

*The Life of the Apostle Peter*  
Study # 12  
A Lesson in Serving Others  
John 13:1-17

**INTRODUCTION:** Cf., Luke 22:7-13

**I. The Context of the Story (13:1-5)**

**A. Our Lord's Awareness (1-3)**

1. Of His Death (1A)
2. Of His Disciples (1B; Ps. 37:28;  
Is. 49:14-16; Prov. 18:24)
3. Of The Devil (2)
4. Of His Deity (3A)
5. Of His Destiny
6. Of Their Debate (Luke 22:24-27)

**B. Our Lord's Actions (4-5)**

**II. The Conversation With Simon (6-11)**

**A. Peter's Outburst (6-7)**

**B. Peter's Order (8)**

**C. Peter's Overreaction (9-11; Titus 3:5)**

**III. The Call to Servanthood (12-17)**

**CONCLUSION:**

1. A lesson about washing!
2. A lesson about working

QUOTE: A Malay proverb says, "The fuller the ear is of rice-grain, the lower it bends."

**On "Washing"**

The word translated "wash" in John 13:5-6, 8, 12, and 14 is *nipto* and means "to wash a part of the body." But the word translated "washed" in John 13:10 is *louo* and means "to bathe all over." The distinction is important, for Jesus was trying to teach His disciples the importance of a holy walk. When the sinner trusts the Saviour, he is "bathed all over" and his sins are washed away and forgiven (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Titus 3:3-7; and Rev. 1:5). "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:17). However, as the believer walks in this world, it is easy to become defiled. He does not need to be bathed all over again; he simply needs to have that defilement cleansed away. God promises to cleanse us when we confess our sins to Him (1 John 1:9).

But why is it so important that we "keep our feet clean"? Because if we are defiled, we cannot have communion with our Lord. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me" (John 13:8). The word translated "part" is *meros*, and it carries the meaning here of "participation, having a share in someone or something." When God "bathes us all over" in salvation, He brings about our union with Christ; and that is a settled relationship that cannot change. (The verb wash in John 13:10 is in the perfect tense. It is settled once and for all.) However, our communion with Christ depends on our keeping ourselves "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). If we permit unconfessed sin in our lives, we hinder our walk with the Lord; and that is when we need to have our feet washed.

This basic truth of Christian living is beautifully illustrated in the Old Testament priesthood. When the priest was consecrated, he was bathed all over (Ex. 29:4), and that experience was never repeated. However, during his daily ministry, he became defiled; so it was necessary that he wash his hands and feet at the brass laver in the courtyard (Ex. 30:18-21). Only then could he enter the holy place and trim the lamps, eat the holy bread, or burn the incense.

The Lord cleanses us through the blood of Christ, that is, His work on the cross (1 John 1:5-10), and through the application of His Word to our lives (Ps. 119:9; John 15:3; Eph. 5:25-26). The "water of the Word" can keep our hearts and minds clean so that we will avoid the pollutions of this world. But if we do sin, we have a loving Advocate in glory who will hear our prayers of confession and forgive us (1 John 2:1-2). *Bible Exposition Commentary.*

**A Ω**

**was set down** (12) - Gk., *anapitoo*, literally, "having reclined." The guests reclined on couches, lying on the left side and leaning on the left hand. The table was in the hollow square or oblong formed on three sides by the couches, the fourth side being open, and the table extending beyond the ends of the couches. (Vincent's)

**ought** (14) - Gk., *opheilo*, to owe. A form of this word is given in Matthew's gospel in the Lord's prayer where it is translated "debt" and "debtor." So Jesus here puts the obligation to ministry as a "debt" under which His disciples are laid by His ministry to them. (Vincent)

**Ps 37:28** For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

**Isa 49:14-16** But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. 15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. 16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;

**Prov 18:24** ... and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

**Titus 3:5** Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

**1 Tim. 5:9-10** Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, [10] Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.