

“Endless Love to the End”

(Part 2)

John 13.1–11

¹Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. ²During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, ⁴got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. ⁵Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. ⁶So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, “Lord, do You wash my feet?” ⁷Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter.” ⁸Peter said to Him, “Never shall You wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” ⁹Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.” ¹⁰Jesus said to him, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” ¹¹For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.” [NASB]

HOPE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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17th May, 2009

I. Introduction

Last week we tasted the loftiness of Christ’s love for His Father and for us. The savor in many ways seems unfamiliar to us. For example, ^{1Co13.4}Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered... Already we recognize that our love is a dim and marred reflection of this description. But one result of Christ loving His own to the end, is that in the end our love will be perfect as His love is perfect.

I believe John was intentionally ambiguous when in v1 he said that Jesus “loved them to the end.” “To the end” means to the end of Jesus’ life on earth and to all eternity. Therefore His love for us never ends. “To the end” also means “to the uttermost.” His love is perfect. His love perfectly fulfills all fifteen characteristics we listed last week from 1Co13, as well as all those named elsewhere in Scripture.

Our verses this week further reveal the uttermost perfection of Jesus’ eternal love. They also put His love into startling relief. In these verses then, we see the devil in the heart of Judas, the Father in the heart of Jesus, and Simon in the heart of Peter. Another way of putting that is, we see perfect hatred to the end; perfect love to the end; and a perplexing mix that *will* end.

II. Perfect Hatred to the End

First is perfect hatred to the end. ²“During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him...” The devil in the heart of Judas.

Is there any more perfect outworking of hatred than betrayal? James says, ^{Jas2.10}“Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.” Betrayal shows that you think you are god. It is an act of worshipping yourself. It exposes distrust in the name of Christ which you confess. Betrayal shows that you have no rest in Christ’s security. To betray a friend is the pinnacle of disrespect. It murders your friend’s spirit if not their body. It prostitutes your friend to your own advancement. It steals your friend’s security. It exposes the falsehood of your own heart. Betrayal arises from bitter envy rotting your bones.

So you see, betrayal completely breaks all Ten Commandments. Satan betrayed his Creator and the One who had placed him in the highest order among all the angels. And here Satan has put this same betrayal into the heart of Judas. Satan betrayed God and now he would have Judas betray the Son of God.

Peter in His first letter said that Jesus, ^{1Pe2.23}while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself [giving Himself over] to Him who judges righteously. But the perfectly unrighteous Satan would have Judas give Jesus over to the devilish Pharisees instead.

This is perfect hatred, the devil in the heart of Judas. We have been thinking recently about the wonder of being loved. Do you ever think of being loved just as something that is advantageous? Someone is trying to love you, and you find a crooked grin spreading across your heart because you begin to see a way you can take advantage of their love, for your convenience? Somebody wants to help you, and you start plotting how you can leverage them to get more than they offer, forgetting all gratitude? Look, I know this sounds sick. But it is worse than sick. It is a vile heart.

Judas had been expecting that Jesus should become the powerful king everybody wanted. Judas already tasted the advantage that would bring. Jesus had no place to lay His head, ^{Lk9.58} but evidently He did draw quite a revenue of donations. Judas used that revenue for his

convenience; he used to steal what was put into it.^{Jn12.6} When at last Judas realized Jesus wasn't going to do Judas's will, Judas found that he could get one last advantage on account of the One who loved him. Namely thirty pieces of silver. The devil in the heart of Judas. He hated Jesus to the end.

III. Perfect Love to the End

How can a world full of such perfect hatred be overcome? Such is the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love to the end. So second, we see perfect love to the end. The Father in the heart of Jesus. There are two things evident here about that love: God's *plan* and God's *power*.

A. God's plan

Firstly, God's *plan*. Jesus knew “that He had come from God and was going back to God.”^{v3} This was all part of the plan. It was God's plan that the devil would put into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. Later the disciples praised God, saying ^{Act4.27}“Truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.” Before that, Peter had boldly preached Jesus,^{2,23} “delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put to death.”

It was God's plan to send a deceiving spirit into the heart and mouth of all King Ahab's prophets.^{2Chr18.19} It was God's plan in Rev17 to put it into the hearts of kings to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and giving their kingdom to the beast to topple Babylon.^{v17}

It was God's plan to love His own by *using* the devil's hatred in men like Judas. Be careful now; you won't find fault with God in this. ^{Jas1.13}“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.” You rightly place high value in freedom of the will. Judas freely acted in perfect compliance with his own will... and his own will was completely compliant with the devil's will.

God's plan for loving His own *uses* even the hatred and betrayal in the hearts of men. Remember, as Jesus said in ch6, ^{Jn6.70}“Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?” Jesus could face the greatest trial—ininitely greater than any mere human will ever face. Jesus willingly gave Himself up to demonic betrayal because He knew that He had come from God and was going back to God. Thus for God's *plan*.

B. God's power

Secondly, God's *power* is evident. Jesus knew “that the Father had given all things into his hands.”^{v3} “All things” includes all the power in all the essence of God to destroy the devil and his works, as well as to eradicate all hatred and evil. That is a lot of power. It is more power than a trillion nuclear bombs. It is more power than the biggest supernova. It is more than all the power unleashed in what some cosmologists call the “big bang.”

So how does Jesus apply that power... by some big cosmic explosion wiping out the devil, Judas, and all evil? No, but by washing feet. All the power to overcome evil, works itself out through humble and self-denying love that heartily wills to wash feet... even the feet of the one who would betray Him.

Travelling on foot with open sandals was most common, and common hospitality required hosts to provide water to a guest to wash his feet.^{egGen18.4} Sometimes a servant would wash a guest's feet, but this was the lowest, most menial task a servant could perform. John the Baptist

made it the mark of his comparison to Jesus. He said he was not even qualified to *begin* the process by untying the thong of Jesus’ sandals in order to wash His feet.^{Mk1.7}

Yet Jesus, infinitely greater than His disciples, lowers Himself to perform the lowest of lowly services for them. The devil put betrayal into the heart of Judas with which to hate. Jesus put water into the bowl with which to love. This is God’s plan and God’s power of love.^{2Co8.9}“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”^{Phi2.6}“Jesus, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.”

You see the contrast. The devil in the heart of Judas would destroy Jesus to make himself big. But the Father in the heart of Jesus would make Jesus low to lift you and me—and Judas, had he repented—high. Such is God’s plan and God’s power as shown in Jesus’ love for the Father and for His own.

IV. Perplexing Mix that Will End

Perfect hatred to the end: the devil in the heart of Judas. Perfect love to the end: the Father in the heart of Jesus. That brings us, third, to a perplexing mix that *will* end: Simon in the heart of Peter. “Lord, do *you* wash *my* feet?” Peter was altogether too magnanimous to let Jesus suffer any humility. In fact, he was altogether too ignorant. I don’t mean to sound nasty when I say he was ignorant. Peter just simply did not understand—yet—that Jesus *had* to suffer. As Jesus told him, he would understand later.

But then Peter *does* get nasty! Or should I say Peter does get Simon. You see, Simon was his name before Jesus gave him the new name of Peter, or “stone.” In Matt16, Simon confessed his faith in Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus then said to him,^{Mt16.17}“Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.¹⁸I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

When it was clear that Simon had the Holy Spirit blessing him; when new life was blossoming in the heart of Simon, Jesus gave him the name of Peter. Peter would be a living stone who resembled and rested upon the Rock—the Chief Cornerstone—Jesus Christ.^{1Pe2.2-10;Eph2.20f} What glorious transformation in the heart of Peter!

But the very next thing Matthew relates is how Peter tried to exercise authority over the Son of God by telling Him that He must *never* suffer! And Jesus, of course, rebukes Peter:^{Mt16.23}“Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

Now Jesus was not saying that the devil had entered into Peter’s heart the way he did into Judas. But Jesus *was* saying that when Peter sanctified *Simon* as lord in his heart, he looked and sounded a lot more like Satan than like Jesus. When Peter presumed to tell Jesus what to do and what not to do, Peter was denying both the plan and the power of God’s love with which Jesus loved His own to the end.

The same thing happens again here. Peter is insistent that he has a better plan for more powerful love than Jesus. This is the old *Simon* speaking, not the new creation Peter. The corruption remaining in his heart which produces Peter’s plan is not patient, not kind; it is envious, it is bragging, it is arrogant, it is unbecoming, and it is seeking its own. Furthermore, it chafes with vengeance at any wrong that might be done against it.^{Jn13.8}“Never shall You wash my feet!” Simon says...

Jesus did not this time say, “Get behind Me, Satan.” Peter was in a terrible mix, and Jesus knew it. So Jesus simply said, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” Peter got the point... well, part of the point. Poor Peter. Now he swings way over to the other side and makes another terrible mistake. Where would you and I be, without Peter among the Apostles and Prophets, that is, among the foundation stones upon which we are built, with Christ as the Cornerstone? We so need Peter! With all his mistakes, and with all his sins... forgiven!

By the way, do you realize that the Church so needs *you* with all *your* mistakes, and with all your sins... forgiven? Without you, we’d be a body missing some absolutely vital parts.

I think Peter is so mixed up at this point, that he doesn’t even know what he is saying. It sounds good... but it is specious. Sounds good, but it is not. ^{Jn13.9}“Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.” You see, what Peter is not yet getting, is that when Jesus washes away your sins with His sacrificial blood, He does so *once for all*. ^{Heb7.27;10.10}

When your sins have been pardoned, forgiven by God, you are *eternally* forgiven. When Jesus’ blood has satisfied God’s justice for you, He is eternally satisfied. When Jesus’ blood has covered you with the perfectly obedient love of Jesus, you are eternally covered.

However, you are not walking around six inches above the ground. You are still in this world. The Simon in you is still being titillated with the lusts of this world. The old man in you is fighting a losing battle to keep you corrupt... but he *is* fighting. If Christ has given you a new heart then you *are* a living stone whom He is building up as a spiritual house. ^{1pe2.5}

Yet you cry out with David, ^{Ps51.2}“Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” Corruption remains in your heart and you long for it to be purged. You do draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having your heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and your body washed with pure water. ^{Heb10.22} Yet you long for that final day when He ^{Ezk36.25}“will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.”

How can you be sure this day will come, when your perplexing mix of old man and new man, of Simon and of Peter, will end? You can know by inspecting God’s plan and God’s power to love you perfectly to the end. The answer is right here. Jesus washes your feet. Will you let Him?

Not all do. Not in their hearts, anyway. Judas let Jesus wash his feet. But Judas was not washed with Jesus’ blood. Judas hated Jesus with a perfect hatred. Judas set the devil apart as lord in his heart. Peter, now and then, set Simon apart as lord in his heart. But Jesus never had anything or anybody in His heart except for His Father and except for His own whom He washed with His blood. So much are you in His heart—you who love Him—that He washes your feet to the end of your days in this world. He is making you holy, as He is holy. No matter how much Simon is still beleaguering your heart, Peter.

V. Conclusion

A. Doctrine

So here is what God reveals to us in this passage: Perfect love overcomes perfect hatred, and washes away the hatred still mixing with love in us.

B. Use

Do you ever wonder if love will overcome hatred? I think this is the greatest evidence: love uses even hatred to accomplish its end. God used the hatred of the devil, of Judas, and of the Pharisees, to accomplish His end, His purpose, of perfect love. God used their perfect intent to do harm, to accomplish His perfect intent to do good. This is awesome. The greatest evil, the

greatest will to harm, is simply what God uses to bring the greatest good. The more fiercely evil rages against righteousness, the more victory righteousness gains over evil!

That applies on the Kingdom scale, and it applies on the citizen scale. Christ has overcome the world, and He did so by washing feet. He has overcome all the power the world had over us, by washing us with His blood. And He continues to wash our feet, as it were, by purging the remaining wickedness from our hearts. He will complete that work.^{phil1.6}

So... when He loves you by serving you, will you let God be God? Or will you presume you have a better plan for more powerful love, than Him washing your feet? Will you let yourself be loved by Jesus?

Do you get discouraged by the amount of Simon in you, Peter? Does Simon visit too frequently and too forcefully? Listen, if you have the tiniest seed of love in you, it must overcome the hatred in your flesh. It is impossible for the hatred remaining in your flesh to overcome the love in your spirit.

Light can find you when you are hiding in the dark, but darkness can never find you when you are hiding in the light. Love can use perfect hatred to accomplish its end. But hatred cannot never use perfect love to accomplish its end. Jesus used the devil's hatred, to save your soul. But the devil can *never* use Jesus' love to kill your soul. That is as ludicrous as darkness finding you when you are hiding in the light.

So I'll close by saying it again: be loved by Jesus. His plan and His power to love you is simply out of this world. Yet He offers it right here and now freely to you.