

## PASSION WEEK – “HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF”

### “WHY THE MASTER MUST SERVE”

Prepared by Patrick J. Griffiths © 2010 - [pastorpat@waukeshabible.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabible.org)  
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*Reflecting on His Work and the Storyline of the Bible*

Read: Mark 14:12-31 (Cf. John 13-16)

Prayer:

*Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may thankfully receive the same in remembrance of him who in these holy mysteries give us a pledge of life eternal, the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who now lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit ever, one God, world without end. Amen.<sup>1</sup>*

The rebel’s redemption is found in the provision of God. The lamb must die and the sinner must eat and drink. It is from this nourishing substance that life is brought forth. This life, His life, has a very distinct expression. It is seen in the self-effacing service one renders in “loving one another.” It is marked by a humility that seeks the well-being of others over itself (Phil. 2:3, 4).

<sup>3</sup>“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but **with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves**; <sup>4</sup> do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but **also for the interests of others**” (Phil. 2:3, 4).

This is the attitude that identified Jesus as the Son of God and the Sacrifice from the Father. It is this life, His life, that now marks His followers (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3, 4; 1 John 4:17).

“I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20).

<sup>3</sup>“For you have died and **your life is hidden with Christ in God**. <sup>4</sup>**When Christ, who is our life**, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory” (Col. 3:3, 4).

“By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; **because as He is, so also are we in this world**” (1 John 4:17).

The force and simplicity of this truth will come into play in the activity of the Upper Room. The apostolic and global church recalls this moment in what is labeled, “Maundy Thursday.”

To know the meaning of “Maundy” hastens understanding. The word “Maundy” comes from the Latin “**mandatum**,” meaning “command”. The reference is to John 13:34. Jesus spoke those words at the Last Supper, which took place the Thursday before Easter.

<sup>34</sup> “A new **commandment** I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34, 35).

It is interesting to place this new commandment into the larger context of the Upper Room. The atmosphere is pregnant with doom and gloom. Denial and death permeate the air. The Master serves His servants and in the midst of all this He says, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” I am always stunned by what is not said. The one quality He accents and leaves us with is “our love for one another”. Now there is a larger context for this statement, not just in the Upper Room but in John’s literature and throughout the New Testament record.

Elsewhere John will tell us that our love for God and for one another is only possible because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). In fact, John echoes again the words of the Upper Room when he notes,

<sup>20</sup> “If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup> And this **commandment** we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also” (1 John 4:20, 21).

The imagery of foot-washing is simply a **cultural expression** of the kind of humility and self-effacing activity necessary if we are going to love like Jesus loves and if we are going to love one another. In the days of our Lord, foot-washing was a sign of hospitality. It was common for them to wash one another’s feet; whereas in our culture it would be uncommon. Yet are there not culturally defined expressions that openly communicate love for God and for one another?

What I find impressive is the abundance of New Testament occurrences of this idea. Let us, for the moment, overlook the abundance of references to this idea and let us simply read the various occurrences of this idea and pray the Holy Spirit enables us to be washed over with the truth of the text. As you read ask yourself the simple question, “What is the main thought or idea in each of these ‘one another’ passages?”

- “Therefore **encourage one another** and build up one another, just as you also are doing” (1 Thess. 5:11).
- “and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. **Live in peace with one another**” (1 Thess. 5:13).
- “See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but **always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people**” (1 Thess. 5:15).
- “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and **the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater**” (2 Thess. 1:3).

- “But **encourage one another** day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13).
- “and **let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds**” (Heb. 10:24).
- “not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:25).
- “Therefore, **confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another** so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (James 5:16).
- “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, **fervently love one another from the heart**” (1 Pet. 1:22).
- “**Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins**” (1 Pet. 4:8).
- “**Be hospitable to one another** without complaint” (1 Pet. 4:9).
- “As each one has received a special gift, **employ it in serving one another** as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:10).
- “You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another**, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE” (1 Pet. 5:5).
- “**Greet one another with a kiss of love**. Peace be to you all who are in Christ” (1 Pet. 5:14).
- “For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that **we should love one another**” (1 John 3:11).
- “This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and **love one another**, just as He commanded us” (1 John 3:23).
- “Beloved, **let us love one another**, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7).
- “Beloved, if God so loved us, **we also ought to love one another**” (1 John 4:11).
- “No one has seen God at any time; **if we love one another**, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12).
- “Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that **we love one another**” (2 John 1:5).

O may this truth worm its way into our minds and hearts. Most of the “issues” and “concerns” we encounter in life would be met and resolved, if we simply “loved one another.”

This is *the key* to resolving relational conflict regardless as to its dynamic. Although this can come across as overly simplistic, this is the truth. In fact, the Bible also speaks to its opposite

- “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, **hating one another**” (Titus 3:3).
- **“Do not speak against one another**, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it” (James 4:11).
- **“Do not complain, brethren, against one another**, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door” (James 5:9).

Is love really the bottom line? Consider what Jesus said when asked, “what is the **first** commandment of the Law (Mark 12:28 [“what is the **great** commandment,” Matt. 22:36])?” The answer is, “Love God”. Give yourself to loving God and all the rest of the “commandments” will be fulfilled. Then as a consequence of this vertical and singular love, you will love your neighbor as yourself.

This is how Paul notes the principle in Galatians 5 and 6.

<sup>13</sup> “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another**. <sup>14</sup> **For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’** <sup>15</sup> But if you **bite and devour** one another, take care that you are **not consumed by one another**” (Gal. 5:13-15).

**Love is the embodiment of Law**. In fact, **love fulfills Law**. The opposite of love is destructive self-consuming cannibalism. The means to this loving expression is found in Galatians 5:16-18. What the self-destructive behavior looks like is described in the “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21). What the self-effacing love looks like is described in the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-24). Can this be any clearer? It is the same principle noted throughout the “one another” references. Galatians 6 shows us what this looks like.

<sup>1</sup> “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, **restore** such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. <sup>2</sup> **Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ**” (Gal. 6:1, 2).

Galatians 6:1, 2 are a cultural equivalent for foot-washing. For us, don’t worry about washing someone’s feet, but rather “bear one another’s burdens.” The application of the person and work of Jesus Christ results in son-ship. The identifying mark of son-ship is love. This love played out looks like the “fruit of the Spirit.” Those who do not bear His fruit but still produce the work of the flesh are not sons and are relational cannibals who are self-serving and consuming. Is this not the principle behind the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)?

This is the foundational fruit of Passion Week. Our Lord came to save sinners from their self-imposed alienation from the Father. Jesus restores this union and enables and empowers His people to love God and from this, to love one another. It sounds simple, but what if . . . what if we simply loved one another by bearing one another's burdens? What if . . . instead of hate and malice and envy and spiritual thievery we placed the interests of others over our own? Would this not begin to fulfill the Lord' Prayer of John 17?

<sup>20</sup> "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup> **that they may all be one**; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. <sup>22</sup> The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, **that they may be one**, just as We are one; <sup>23</sup> I in them and You in Me, **that they may be perfected in unity**, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me" (John 17:20-23).

What is true of our position **in Christ** must be played out in real time. It is love that reveals who we are **in Christ**. O may the weight of our Lord's work and words compel us to live lives of self-effacing love. May we forever and always put the interests of others above our own. May this mark be indelibly placed on the face of His people. May we simply love one another; in Jesus name, Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bcponline.org/>