



DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

JOHN 13-16, 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11

MAY 2015

Better Than Clean

Just before his betrayal and the events surrounding his death, Jesus met with his disciples to celebrate the Passover meal, inaugurating a whole new era.

As they gathered, he did something that none of them fully understood at the time. He washed their feet. As an act of humility it could stand alone as a model for their future, but there was more to it than that. Jesus was dealing with defilement. The disciples had been walking the filthy streets of Jerusalem, and they needed their physical feet washed, but they were also part of a race that had been defiled in the Garden of Eden and needed to be washed spiritually. That washing would happen in a few hours as his blood flowed down a cruel cross and cleansed them from a defilement that went deeper than the skin.

One dynamic we see in this story is how Peter felt uncomfortable being served by Jesus. Don't we all? We should be the ones serving, not him. But Jesus was emphatic,

"If I don't wash you, you have no share with me." That is instructive to all who have been reluctant to submit to his washing. It means we must expose our defilement to him and allow the Son of glory to do for us what we had honestly rather do ourselves. Thousands continue to walk in defilement simply because they can't let Jesus wash them.

Another dynamic we see being revealed here is the need for continual cleansing for those who continue to walk in the world. It is inevitable that we get some of the dirt of the streets on us, even after we have been washed in his blood. The descendants of Adam all carry defilement. We all have a history of hiding behind bushes, trying to protect any honor we might retain. We all have spent untold energy trying to regain the

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honor our father, Adam lost in the Garden. We are ravishingly hungry to hear again the words God spoke over our race before the fall: "Very good." We wanted to hear it from a dad, a mom, a teacher, a friend, the boss, our peers, and *Him*. We have tried to achieve. We have run roughshod over others to get approbation. We have become slaves to the opinion of people we don't even know. We had an honor back in the Garden that befit our design. Since it was lost, we have looked everywhere trying to find it. Some of our forbears even built a tower high into the heavens, trying to make a name for themselves. Actually, that "tower-building" tendency is still in our ranks.

Jesus doesn't offer to just soften the **extreme expressions of disordered lives**. He has a **whole new life to share**.

I am so glad we have the promise that as we walk in the light of Jesus' gospel, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us (1 John 1:7). We all still battle with trying to grasp honor for ourselves and need daily visits to the towel and bowl. We must be reminded by our fellow travelers that you can have dirty feet without being dirty. For instance,

Peter was a few hours from denying Jesus, but he was not a betrayer. On the other hand, Judas would betray him because he was not clean. Jesus said so.

Cleansing was a very important part of the social life of Israel. People and things became defiled and needed to go through a thorough cleansing process, administered by a priest. There were three levels of honor:

CLEAN: When a person or thing was CLEAN it was usable for whatever it was designed to do. A pot was used for cooking, holding liquids, etc., until it came into contact with something unclean, such as a dead body. Then it was UNCLEAN.

UNCLEAN: Unclean things had to be kept away from clean things and were unusable for what they were designed to do, until they were cleansed. Some people and things were in another category. They were not only clean, but also SANCTIFIED.

SANCTIFIED: Sanctified things or people were set apart for special use. They were for the honor of the master. Everything about them existed for the pleasure and glory of the master.

This is what Jesus did to solve our defilement problem. He didn't just cleanse us to be Adam's race; he sanctified us to be a

part of a new race of which he is the head. We have been given an honor above the original one given to the innocent Adam and Eve. We are sons of God. We have one to glory in who has no equal. His honor is our honor. We dare to take up the towel and bowl because we aren't afraid that others will think we are just servants. We know we are better than clean.

This is what the apostle Paul offered the disciples in Corinth.

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were **sanctified**, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

1 Corinthians 6:9–11
(ESV; emphasis mine)

He is saying that the root cause of all the sins listed in the passage is the same. They are all defiled and need to be washed. But they get even more. They are sanctified and justified. It is not enough just to get back to Adam's level. The solution is living the

shared life of Jesus, the last Adam. Jesus doesn't offer to just soften the extreme expressions of disordered lives. He has

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a whole new life to share. It is a life that has settled the issue of honor. It is capable of washing any feet because of a secured glory. It is not about trying to be a minimal sinner. It is about being a radical disciple.

But I must go on. Jesus didn't stop with the gesture that carries such transforming truth. He told them about what they were about to inherit. I will go quickly through the discourse in the upper room (John 13–16), just pausing to point out the many riches they were going to get. He gave them a new commandment. This was to be their mission and motivation. They were to love each other as he loved them. This included the ability to love as he does. What a privilege. He told them of the place that he was going to prepare. It is a place in relation to the Father. God had given Abraham an inheritance of **land**. Jesus was giving his new people a **life**. They were going to have a place of access to the Father—the same access he had.

They would be God's partners on earth, carrying out his commission. They would have prayer privileges of sons. And they would not have to do this in his absence. He was sending another just like him, but without local limitations. The Holy Spirit

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was coming to comfort and guide. He was going to take away their orphan mentality so they would be assured of sonship. Jesus spoke a peace to them that carried the weight of divine order. It is the peace that comes from harmony. He identified himself as the true Vine of which Israel had been a type. The disciples were the branches that displayed the fruit of his own life. They would experience a joy beyond human expectation, and it would be his joy. They would relate to him not as servants who only got instructions, but as friends who would share their thoughts. And then, to top it all off, he prayed for them. He prayed they would know all that he had

done and live in the wonderful privilege of being cleansed, sanctified, and justified sons of God.

He left them, but not alone. They had the Holy Spirit and the community of faith. They were true sons of God, but they still had memories of defiled, orphanic living. They would need daily refreshing from the word of Jesus, as interpreted by the Spirit, and the encouragement of the new family they were in. We watch them trying to adjust in the stories of the book of Acts that Luke wrote.

We live in confident hope that what Jesus has done is enough for us to live beyond the race of Adam, hiding and grasping. Because of him, we are better than clean.



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