

“MY LOVE FOR YOU IS UNCONDITIONAL”

“My love for you is not based upon your intentions. It is not based upon the promises you have made in your enthusiasm, and later broken in times of weakness. My love is based upon the covenant I have made to you. There will be times in your life when the good that you will do, you will not do (Romans 7:19). There will be times when you think you are able to stand strong... But *“let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”* (John 14:27). I will use these times to teach you of My unconditional love.”

The disciples watched as Christ demonstrated selfless and limitless love for them. There was no one unworthy; none He refused to *“show the full extent of His love”* (John 13:1, NIV). But in the coming hours, their belief in His claim to love them in spite of themselves would be challenged. As He spoke of their weaknesses and impending failures, they must decide if Christ’s love would truly remain unchanged when their failings outweighed their virtues.

How would you define unconditional love? What conditions have you encountered in your relationships with others? _____

Unclean

Peter shirked as Jesus reached for his feet with the towel with which He was girded. *“You shall never wash my feet!”* (John 13:8), he declared. Who was he that his Master and King would assume the posture of the lowest household servant before him?

Read the account in John 13:1-17.

Describe Christ’s love for His disciples according to verse 1. _____

Considering all that had occurred—the Triumphal Entry, the cleansing of the temple, the raising of Lazarus, the anointing—why would Christ’s actions be confusing to the disciples? _____

What did Peter’s initial refusal to allow Jesus to wash his feet disclose about his heart for Christ?

As Jesus humbled Himself before them, He said, *“A servant is not greater than his master”* (John 13:16). *“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet”* (v.14). What message was Christ seeking to convey to His disciples? _____

How are we to wash one another's feet? What prevented the disciples from doing so?¹ What prevents you? _____

No one disciple was greater than the others. Why was it imperative that Jesus demonstrated and then spoke this truth before He went on to address their weaknesses? _____

While He washed their feet, Jesus said, *"You are not all clean"* (13:11). *Clean, katharos*, speaks of being ethically pure; "free from corrupt desire, from guilt."² *Katharos* comes from a root word that means "of uncertain affinity". In other words, "You are not all free from corrupt desire."

This wasn't the first time Jesus had revealed that one of His chosen disciples was against Him. In John 6:64-71, He states *"one of you is a devil"* (v.70). What was meant by such a statement? _____

Continue reading in John 13:18-30, then read Matthew 26:21-25.

As Jesus continued to speak the mood changed from zeal to sorrow. Then He spoke plainly: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me"* (John 13:21). Record their responses:

John 13:22 _____

Matthew 26:22 _____

The parallel account in Luke 22:23 records, *"Then they began to question among themselves, which of them it was who would do this thing."* Then an argument incurred. Read Luke 22:24-27.

With this in mind, why do you think the disciples were unsure whether Jesus was referring to them? _____

Matthew 26:25 says, *"Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, 'Rabbi, is it I?' He said to him, 'You have said it.'"* Judas' words must have come as a shock and a relief to the remaining disciples.

The disciples had just watched Jesus wash the feet of the worst of sinners while possessing full knowledge of his traitorous plans. If Christ had been unwilling to wash Judas' feet, what would that mean to you? (Consider Romans 5:6-11.) _____

Stumbled

"All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night" (Matthew 26:31). Continue reading in Matthew 26:31-35; also, Luke 22:31-34.

¹ "None of the disciples were interested in washing each other's feet. Any of them would have gladly washed Jesus' feet. But they could not wash Jesus' feet without having to be available to wash the others' feet, and that would have been an intolerable admission of inferiority among their fellow competitors for the top positions in the disciples' hierarchy. So no one's feet got washed." David Guzik.

² Vine's Expository Dictionary

What is God’s purpose in “sifting”? What is Satan’s? (Consider 1 Peter 1:6-7 and Job 1:6-12, 2:1-6.)

Peter’s vehement statement gives us a glimpse of his passionate desire to follow Christ—even unto death. His statement also reveals that he had exalted himself above the remaining disciples. Even if they failed, he would not. Peter considered himself incapable of committing such a dreadful act.

Have you ever thought yourself incapable of committing a certain sin? Explain. How do you view, or treat, others when they stumble in this way? _____

What prevented Peter from heeding Christ’s warning? What prevents you from doing the same?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:12-13. Instead of refuting Jesus’ words, what could Peter have done to guard himself from stumbling? _____

Romans 12:3 says, *“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly...”* *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”* (Proverbs 16:18).

In John 13:34-35, what instructions did Christ give immediately preceding the prediction of Peter’s denial? _____

How were the disciples, and how are we, to treat one another when we stumble? (Also consider Galatians 6:1-3, 1 Peter 4:8.) _____

Why do all people need this kind of love? Why is it the most difficult type of love to give? How do individuals excuse themselves from loving others as Christ has loved them? _____

Without Conditions

The disciples’ confidence was shaken. The unsuspected treasurer had left to carry out his plans. The strongest among them would deny their Master and Teacher. Thomas now doubted and Philip was unsure of all he had seen.

After disclosing the uncomfortable truth of what would soon occur, Jesus sought to reassure His disciples. *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me”* (John 14:1, NIV). As if to say, *“You will all stumble in many things (James 3:2)—but this is part of walking with Me. I have not asked you for a flawless performance, to be strong when you are unable, but to believe upon the promise I have made to you.”*

BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US: “MY LOVE FOR YOU IS UNCONDITIONAL”

Throughout their evening together, Jesus defined unconditional love. Describe it per Matthew 26:32, Luke 22:32, and John 13:36. _____

How do the following verses speak of God's absolute promise and unconditional commitment to walk beside *you* even when you stumble?

Psalms 139:7-10 _____

Hebrews 4:16 _____

1 Peter 5:10 _____

John 14:27-28a says, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. You have heard Me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you'"* (NIV). John 13:1 says, *"Having loved His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love"* (NIV).

In closing, read Hebrews 10:22-23.