

=LIFE OF PETER=

Lesson 6

Peter the Impetuous Becomes Peter the Restrained

AIM: to teach my pupils that the Lord commands us to love Him and to love one another.

POINT OF CONTACT: Bring a towel and some water to class. Tell the class: These two items are symbols of Christian love. You say, "This is strange. How could a towel and some water be symbols of Christian love?" By the close of the lesson today you should be able to answer this question.

INTRODUCTION: It was early evening on Tuesday of the last week of Jesus' being on earth in His earthly body. Jesus gathered His disciples around Him for some last-minute instructions and words of love. Jesus wanted to leave on them His crest, His coat of arms; He wanted to leave them as being identified with Him. Peter's eagerness to keep the Lord close to himself, his deep desire to please Jesus and to be counted as loyal to Him were exclusive sometimes of wisdom and forethought. Jesus worked lovingly with the lump of clay which was called Peter to mold him into the kind of vessel that would be most useful to Him and therefore blessed to Peter himself. This occasion was no exception to previous times of personal instruction to this disciple who was named first on almost all the lists of the twelve disciples.

I. A MEAL HAD BEEN PREPARED. See Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-18.

1. The meal was the Feast of the Passover. The Passover Feast was eaten each year about April 14. It was held in commemoration of the passing of the death angel over the Israelite families before they were released from Egypt to start on their march toward the Promised Land. The meat of a lamb, whose blood had been applied to the lintel and the two side posts of the doors of their houses, had been served with unleavened bread. When Jesus and His disciples were to sit to eat, their meal would consist of the meat of the lamb with unleavened bread and grape juice. The unleavened bread and the grape juice represented the body and blood of Jesus. Luke 22:19, 20.
2. Peter and John were delegated this responsibility. They had to find the place as well as prepare the meal in advance of the coming of Jesus and the other ten disciples.

II. THE DISCIPLES AND JESUS SAT DOWN. Notice John 13:1-3.

1. Jesus knew that it was time for His crucifixion. The work for which He had been sent to earth from Heaven was coming to its climax. It would not be long now before He would be back in Heaven with the Father. Jesus knew His position; He knew that He had come from Heaven and that He was due to return to His place of glory.
2. Supper preparations were ended. The preparations for supper were completed, but the meal had not been eaten.

III. JESUS GAVE AN OBJECT LESSON. Read John 13:4-17.

1. He portrayed Himself as a servant. He took off His outer robe and put on the garment of a servant. He picked up a basin of water and wrapped a towel around Himself. He then proceeded to wash the feet of the disciples. (The servants of a household helped the guests to prepare for a meal. Because the people walked through dusty streets and wore open, sandal-type shoes, their feet needed washing when they came into the house. The servants would wash the feet of the seated guests.)
2. Jesus explained the meanings behind His object lesson.
  - 1) The first explanation was in response to Peter's objection at having his feet washed by Jesus. Peter had said, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Peter also said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Peter knew the identity of Jesus, the Son of God, and Peter loved Him. Perhaps Peter did not want Jesus to concentrate on his dirty feet; Peter would rather have had a servant see his dirty feet than have Jesus see them. Jesus said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Christians need to come to Jesus, confessing their sins and asking for cleansing, as a regular routine. I John 1:9, 10.
  - 2) The second explanation was in response to Peter's urging: "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Jesus told Peter that he did not need the overall cleansing again because he was already washed; he needed only to have his feet cleaned. Jesus was explaining that

Peter was already saved; he had been cleansed from his original sin when he had put his faith in Jesus and asked Him to be his Saviour. Peter had been thoroughly cleansed from sin and had received Jesus' righteousness. II Peter 1:1-4. Peter would never need to ask for salvation again, the same as no Christian has to ask for salvation more than one time. I John 5:12. By walking through the world, communicating with unsaved people, having temptation come from Satan, fighting down the old sinful nature, he did become dirtied, however.

- 3) Jesus gave a third explanation for His object lesson. He told them to look to Him as an example of how they should be. He wanted them to have the same attitude of service and love that He showed. Jesus said, "You disciples have acknowledged that I am your Lord and Master, and rightfully so. If I can take on the role of a servant to you, then you ought to act as servants to each other." Christians, it might be easy to act as a benefactor to a Christian brother who is less fortunate than we, or who has not had time to grow in grace as we think that we have, but it is love when we serve those who are on or above our spiritual and material level. The humblest task for a Christian is not too small; the Christian is to live a life for other people; the Christian is to live for God's glory, not for his own glory.
3. Jesus emphasized that His actions were an example to them. He did not set up the act of feet washing as an ordinance of the church. John 13:15. Feet washing is not to be considered as a literal command nor the forming of an ordinance. The custom of literally and ceremonially washing the feet is not found before the fourth century. Notice that our Lord said, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." Our Lord's action was symbolical.
4. Jesus promised happiness to those who love and serve their fellow Christians.

#### IV. JESUS REPEATED HIS COMMAND TO LOVE. See John 13:18-35.

1. It was one of the most urgent last-minute instructions which He gave His disciples.
  - 1) It was after He told them that He was about to be betrayed. The betrayal would come from one man who was of the group of twelve disciples. Peter wanted to know whom Jesus meant, but he was reluctant to speak out again so soon after blurting out that he did not want Jesus to wash his feet. He therefore signaled to John, asking him to ask Jesus who it was that should betray Him. In answer to John's question, which was asked for Peter, Jesus gave them a sign whereby they could know that it was Judas, but they did not understand Jesus' words.
  - 2) It was after the act of betrayal had begun. Jesus sent Judas from the room where they had all eaten together and told him to do quickly what he was determined to do.
  - 3) It was after Jesus knew that very soon He would be glorified. The remaining eleven disciples and Jesus went out from the room where they had eaten together. He repeated His command to them: "...love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."
2. It was a command with promise. If disciples love each other, all will know that they are disciples of Jesus.
3. Peter seemed not to have heard the command; at least, he was not thinking about it at that time.
  - 1) He asked immediately, "Lord, whither goest thou?" Jesus told Peter that he could not follow Him then, but that he would follow "afterwards." See John 13:36.
  - 2) Peter did understand afterwards the command which Jesus spoke that night to His disciples. Peter wrote later, "...love one another with a pure heart fervently." I Peter 1:22. Fervent love is a continuous, burning love. Again Peter wrote, "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood." I Peter 2:17a.

CONCLUSION: The words that Jesus spoke to Peter concerning the surety of his salvation and the need for constant cleansing apply to every person who has accepted Jesus as Saviour. The new commandment which Jesus gave His disciples also applies to every Christian. Happy are we if we will keep it!