

Our Pilgrimage and His Rest

Notes of Lectures

Chapter 1

Cleansing and Communion

John 13

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These addresses were taken down in shorthand by one who heard them, and at his desire the author has, as far as it was possible, revised them; at the same time he did not think it well to change in any way the style or expression of extemporary address, which it is well known is so different from what is deliberately written. Many will no doubt wonder that they should ever appear in print. The author can truly say that no one could ever be as conscious as he of their feebleness and weakness; but the truth sought thus to be ministered and set forth, will, he trusts, screen from view the poor vehicle which thus carries it. If the Lord shall be pleased to help or comfort any of His own through these addresses, and give thus a fresh instance of how He can take up that which is foolish, weak, base, and despised, to His name shall be all the praise and glory.

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W. T. T.

Chapter 1: Cleansing and Communion John 13

There are two subjects, beloved brethren, that are on my heart to speak of for a little this evening, in the very order in which you find them in this scripture; not merely the moral order, but the literal order as well. The subjects are the following: first, the practical positive *cleansing* to which we must be subject in order to have part with Christ; and second, the *rest* which follows.

Now, anyone who is a careful observer of the state of the people of God at the present moment, cannot fail to observe how little positive *rest* exists among them. I do not deny for a moment that there is earnestness, activity, zeal, knowledge, and intelligence; but you may possess all these together, or any one of them, and yet be destitute of positive rest, real repose. The rarest thing, at the present instant, is to find one who is consecutively restful. Now why is it? Have you ever asked yourself the question why it is that among the saints, the contrast to all around us in this respect is so little observable? My present object is to furnish, if possible, a true answer to this question.

Now, there are two great things working at the present moment amongst professing Christians, and each of them is vying with the other to give rest. One is *activity*, earnest incessant activity; occupation of heart with that which is perfectly good and right in itself, but which does not and cannot give rest. On the contrary, beloved friends, you will find it a matter of fact, that very often the amount of the activity is in consequence of the destitute state of the soul with reference to rest. You will frequently find that a person who

has not this rest of heart and this repose of soul, is driven into activity in order to get out of self.

The other popular effort at the present moment, is a kind of -- I must say it, though with all kindness -- *bettering* of the flesh in order to give it rest. That is, to express it simply, it has been said, and widely accepted too, it has been put forth and received on every hand, by earnest Christians, true children of God, that the *surrender of your will* by the force of your will gives you rest; that the moment your will gives up your will (an absurdity it looks on the face of it), the moment that your will surrenders itself, puts itself to death, so to speak, the act of doing it gives you rest.

Now, my present earnest desire is, to state positively what I see *in scripture* as that which stands in the way of the soul having this perfect rest which I find here -- a man putting his head on the bosom of Jesus -- what that rest consists in, and what the consequences of it are.

Now I believe, beloved friends, that the first and simplest reason why there is not rest is, that the feet of saints are not washed. There is practical unfitness for communion with Christ *where He is*; because, observe this at the outset, this is the great truth set before us, I believe, in John 13. It is not primarily, though that be true in itself, that the blessed Lord removes the defilement which we contract as we go on from day to day. I believe that here there is a far deeper thing than that, namely, fitness of heart for Himself where He is -- a cleansing in order to have part with Him in glory. It is not, I repeat, the fact that He washes our feet as we go on from day to day. I do not deny that, but here is a far deeper thing, even suitability for common interest, fitness for a part with Christ where He is. This, I believe, is the great thought in John 13.

I take the liberty, without in the least pretending to be a critic or a scholar, of altering that word, which anyone knows must be an entire mistake, viz., “supper being *ended*.” There would be no sense in saying so in connection with what followed, but there is every sense in the words “supper being *come*.” Instead of carrying on the association which He had with them down here in this world, He breaks it, and shows them how He can fit them for *another* and better one; and hence the passage really reads “the supper being *come*”; as much as to say, I have had association with you heretofore on your ground, but now I will show you how I can fit and qualify you to have association and communion with Me on My ground, and in the new sphere, and in the new place, into which I am about to go.

Well, beloved friends, you see He takes the basin, and the water, and the towel, and in the conscious sense that He “came from God, and went to God” -- that was God’s side of it, and His own too -- He stoops to perform this act of service for those whom He loved, and there you get the root and spring of all His action towards them. “Having loved his own which were in the world he loved them unto the end.” Oh, what blessed love and wondrous grace of Thyself, Lord Jesus! There was in His heart an affection, in His bosom a love for them, that could live through changing times and circumstances. How blessed it is thus to get simply at the spring of the actions of the Lord Jesus Christ! And how little out hearts really apprehend it that the motives of everything are *in Himself*! The simple fact stands out in prominence that all the motive-springs which set in action every movement of His grace towards us come simply from His own heart. This, therefore, it is which leads Him to make them as fit morally for His own presence and for communion with Himself in that new sphere that He was about to take as He Himself could make them. Nothing would suit the heart of Christ but that. Have you and I the sense of that in our souls? That nothing would suit the heart of the blessed Lord but to have us as fit for His presence as it is possible for Him to make us? Have you the sense of that in your heart and in your soul? That it was in His heart to make a poor worthless wretch like me as fit to have communion with Himself in that new place that He has gone into, as it is possible for Him to have me? It is not merely a question now of my need, of the deficiencies that are in me, but of the affections of His heart, the motive-springs of His own bosom, that He desires to have me fit for Himself there; and therefore it is that He takes this basin, and the water, and the towel, and begins “to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.”

Now, beloved friends, let me ask you this: Do you know what that action of Christ is with reference to you? I am speaking of simple things tonight, and I do so purposely; I speak of what perhaps many here know well. But the oldest things are those that need to be revived most in our hearts, as these are they which, although so well known, are most likely to slip through our souls, and all the more because of the busy scene that is around us. I ask you this evening, are you con-

scious of the blessed Lord having your poor feet in His hand? Do you know what it is to be subjected to that action of the Lord Jesus, so that He removes every bit of soiling influence that could possibly unfit you for communion with Himself, in order that His heart may have a deeper joy in having communion with you, than yours in having communion with Him? Are you conscious of that? And do you submit to it? Do you submit your feet to be washed? Do you *allow* Him to wash your feet? Do you *allow* Him to gird Himself in your behalf, so that He may remove by this action of His everything that would unfit you for Himself, as well as for having communion with Himself?

Why do I put those questions? Because I believe that action of Christ’s is most *unsparing*. You will perceive, if you look at it for a moment, it is an immensely solemn thing; and that it is exactly there lies the deficiency in hearts at the present moment. I do not believe, I say it boldly now, that, as a general rule, we are subjected to the piercing, separating, penetrating, power of that word, so that every single thing that would be unfit for Christ is judged and removed. There is a passage to which I would like to refer for a moment, Heb. 4:12. It will bring out clearly what I want to impress upon you.

For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Here we have the divine record of the way in which the blessed Lord removes everything that would unfit us for communion with Himself, namely, by *the word of God*. The word of God is the water; and you will find that nearly everywhere in scripture the word of God is spoken of as water. That water is the purifying power by which everything unsuitable is removed; and when that word is brought in its living, searching efficacy to the conscience and to the soul, they are brought into the presence of God through it, and the judgment of God with reference to all that is there is brought into action through that word. I also refer to it for another reason, that you may see how entirely the Incarnate Word and the written word are placed together in those two verses. Just observe the verse again: “The word of God is quick, [living] and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword . . . Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” “His sight.” Whose sight? God’s sight! But then that which is true of God is true of His word, and the very prerogatives of God, the penetrating, searching power of the blessed God, who reads the thoughts and intents of the heart, are referred to His word. I press it solemnly this evening, beloved friends, because I do not think we have in our souls the sense of the solemnity of that word, or how it would act if allowed to bear upon our consciences; and I

doubt very much -- I say it with all respect, and with all affection -- I doubt greatly, whether the word of God has really in our hearts the place it had in the hearts of saints of God in days gone by. I grant you there is an increase of intelligence to a remarkable degree, and moreover there is an increase of earnestness, but I question as to whether the powerful place which the word of God had over souls fifty years ago, holds good to-day with those who are reaping what others sowed; and I doubt as to whether there is the apprehension of what a blessed thing it is, to submit every thought and motive, and every action of our life, to the penetrating power of that living word.

Well, I say then, if that is the case, no wonder there is not rest. If there is an absence of that water which purifies us from everything that would be unfit for the presence of Christ, I can understand how there is not rest, and I can see also the goodness of God in keeping us out from rest until there is that *fitness* for Himself by which we can *enjoy* it.

Now, when I speak of His washing our feet, let me also speak of what I do not think we sufficiently enter into, viz., not merely the removal of positive unfitness for His presence, but the *anticipation* on His part -- on the part of the blessed Lord -- of that which, if it came in and were allowed, would hinder communion. And, beloved friends, I have been struck with that lately in looking at another scripture in that light. I know we admit the fact of His *restoring* grace.

"My soul He doth restore,
Whene'er I go astray."

We admit that He washes our feet; but there are hundreds of instances in our history as saints of God which we should look on in a different character, and in a different light, if our hearts intelligently entered into how He *anticipates* in us the working of principles which *would* bring in moral distance between us and Him. He *anticipates* as well as *removes*. I will ask you to turn to the scripture to which I refer, namely, 2 Cor. 12,

And lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.

In this, you see, distance had not actually come in between Paul and Christ. The flesh had not wrought in Paul. The flesh was present to work in him; that is, there was the *basis* on which to rest distance from Christ. There were all the materials in the man, though he had been in the third heaven, on which the flesh could work. What do you find? Why this: "Lest I *should be* exalted above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh."

Now, I do not believe that occurs to our hearts with the force that it ought to have. I think we confine our thoughts to the removal of distance, when flesh *has* wrought and distance is the result, and that we do not sufficiently think of how often He prevents distance between himself and us. It would throw light, I feel assured, on many circumstances in our history -- many a path that we find ourselves in -- many a

sorrow, many a trouble, many a pressure, many a weight, many a grief, many an untoward circumstance that we had wished otherwise -- if our hearts were in the divine consciousness that there was One who had gone on high, who loves us with an eternal love, and thinks of us, and knows that there is in us a material to be worked upon, so that distance would come in, and knows exactly when to interpose. What light would shine upon us in many a dark day! Oh! what a blessed sort of love that is which not only can stoop to remove the defilement when it is there, but anticipates the working of that evil nature in me, which would introduce distance, and puts a hindrance in the way of it, and gives me the blessedness of learning what the flesh is, in communion with *God*, instead of learning it in company with *the devil*: and you must learn it in one of these two ways. If you do not learn what sort of a creature you are, in communion with *God*, as Paul did, then you will have to learn it in company with *the devil* as Peter did! How very solemn! There was then, on the apostle's part, the learning of himself, in communion with God, as you get in 2 Cor. 12; and there was the *anticipative* love of the blessed Lord. "There was given to me a *thorn* in the flesh." Blessed Savior, watchful shepherd, unfailing friend of poor, worthless things like us, but valuable to Thee as thy Father's gift, and fruit of Thine own unchanging love!

Well, now, let me ask the question again. Do you know what it is to *be fitted* now? What have we got in our hearts as to the question of this communion with God? Do we know what communion is? I fear we know very little of what real communion is -- and it is wonderful how little it seems to affect us. If I were to ask you what you know according to scripture, of common interest, common thoughts, with Christ in glory, oh, how little we should be compelled to say our hearts know it! A person may say, "I am happy every day." It is all quite true, but that is not John 13. It is entire fitness for His presence, so that everything that could hinder is removed, everything that could promote reserve completely put away through this washing of our feet by the blessed Lord. There is no hindrance now to my having perfect communion with Him where He is, and having the *rest* which follows it.

I believe, then, this accounts at once for the restlessness of saints -- they are not cleansed so as to have part with Christ. Their feet are not washed; there is moral distance between them and Him. Is it so with you tonight? Is there moral distance between any of your hearts and Christ? Are you conscious that there is a reserve between you and Christ tonight? Beloved friends, be assured of this, very little will produce it. The smallest thing unfit for Christ brings in moral distance between us and Him -- *the very* smallest thing! And what is so solemn is this, that I *may* withdraw my feet from His blessed hand, I *may* hinder, for the time being, His taking my feet, and so washing them, and applying His word. That is His part and not ours at all. I do not deny our side. I am speaking of Christ's side tonight. There must be on our part self-judgment, and all the rest, but I am speaking of the

blessed Lord's side. You may so withdraw your feet from His blessed hand, so thwart and hinder that action of His love, that the distance remains between you and Him, and He has to allow you to learn it in another way. What a wonderful moment it is for poor creatures like us! Oh, the grace of that Lord who stoops to wash our feet from everything unfit for Himself! What a wonderful moment, beloved friends! There is not a single thing, even the most trivial, that He does not remove; and this is the blessedness of His love, that it does not *pass over* anything. You can see the *selfishness* in us which passes over things, but His *love* overlooks nothing. Selfishness travels within its own circle; love sets itself to carry out the good of its object, and devotes itself to the good of its object; it thinks of its object for the best, and allows nothing, no, not the very smallest, to remain upon it, that would be unsuited to the affection. For what purpose? In order that it may gratify itself in having it according to itself! And oh, the joy of His heart -- how can one speak of it! -- how little one knows of it! the joy of His heart in having us *where* and *as* we can have communion with Him, and His a deeper joy than any joy of ours. Are you conscious of that? That it gives the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ greater pleasure to have you where He can have communion with you, than it ever could give you to be there with Him? It is this which is at the root of that simple action in John 13, the washing and wiping away of every soil which would not suit His presence and His heart. I press it, because I believe these are days when, with all the activity that is going on outside, and there is much of it -- there is every danger of our forgetting what is due to the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, remember that this is what His heart looks for. I feel it, I am satisfied of it in my soul, that what the heart of Christ longs for, as to testimony in connection with His people in these days, is, to find them here upon earth, not a people that are signalized by doing great things, performing exploits, but a people whom His God and Father can point to, and say, There are hearts that are proofs of the sufficiency and power of My Son to do everything for them. He is looking for specimens of the grace and power and sufficiency of Jesus, so that He can point poor, weary, desolate hearts to such, and say, "My Son can do for you what He has done for them." Have you got a divine sense within you that God has left you in this world to be specimens of what Christ is able to do for poor things like us; that He is able to take our hearts and fill them to overflowing, to fit them so as to enjoy Himself in that bright place where He is, and to be their eternal satisfaction and rest? The Lord give us grace, not to take ourselves out of His hand, but to be so perfectly before Him with this blessed word of His, searching every motive of our souls, that the full and blessed rest of it may be ours. Do not take your conscience from under the edge of His word! Do not be afraid to subject every thought of your heart and every movement of your soul to its penetrating power! Do not fear to let that word cut you through and through! Be afraid of that which would keep that word from you -- be afraid of all that would hinder you from subjecting yourself to the scrutinizing test of that word, but

never be afraid of the word of God. Never fear that love which thinks of nought else, but how it can do its best for you. That is the love of Jesus. The thoughts of His heart are set upon your blessing, His object we are, and how He may have us so that His joy might remain with us, and our joy might be full. Now, you observe, following this, and as a consequence of it, there is *rest*; because now there is nothing to hinder, the obstacle to it is taken out of the way, and there is *rest*. I take the fact in the record simply. There you find John putting his head upon the bosom of Jesus. Have you ever put your head upon the bosom of Jesus? Are you conscious that He has taken your feet and washed them, in order that you may rest on His bosom? You cannot rest on His bosom if your feet are not cleansed. If your feet are washed there is nothing to hinder your resting there. What a wonderful thing it is to lay the weary head there! And, beloved, let me say this, there is such largeness, such comprehensiveness in Christ, that there is room for every head of every saint.

Now I am not pressing the thing beyond its proper limit. This is a figure, I know, but I take the fact recorded, and use it as an illustration; and what I mean by putting your head upon the bosom of the Lord Jesus is this -- that you are brought so close to Him, so near to Him, that He is the perfect rest of your heart, and that you find your rest in being near Him. It is not what I get *from* Him, but Himself is my rest. If there was anything between you and Him, you could not have rest as long as it was there. The thing that your heart would dread, if there was anything between you and Christ, is, that when you got into His presence, there must needs be explanations. Therefore you find, beloved friends, how few there are really who can bear to be *alone* with Christ and God. You cannot bear to be alone with Him, unless everything is settled between you and Him. That is the reason why people dread being alone. It was when Jacob was left alone there wrestled a man with him, until the breaking of the day. It was when Joseph was alone with his brethren, and no one stood by, that he made himself known unto them.

I doubt not herein is the reason why people seek relief in the ten thousand things around, in order to avoid this solitary hour with Christ or God. But when there is nothing between us and Him, we can be alone, and we can find our rest in His company. His presence, then, is the rest of our hearts. Now that is what I mean by putting your head on His bosom. Do you know what it is? How many of us here tonight can say, "I know what it is to be *near* Him?"

There are two marks of a true soul. You will find them in Luke 7. One is, I must get near him; and the other is, I must make everything of Him. But when I speak tonight of being near Him, it is being near Him *where He is*. It is not like what we have all around us. It is not bringing Christ down here to make us comfortable with the world. That is the real effect of all that is going on around. You will find that the consciences of both saints and sinners are getting relieved to go on with the world. Oh, it is not bringing Christ down to us here, into our circumstances, to make us happy in them,

but it is Christ cleansing my feet, and washing me from everything that would be unfit for the presence of God, that there may be no hindrance to my going into *Christ's* circumstances. And if your heart ever tasted the blessedness of what it is to have company with Christ where Christ is, in those wondrous circumstances of His, you could go back, and say, "I am independent of things here." The possession of the good would fortify your heart against all the counterfeits that are around you. Another reason why people are taken in, is, they have not possessed the good. If you had the good, you would know the measure of all that is against the good, and you would not desire it. No one can truly tell, or divinely know, what is false, unless he knows what is true. You must have a standard to judge it by, because there is no such thing as knowing anything in the abstract. If you do not know the truth, you cannot know the thing that is inconsistent with it, and neither are you fortified against the error; but if you have the best, you know what is bad, and you do not want it. If I possess this wonderful common interest with Christ, I am brought into His company, His presence being the rest of my soul, and my heart knowing what it is to lie down there, according to the words of Psa. 23, which do not describe any spot in this world. There are no "green pastures" here; I should like to know where they are! You must go to heaven to find such; and, as to "still waters," here there are none. Ah! no, there is no quiet amid the tumultuous storms of things here. There is neither *verdure* nor *quietness* -- nothing but unrest and unreality. But the moment my heart knows that it is in His company, because there is nothing to hinder me from being there, then I can turn my back upon the very best things of earth; and the wares of this poor world, and the counterfeits of Satan, and all his intrigues, are at once unraveled for me. Why? Because I possess the good, and the possession of the good fortifies my heart against all that is inconsistent with it, and nothing else will do.

"Then rest, my long-divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful center, rest;
With ashes who would grudge to part,
When called on angels' food to feast?"

Let me point out one thing further. When you are near to Christ -- when your head is on His bosom, when you have that rest -- this necessarily flows from it, we are in the place to receive His communications. Do you know what it is to receive communications from the blessed Lord? Do you know what it is to be sufficiently abstracted from self and its surroundings, the world and its restlessness, and to be in the presence of Jesus, so that Jesus can communicate to you His thoughts? Let us look at it here for a moment, turning to v. 21.

When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter, therefore, beckoned to him, that he

should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto him, Lord, who is it?

There was confidence, and there was rest, to get the answer of confidence. Now what can be more simple or blessed than that? It was the one that was nearest to Christ to whom was accorded by the others the right of intimacy as a friend. Peter in the distance uses John's nearness, not only to quiet the doubts of their own minds, but also to get secrets from the heart of Christ. Peter knew well it was the one that was lying on Jesus' breast who would learn the secrets of His bosom -- the one to whom Christ would communicate. And, beloved friends, here is a matter of the utmost moment; He will not communicate to you in the distance. If you are at a distance from Christ, you can neither know His secrets nor hear His longings. I do not say He does not love you; but what His heart is set upon with reference to you, if you are in distance, is to bring you practically near, so that He may have the joy of communicating to you. This is ever His action. But when you are near, then He can communicate to you. He delights to do so. The others were not near enough to know the secrets of Christ. John was, and moreover he had confidence enough to say, "Lord, who is it?" and he was restful enough to hear Jesus give the answer. There was *nearness*, *confidence*, and *rest*. Do you know what these are? I am assured in my own heart, I feel that we make communications *to Him*, but how seldom we are sufficiently quiet, and near, and restful for Him to make communications *to us*. Alas! how seldom it is, and how little we seem to know how suitable to His nature it is, and how it delights His heart, to have us near Him, that He may keep nothing that is in His heart back from us. The Lord give us that quietness of soul before Him, and that rest of heart, that upturned ear, to catch the communications which His heart delights to make to those who are thus so nigh unto Him!

As we have had one instance of this, I will ask you to look at another, namely, ch. 21 of this gospel, and v. 7, "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith to Peter, It is the Lord." There is another effect of being near to Christ, beside what I have spoken of already, namely, that you are able to interpret every action, because you know the Person that does it: and you know the Person who is the author of the action so well, that you can link the action with Him.

But now, beloved friends, let me say this plainly, with reference to these two things. It is not being near Him *for that purpose*, or on account of that. It is not being near to Christ *in order* to get communications from Him, or *in order* to be able to say, "That is Christ," or "This is Christ"; it is being near Him for His own sake, no other motive in the heart; to put the head upon that bosom, the bosom of One who finds His pleasure in having it there, with no other motive than that which His person inspires.

I feel I have spoken feebly, beloved friends, far more feebly even than I feel; but the Lord give our hearts to have everything so entirely removed, to subject ourselves to Him, to allow Him to take our poor soiled feet in His blessed