

OpenTheo

Foot Washing, Leadership (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg explores the themes of foot washing, apostleship and the new commandment of Jesus in this discussion. While foot washing may not be a normative practice in Christianity, it teaches the principles of servanthood and humility which can be exemplified through modern-day acts of humble service. The inclusion of documents in the New Testament canon is based on their apostolic or close associate apostolic authorship and their connection to the teachings and approval of the apostles. Jesus' new commandment to love one another, as he loved us, is a duty for all Christians and it is the distinguishing factor that makes the world recognize disciples of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

I just want you to know, that would be more parallel. I mean, if there's something gross and gross that needs to be done, and somebody says, well, I'll do that, then that is washing the feet, as it were, in the cultural parallel. John? Uh-huh.

Right. The difference there, and it's a little bit like Paul's teaching about head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11. There's a variety of practices, which may have had symbolic or cultural value in the first century, which are mentioned once in the New Testament.

And they're mentioned in a form where it seems to impose a duty. Jesus says, I want you to wash each other's feet. Paul says, I want you women to wear coverings on your heads, or whatever.

But I understand, you know, this is my approach to it. Whatever is mentioned only once in Scripture, we need to be cautious about describing it as normative to the Church. There is a principle in the Old Testament that says, in the mouth of two or more witnesses, every word will be established.

And that is apparently such an important principle that that is quoted five times in the New Testament. Jesus says it in Matthew 18, and Paul says it a number of times, that in the mouth of two or more witnesses, every word should be established. And if you think about it, things like baptism and the Lord's Supper and those kinds of things, they're mentioned frequently in the Bible.

Baptism is mentioned in the Gospels. We see it practiced in the book of Acts. We see it taught about in the epistles.

And therefore, I think we'd have to say, that's normative. But if Jesus was talking in one situation to one small circle of people, his apostles, and said, I want you to wash each other's feet, to make that normative practice for all Christians is, I would just say, there's not the same kind of basis for establishing that as a biblical norm for Christianity. It could have applied only to the apostles themselves, or it could have applied to Christians in those days when foot washing really helped.

And today, you'd be doing a better service by cleaning somebody's septic tank or their bedpan or something like that in the hospital. To do something that needs to be done, which is not a pleasant duty, that's humbling to do, is far more capturing the spirit of what this is. Now, baptism and communion are some of those other things, which don't really do something practical, but have symbolic value.

I guess those are the kinds of things that we call sacraments. And different denominations have different lists of sacraments. Most Protestants have viewed baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments.

I mean, if anything is called a sacrament in Protestantism, those two things certainly are. And other denominations have other things they add to the list. I think what I'd have to say is, if something is of a sacramental quality, it is basically something that has spiritual and symbolic value.

And it is something that is not in itself a moral issue. It's not like murder and adultery and thieving are moral questions. It's more like something that's done just because we're told to do it.

It doesn't necessarily help anyone or hurt anyone. It's done because God wants it done, and we do it just because we're commanded, and that's all. And some have understood that these are means of grace, too, that when we perform these things, there's a certain grace given to us as a result of it.

But if foot-washing is one of those things, it has very little biblical basis to establish it. Whereas baptism and some of these other things that are symbolic, and you don't get baptized because you need it for practical reasons. You need it for obedience reasons.

You want to obey Jesus Christ. And the same thing with communion or whatever. Foot-washing, if it was an important sacrament or an important symbolic practice in the church for all time, we'd probably see it done in the book of Acts.

Now, there is a reference to washing the saints' feet in one of the epistles. In 1 Timothy chapter 5, when Paul is talking about the women who were to be added to the role of widows that were to be supported by the church, he gave a set of qualifications, and he

said, you know, if she's been a wife of one husband only, if she's been hospitable, if she's washed the saints' feet, it says, that's in 1 Timothy chapter 5. Let's see here. Let's see where he's given the qualifications there.

That's verse 10, yeah. She has to be well-reported for good works if she's brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work. Now, if she has washed the saints' feet, I take to mean if she has been a servant of the brethren.

She might even have literally washed their feet. But these things are not things that are done because, I mean, look at the list of things. They're not done because they're commanded to be done.

They're done because they are expressions of love and true virtue. You know, being reported for good works, bringing up children, lodging strangers, being hospitable, washing the feet, relieving the afflicted. These are not symbolic gestures.

These are just practical servanthood, you know, to the church. And in those days, of course, people needed to be served by having their feet washed once in a while. So anyway, I'm certainly not trying to put down people who practice foot washing.

They're certainly within their rights with my blessing to do it. I just don't see it like they might as being something Jesus commanded to be done in that way throughout all generations for all time. So much as saying more, do the lowly job.

Do the humiliating job. If you want to be a leader, don't just go for the glory. Go for the servanthood and the lowly, humble servanthood.

And that's what I understand to be his teaching here. Yeah, and a few minutes ago, another thought came to me that was perhaps another modern day kind of illustration of this. Oh, I was thinking of Eric Little.

If you saw the movie Chariots of Fire, Eric Little was an Olympic runner. I think the 100 meters is what he ran or something in, what was it, 1922 or 1920, the Olympic Games? I don't know which year it was. It was way back then.

And he made international news because he refused to, he was the fastest runner in the United Kingdom. And he'd won every race he'd ever run against anybody, anywhere. And he was on his way across the English Channel to France to run in the Olympic Games for his country.

And he heard as he was boarding the ship that the initial heats for that race were going to be held on Sunday. And he was a strong, I don't know what his denomination was, but he was Scottish, so I don't know, Presbyterian probably. But he believed Sunday to be the Sabbath, and he felt that running on the Sabbath was a sin and he wouldn't do it.

And he made international news because here he's Great Britain's greatest runner, and he's not going to run. Because the French won't change the day of the heats, and he's not going to run on Sunday. He won't violate his conscience.

Anyway, that's what that movie was about, Chariots of Fire, and I imagine many of you have seen it. But what the movie doesn't go on to tell is about his destiny or his fate. After he won the gold medal at the French Olympics, by the way, they switched races so that he was able to run another race that he didn't have to run on Sunday.

But after he won the gold medal at the Olympics, he went to China as a missionary. He had been born on the mission field in China, and he went back to China. And I guess it was during World War II, the Japanese invaded China and did horrible things to the Chinese people there.

But all foreigners, Westerners and so forth, were rounded up into detention camps. And Eric Little spent his final years in one of these Japanese detention camps in China during World War II. And he died of something like a brain aneurysm or something.

But those who knew him in the camp have left biographical details about his life that are interesting. For instance, there was, in the detention camp, a latrine, which the drains were clogged up, and the Japanese gave it no attention. They didn't send any plumbers in, and the thing just filled up.

I guess the door had a stoop, you had to step over to get into it. So there was maybe a few feet or 18 inches or something that just got full of human excrement. And nobody wanted to go in there.

And he, Eric Little, just went in there. Every time it got full, he'd go in there and go wading through the stuff and shovel it out and clean it out himself. And he'd do so cheerfully and singing.

And everyone loved him because he was so humble and so willing to do that kind of work. And that's more like a modern-day foot washer, I think. The whole camp needs a place to go in to relieve themselves, and they can't go in there unless they want to wade knee-deep in other people's stuff.

And so he goes in there, and he takes it on. And he does it himself. That's, to my mind, analogous to what Jesus did in this story.

Okay, let's go on here. Verse 16. Most assuredly I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.

If you know these things, happy are you if you do them. I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen, but that the Scripture may be fulfilled.

He who eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am he. Most assuredly I say to you, he who receives whomever I send, receives me.

And he who receives me, receives him who sent me. Now, there is a hint here of Judas going to betray Jesus there in verse 18. He says, I do not speak concerning all of you.

I know whom I have chosen, but that the Scripture may be fulfilled. He who eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me. This Scripture that he is quoting is Psalm 41:9. But most of this section we read, verses 16-20, are not about Judas.

He does start talking directly about Judas in verse 21. But he is talking about the apostles as ones who are sent. Now the statement in verse 20, most assuredly I say to you, he who receives whomever I send, receives me.

Is, to my mind, one of the principal verses of Scripture that established for us the canon of the New Testament. Now you might say, how so? Well, when we talk about the canon of the New Testament, of course the word canon refers to the accepted documents that belong to the Scriptures. The canon of the Old Testament, made up of 39 books, was established in the first century or before.

And the Jews had an established canon of Scripture, and Jesus affirmed it. Jesus quoted from it. He called it Scripture.

He quoted the law, the prophets, the writings, the Psalms. And therefore we know that Jesus approved of the selection of books that were in the Old Testament canon. But the question has been raised, how do we know that the 27 books in our New Testament are the right books to be in there? After all, the canon of Scripture of the New Testament wasn't really established until late in the fourth century.

The majority of the books of the New Testament were fairly universally recognized at the end of the second century. But there were several books like Hebrews, 2 Peter, Revelation, and a few others, James and Jude, that were not universally accepted in the Church until almost the end of the fourth century. It was about, I think it was the year 393 AD that they finally universally acknowledged the 27 books that we now have in our New Testament as canonical.

Or as belonging to the canon. But even so, people sometimes wonder, why those ones? How do we know that the people who chose those books, who took three centuries to do it, how do we know that their decisions were right? On what basis is a book considered canonical in the New Testament? Now, we don't have to ask those kinds of questions about the Old Testament, because Jesus himself affirmed the canon of the Old Testament. But Jesus wasn't around after he left here and when the New Testament writings were written.

He wasn't around to affirm which books belonged and which didn't. We know that, for example, a lot of other early Christian documents were written at the time. Some of them have survived, but don't belong in our New Testament.

The basis for inclusion of a book in the New Testament, in my opinion, is that it is apostolic. And that means it was written by one who was an apostle. Or by somebody who wrote under the supervision of an apostle.

Someone who was a close associate of an apostle and who therefore wrote things approved by the apostles. Of course, Mark was not an apostle, but he wrote under Peter. We know that Luke was not an apostle.

He wrote Luke and Acts. But he was a constant traveling companion with Paul. And therefore could never have written his books without close supervision from his mentor, who was with him all the time.

And there are a few other books like that. James was not one of the twelve apostles, though Paul called James an apostle in Galatians. And therefore we accept the book of James.

Jude was not an apostle, but he was the brother of James and the brother of Jesus. It would appear in some connection, a relative of Jesus. And he was therefore close enough to consider his book as canonical.

And it is really this connectedness to an apostle that makes the individual documents of the New Testament earn their place or warrant a place in the New Testament. But why should that be so? What's so special about the apostles? Who's to say that these guys didn't make any mistakes? Why should something be included as scripture just because the apostles wrote it? Well, this is why. Jesus said in verse 20, Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send, receives me.

Now, there's a sense in which Christians all have been sent. I mean, the church has been sent into all the world to preach the gospel and so forth. And we could see ourselves in this, but not rightly so.

I remember I was raised in a Protestant denomination that tended to take all these things universally of all Christians. And I remember, you know, I'd read a passage like this. And when Jesus said, for instance, in John 20, in verse 22 or 20, whatever it is right around there, He said, as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.

See, that's John 20, verse 23. No? Verse 21. Then Jesus said to them, again, peace to you.

As the Father has sent me, I also send you. I remember hearing sermons all my life. Missionary sermons about, you know, how we all ought to be able to go on a mission.

Because Jesus said, as the Father sent me, so send I you. And you meant all of us in the sermon, at least in the preacher's mind. And by the way, I'm not trying to say that some of us aren't sent out to be missionaries, but I believe these words apply to the apostles particularly.

And the reason for it is that in verse 16, when Jesus said, Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is no greater than his master, nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. Well, he who is sent, the word sent there, or the word he who is sent, is one word in the Greek, it's apostolos. It's the Greek word for apostle.

So he actually says, nor is the apostle greater than he who sent him. And the word sent, at the end of verse 16, is the same Greek word as in verse 20. He who receives him that I send.

In the context, the ones who are being sent are the apostles. I just ran across this this morning by accident. I was not aware at the time I found this that I was preparing for today's lecture.

I was reading, this book's called Inerrancy and Hermeneutic, a Tradition, a Challenge, a Debate, edited by Harvey M. Kahn. Not exactly a bestseller, and it's a compendium of writings about different issues in hermeneutics and inerrancy of scripture. But I was just looking at the chapters, just to, you know, bide my time.

I found a chapter called The New Testament is Canon. I thought that looks interesting, so I was reading it this morning. And I ran across this passage, which was very helpful.

In fact, it even quotes this verse. You know, I thought, wow, this is very opportune. Because I had no concept that when I opened this book I was going to find anything relevant to what I say today.

But this scholar who wrote this particular treatise here, his name is what? Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. Don't even know who he is, some Presbyterian, I think. But he wrote this little section on the meaning of the word apostle. Let me just read you a little bit here.

He says, the Greek noun apostolos, related to much more common verb apostelo, to send or send out, refers in general to a messenger or, more formally, to an envoy or delegate. Traditionally, then, the New Testament apostle has been understood primarily as a religious figure, like a missionary, someone sent to communicate the gospel. That understanding, no doubt, has a large element of truth.

More recently, however, studies in the background of the New Testament have shed new light on the figure of the apostle in the New Testament. In particular, a line has been drawn to the figure of the *Salia* in the intertestamental Judaism. In fact, that relationship and the extent to which the latter influenced the former continue to be debated.

But that debate does not have to be settled here for us to recognize that the Jewish institution does at least serve as a backdrop to illumine an important point of New Testament teaching about apostolicity. In the Judaism contemporary to the writing of the New Testament, the Salia, from the Hebrew word sala, to send, has a significance that is legal, not religious. The Salia is someone authorized to execute a task in the interests of another person or group.

The contents of this commission can vary greatly, from economic tasks like the carrying out of a business deal to social activities like arranging a marriage. The fact of his authorization, rather than a particular content, distinguishes the Salia. He is an authorized, authoritative representative, akin to someone today who exercises power of attorney.

Furthermore, the Salia was identified fully with the one who commissioned him. In some instances, he was free to take initiatives in discharging his commission. This full authority, the fullness of empowered representation, is reflected in the Talmudic formula that a man's Salia is the same as himself.

Something of this background is reflected in the figure of the Apostle in the New Testament. In John 13, 12 through 20, the issue of authority is prominent. The point, paradoxically, is the authority to serve others, exemplified in Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

The focus of verse 16 is the derivative nature of the Apostle's authority. No servant is greater than his master, nor is an apostolos, apostle, greater than the one who sent him. Verse 20 not only expresses this point of derivation, but accents the identification of the sender and the one sent.

Quote, whoever accepts one who I send, accepts me, and whoever accepts me, accepts the one who sent me. Anyway, that's a long thing. I don't usually read so much out of a book, but that was news to me.

I didn't know about the Salia. And it's interesting that in the Talmud, which was, of course, the product of intertestinal Jewish traditions, the Salia is said to have an authority from the person who authorized him, who sent him. That is so much like the one who sent him that it can be said a man's Salia is himself, or is as himself.

Now, the Apostle Paul, for example, in stressing his apostleship, often indicated that he could act as it were as if he were Christ. In 2 Corinthians 2, I believe it is, I think I can find it here. Oh, wrong book, 1 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 2. Look at verse 10, 2 Corinthians 2.10. Now, whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ. Now, the word presence of Christ can be translated

person of Christ, and some translations have rendered it so.

So, he says something like, I forgive that person for your sakes in the person of Christ. As if Paul is standing in for Christ and declaring this man forgiven, as if Christ had done so. Now, of course, in some traditions, those powers are relegated to church officers.

But I don't know of any church officer since the time of the 12 Apostles who had apostolic authority. Now, I realize there are some different groups. Not only Roman Catholics, but certain Pentecostal groups and so forth recognize modern apostolic authority.

This is an area which is debated among different groups. But I personally don't think anybody who has ever lived since the 12 Apostles has ever had quite the authority that they have had. Now, one may differ on that point, but the thing to mention is, that in verse 20, Jesus said, Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send, and that is in the context of him sending his apostles as agents, as envoys, as having the power of attorney to speak on his behalf, receives me.

And he compares that with the authority he had from his father. He said, and he who receives me, receives him who sent me. Now, a moment ago, I read to you John 20, verse 21, where Jesus said to the apostles, As the Father has sent me, so send I you.

Now, in that passage as well as this one, Jesus speaks of his sending the apostles, and he compares it with the Father's sending him. He makes it sound almost like the two kinds of sending are equal. Because, as the Father sent me, or in the same way that the Father sent me, in that way, I am sending you, he said to his apostles.

Which means, well, in what way did the Father send Jesus? Jesus, in the book of Hebrews, is referred to the apostle, the high priest and the apostle of our profession. Jesus is an apostle. He is an apostle of his Father.

He is the envoy, the authorized agent of his Father. And whatever he spoke, his Father authorized him to speak. And he was authorized to speak as if he were God.

He was, in fact, God. But, in terms of his role as the Son of Man speaking to men on earth, his authority was equal to that of his Father. Because he was an apostle, an envoy, a sent one from his Father.

And he said, in the same way that my Father sent me, I'm sending you, apostles. And therefore, he was saying, to receive you guys is to receive me. And that is where we get back to this idea of New Testament canon.

How do we decide which book should be and which book should not be in the New Testament? Well, obviously, if Jesus had ever written a book, and he never did, we don't have any record of Jesus ever writing anything except something in the dust on the

temple floor in John chapter 8. But, Jesus left us no written documents. But, if he had written anything, we clearly would want to put that in the New Testament. That would clearly be scripture to us, if Jesus wrote it.

But, if the apostles wrote it, it's as if Jesus wrote it. Because to receive their teaching is to receive his. And no one can reject their teaching without rejecting him.

Because those who receive him that I send, receives me. Now, this is why I don't personally think that this particular promise that Jesus makes in John 13, 20, is made beyond the apostolic group. I don't believe it's general to all of us.

Because I can't say that. I can't say to you, if you receive me, you've received Christ. I mean, in one sense that's true, but not at all the sense that he meant here.

I mean, Jesus did say, whoever receives a little child in my name, receives me. So, I mean, in a sense, to receive anyone who's a Christian is to receive Christ, in a sense. But not in the special apostolic sense that this context is talking about in verse 16, where actually the one who is sent isn't the apostolos.

The envoy, the official, Salia. The one who has power of attorney. Because, if I speak to you and I say, listen, this is what you should believe.

You have the right to reject what I say. Because I have no absolute authority. But if the apostle says, this is what you should believe.

If you don't receive that, you're not receiving Christ. And, therefore, the apostles had special authorization from Christ to speak for him. And this actually shifts the issue of New Testament canonization of books from the focus on inspiration to the focus of apostolicity.

What I mean by that is the Old Testament books were chosen to be canonized because of inspiration. It was understood that they were written by prophets or prophetically gifted men who received revelation and inspiration from God. And, therefore, their words were inspired.

Well, the apostles also received revelation and inspiration of God. We don't know, because they don't say, to what extent inspiration was actively involved at the time they wrote. I personally accept the New Testament writings as inspired, but that's not the issue.

The issue is, are they apostolic? Because even if it were demonstrated, as I don't think it ever could be, but even if it were demonstrated that some writing in the New Testament was not inspired, if it was nonetheless apostolic, that's all that matters. To receive it from an apostle is to receive it from Christ. And that is why apostolicity is the criterion, I believe, for the selection of books in the New Testament.

If the New Testament book is written by an apostle or by a close associate of the apostles and clearly reflects what the apostles approved of and taught, then it is apostolic and, therefore, canonical. And I base that largely on this passage in John, which Jesus uttered to the apostles. Verse 21.

When Jesus had said these things, he was troubled in spirit and testified and said, Most assuredly I say to you, one of you will betray me. Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom he spoke. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, who happens to be the narrator of this story.

Simon Peter, therefore, motioned to him, that is to John, to ask who it was of whom he spoke. By the way, how do I know that the one leaning on Jesus' bosom, the one whom Jesus loved, that that's the narrator, that that's John the writer here? Well, let me just establish that point since I made it without defending it. Let me just establish that for you real quick here.

Look at John chapter 21. John 21, verse 20. Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on Jesus' breast at the supper and said, Lord, who is it who will betray you? That's referring back to this passage in John 13 we're now reading.

That's the guy that Peter looked back and saw. And Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, But Lord, what about this man? And Jesus said to him, If I will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me. Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die.

Meaning John would not die or the disciple whom Jesus loved would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die. But if I will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? This is the disciple who testifies of these things and wrote these things.

So the disciple whom Jesus loved, who leaned on Jesus' breast at the table, is the disciple who testified and wrote the book we're reading. That's what he says. So if that was John, and that seems to be the only sensible conclusion, then Peter, when Jesus said, Somebody's going to betray me, Peter turns to John, who apparently was between him and Jesus.

Or else Peter would have just turned to Jesus himself, because I'm sure that he would have felt the liberty to ask Jesus directly, rather than asking John to ask him for him. But apparently in the seating arrangement at the table, John was between Jesus and Peter. And so Peter says to John, You know, ask him.

Ask him who it is that he's speaking about. And verse 25, Then leaning back on Jesus' breast, he, John, said to him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it. And having dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas

Iscaiot, the son of Simon.

Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, What you do, do quickly. But no one at the table knew for what reason he said this to him.

For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, Buy those things that we need for the feast, or that he should give something to the poor. Having received a piece of bread, he then went out immediately, and it was night. Judas did.

Now, it might seem strange when Jesus gave such a direct answer to the question, Who is it, Lord? He said, Well, it's the one I'm going to dip this bread and give it to. And he gives it to Judas. It seems like everybody would then know that Judas was the one.

And yet when Judas went out, most of them didn't have a clue what he was going out for. They still didn't suspect Judas. They still thought that Judas was a trusted one going out on an errand for Jesus.

How is it that they remained in ignorance after this? I think we have to assume that when John leaned back on Jesus and said, Who is it, Lord? That Jesus spoke it very quietly to John and said, It's the one I'm going to give this to. And so John alone recognized the signal. That Jesus told John.

Now whether John passed that on to Peter, who had asked the question in the first place, we don't know. But the other apostles didn't have a clue. And when Judas took the bread and left, they just figured he was out going on another spending spree.

Buying food for the feast or maybe going to give it to the poor. It is probably not only literal but partly symbolic in verse 31. It says that when Judas went out, it was night.

That would be true, of course, literally true. But in all likelihood, there's a suggestion there that Judas, in leaving him, who was the son of righteousness, went out into perpetual night. And in a perpetual darkness.

So when he had gone out, Jesus said, Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and glorify him immediately. Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer.

You will seek me. And as I said to the Jews, where I'm going, you cannot come. So now I say to you, a new commandment I give to you.

That you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples. If you have love one for another.

Now, is this command only to the apostles or to all? I think it's quite obvious that this command to love one another is to all, not just apostles, but all disciples. And remember

that the word disciples is simply the word that was later replaced with the word Christian in the book of Acts. Disciples and Christians are co-extensive terms with reference to their range of meaning.

Besides, John, later writing his epistle in 1 John, speaks to the church as if this commandment Jesus gave to love one another is all of ours. Tonight we're going to have a study in 1 John at the Friday night meeting. And we'll probably come to one of those passages where John says it.

But it's very clear that John, who was in the room when this commandment was given, later passed it on to the entire church when he wrote 1 John and said that this is the duty of Christians generally. This is the command that we have from him that we love one another. It's repeated many times in 1 John.

So, the commandment is to us all. It's the commandment of the king. It's the kingdom law.

Now, why does Jesus call it a new commandment? After all, there was back in Leviticus the command to love your neighbors yourself. And Jesus had even called attention to that during his earlier ministry. He said that was one of the great commandments was to love your neighbors yourself.

Why does he now say I'm giving a new commandment as if they never heard it before? Well, if you'll notice, he doesn't here say love your neighbors yourself. He says love one another as I have loved you. Now, there's a difference between the way we love ourselves and the way that he loves us.

To love your neighbor as you love yourself is like what John the Baptist said. He who has two coats, give one to him who has none. You got two coats, two people.

But only one person has two coats. One doesn't have any. You take one of those coats, give it to someone who has none.

Then you're equal. You treat the person just like yourself. You don't put yourself below them or above them.

You just treat them the way you treat yourself. You want to own a coat, and you should therefore want them to own a coat. But Jesus didn't treat us as equals.

He made himself servant of all. He put himself below us and gave his life up for us. And this is a higher degree of love.

It's treating your brother above yourself, not as yourself. And that is the kind of love that Jesus made possible by the giving of his spirit. And he said in verse 35, this is the signal to everyone that you are in fact his disciple.

If you have love one for another. There are no other indicators to the world that we are disciples of Jesus Christ. It has nothing to do with what church we go to.

Because many people go to every church who don't know Jesus. It doesn't matter what denomination you choose. You'll find people there who don't know Jesus and who are not his disciples.

It has nothing to do with perfection, personal perfection, or religiosity. It has to do with one thing, love. This is how men will know that you are my disciples.

If you have love one for another. And if the world doesn't see us loving each other the way Jesus loved us, laying down our lives for each other, washing each other's feet as it were, then we can't really claim that they ought to recognize us as Christians at all. And that is where the church often has failed.

Instead of measuring Christianity by the standard Jesus set as the measure, other more religious factors have been made the measure and that's not what Jesus did. Jesus didn't start a religion. He started a family.

Jesus never held church with his apostles as near as we can tell. No record of it. He just was with them all the time.

He expected them to love one another, to love him as he loved them. It was a family of love that he started. He never started as near as we can tell a religion.

Christianity became a religion considerably later, some centuries later. Okay, now verse 36. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him, where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you shall follow me afterwards.

And Peter said to him, Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for your sake. This doesn't mean that Peter knew that Jesus was talking about dying. He just felt like Jesus was talking about going somewhere that maybe was too dangerous to take the apostles along.

And Peter said, I'll go with you anyway because I'm not afraid of any danger. I'll even lay my life down for you if necessary. And Jesus answered him, will you lay your life down for my sake? Most assuredly I say to you, the rooster shall not crow until you have denied me three times.

And the discussion goes on into the next chapter. So we're going to have to stop there and we'll continue the Upper Room Discourse next time. We've simply run out of time.

So we've covered this chapter. We'll have three more chapters of this to cover in the next couple of sessions. Are there any questions?