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# “Lord, Do You Wash My Feet?”

*“So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, ‘Lord, do You wash my feet?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter.’ Peter said to Him, ‘Never shall You wash my feet!’ Jesus answered him, ‘If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.’ Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.’ Jesus said to him, ‘He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.’ For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, ‘Not all of you are clean’” (John 13:6–11).*

In that upper room on Thursday night, as our Lord prepared His apostles for His death and departure from this earth, He arose, took off His outer tunic, girded Himself with a servant’s towel, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the apostles’ feet. This gracious deed that exhibited the truest humility must have profoundly affected everyone in the room. A silence no doubt fell over the Twelve, and every heart must have been captivated by what Jesus was doing.

The event perhaps had been preceded by a discussion of who would be the greatest in the kingdom, Jesus’ description of what true greatness actually is, and a quiet expectation of the apostles for one of them to rise and perform this simple courtesy. As this tense situation continued, as each one looked to someone else to humble himself and serve the others, Jesus arose and began washing everyone’s feet.

We do not know where Jesus started. Was it with Judas? Was it with Peter? We cannot be sure. From John’s record, we do know that when Jesus came to Peter, He met a resistant heart. Peter said, “Lord, I cannot permit you to wash my feet.” Perhaps Peter could not entertain the thought of Jesus, his Master, serving him in this way. Jesus replied, “Peter, if you will not let Me wash your feet, you have no part of Me.” He implied, “You will understand more about Me and what I am trying to teach you later.” Peter, going to the other extreme, then said, “Lord, if that is the case, I want You to wash all of me!” Jesus brought Peter back to the center of truth as He said, in effect, “One bathes in the morn-

ing and is clean as he faces the day. Throughout the day, he does not need to bathe again, but he will need at times to wash his feet.”

From Jesus’ conversation with Peter important lessons emerge. Let us look again at their interchange and ask the question “What do we learn about Jesus from this scene?”

*The first truth that surfaces from this interaction is the truth that we will know much more about Jesus later. We see progression in learning. Our journey with Jesus is an ever-ascending experience. At various points along the way, we come to a more complete knowledge of who Jesus is and what His plan of action is. He said to Peter, “What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter” (John 13:7). It must be that our Lord was referring to His cross in these words. After Jesus’ death, Peter would be able to grasp more firmly why He had come. His death for our sins was the greatest servant-act that the world would ever know. His cross showed the condescending nature and servant-attitude of God Himself. Surely, no one can look at the events of the cross and conclude that God is a self-serving God. Altruistic love emanates from Him.*

Jesus was telling Peter, “Take My word for it now. Do what I am asking you to do, but anticipate greater knowledge of My plan in the immediate future.” No one, not Peter or anyone else, has been given complete knowledge at the beginning or at any point on the spiritual road that must be traveled with Jesus.

*The second realization that arises from this scene is the awareness that our relationship with*

*Jesus is built upon submission to His leadership and lifestyle.* We see participation and partnership in living. Jesus quickly told Peter, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (John 13:8b). Although Peter did not understand everything that was happening, he still needed to be a part of what Jesus was doing. Submission to Jesus demanded that this be so. Jesus was the Master, and Peter was the servant; Jesus was the Teacher, and Peter was the student. Peter would be required to fulfill assignments even when he did not understand the purpose of the assignments, the value of the exercise, or the importance of the time-frame.

Close to the center of following Jesus is submission to His leadership. We are His followers. We are *Christ-ians*. His lifestyle has become ours. We are not in the dark about everything; but when we are confused about what we should do next, we should just imitate Him or do what He asks us to do. It is hard to get lost if all we have to do is travel down a straight road.

*A third lesson that we must learn from this episode is that we need continual cleansing.* We see perpetuity and persistence in salvation. We first come to Him; at the time of our coming, we get the complete bath. Then, as we follow Him, our feet are washed daily.

When Peter heard that if he did not allow his feet to be washed by Jesus he would not have any part in Him, his reaction was "If that is the case, please wash all of me! I want to be fully connected to You." Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you" (see John 13:9, 10). Peter was clean, but he did not fully understand the purification he had received. His coming to Jesus resulted in a complete washing, as a bath provides for a person who is preparing for the day. Then continual, periodic purging would be required to maintain the cleansing that he had received. Everyone among them was bath-clean except

Judas. Jesus said, "You are clean, but not all of you." John added, "For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, 'Not all of you are clean'" (John 13:10, 11). Judas had lost the complete, initial cleansing that he received when he came to Jesus. He needed a thorough bath, but the rest of the apostles needed only a foot-washing.

We come to Christ through the bestowal of His wonderful salvation, and we receive total cleansing so that our sins and iniquities are remembered against us no more. Then, daily, as we walk in the Light, we experience constant, continual cleansing (1 John 1:7).

As we review the life of Jesus, we look, listen, and learn. In that upper room, when Jesus proceeded to wash His apostles' feet, we enter in thought into the Master/servant relationship. We come to understand that walking with Jesus means constantly learning about Jesus' life. We see and understand, but later we will understand even more. Sometimes discipleship means following Jesus when we half understand or when we do not understand. Through imitation, we let His example lead us.

Jesus' words likewise point us to the necessity of continual cleansing. We have sinned, but Jesus has forgiven us; we will sin, and Jesus will forgive us. He has been, is, and will be our Savior. Let us come to Him; then, let us follow Him, ever learning, ever growing, and ever imitating His nature.

Eddie Cloer



*"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30, 31).*