

Lessons from the Gospel of John (14): Life's Washing in Love to Maintain Fellowship

Bible reading

You may find it helpful to also read the entire case found in John 13:1-38.

John 13:3-5, 14

3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all into His hands and that He had come forth from God and was going to God,

4 Rose from supper and laid aside His outer garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself;

5 Then He poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

Introduction

At the end of John chapter 12, we saw how Christ as the divine life came to bring God into man by regenerating man's spirit to produce the church as His increase. However, we continue to live in the flesh on earth and can easily be contaminated by our contact with earthly things. This dirtying frustrates our fellowship in life with the Lord and with other believers; therefore, we need another kind of cleansing, a washing in love by the divine life to maintain our relationship with God and with one another.

Bible study reading

Please prayerfully read through the following portions of ministry related to this lesson.

We come to John 13, a very interesting and meaningful chapter. Probably all Christians know that such a chapter about the Lord's washing of the disciples' feet exists in the Gospels. It seems easy for anyone to understand this chapter, but actually it is not at all easy to realize its true meaning. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 27, section 1)

Do you know when the Jews washed their feet? They washed their feet especially when they came to a feast. A feast is a center for fellowship. At that time the Jews wore sandals, and since their roads were dusty, their feet easily became dirty. If, when they came to a feast, they would have sat at the table with dirty, outstretched feet, the dirt and smell would have frustrated the fellowship. Therefore, for a pleasant feast they needed foot-washing.

Since this is a sign, the significance of foot-washing is that it is for fellowship with the Lord and with one another. If you just come and stretch out your feet without washing, the fellowship between you and others will be hindered. While we are in this world, we touch the earth day by day. This earth we touch makes us dirty and hinders the fellowship with the Lord and with one another. Therefore, foot-washing means that while we are still on this earth, the Lord as the life-giving Spirit washes our feet, that is, the Lord always keeps our walk clean from every kind of dirt

due to the earthly touch. Today we must realize that the Lord is eager to wash and keep us clean from the dirt that we gather from our contact with the earth. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 27, section 3)

Many times you are not sinful, but you are dirty. Dust is everywhere. How easy it is to get dirty. While you are living on earth, even if you sit there without moving, you will become dirty. This earth is full of dirt. Thus, in doing anything, you will get dirty. Even as you are driving down the street on the way to the meeting, your eyes may accidentally see something that causes you to become dirty. Before you got into the car, your spirit was living and uplifted, but after driving for ten minutes, although you had no intention of seeing anything, simply by seeing certain things on the way to the meeting place you were dirtied and your spirit went down. For things that are sinful we need the cleansing of the blood, but for things that are dirty and not sinful we need the spiritual washing. We need a washing by the Holy Spirit, the living Word, and the inner life.

You need to spend time in the Lord's presence. Remain in the Lord's presence, and the Lord will come to you and wash you, not with the blood, but with the Spirit, the living Word, and the inner life. It is difficult to say just when He completes this washing. Sometimes it takes only a few minutes to wash the dirt away; at other times it may take half a day. Whenever you are in need of such a washing, just open yourself up to the Lord as you spend time in His presence, and allow the inner life to flow within you. Spontaneously, something living will flow, water, and wash you, and you will become clean again. Your spirit will be uplifted, and your whole being will be so pleasant in the Lord's presence. This is the washing with the living water in the presence of the Lord. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 27, section 4)

Going deeper

Please read or listen to these materials for an in-depth study of this lesson.

Further reading:

[*Life-study of John*, msg. 27](#)

Radio broadcast link:

Broadcast 31, [*Life's Washing in Love to Maintain Fellowship \(1\)*](#)

Footnotes from Recovery Version of the New Testament:

John 13:4, footnotes 1 and 3

John 13:5, footnotes 1-3

Questions for personal or corporate study:

References in brackets indicate readings or broadcasts that may be helpful in answering the questions.

- What is the true meaning of foot-washing revealed in this chapter? (Broadcast 31)
- What are the three significances of the water used to wash the disciples' feet? (John 13:5, footnote 1)
- Why do we need the Lord to wash our feet, and how do we practically experience this in our spiritual life? (*Life-study of John*, msg. 27)

Next week

Life's Indwelling for the Building of God's Habitation (1)—The Father's House (Part 1)

In our spirit we Christians are heavenly, eternal, and spiritual, but in our physical body we are still in the flesh and in the old creation. In order to maintain our fellowship with the Lord and with one another, we need to be washed daily by the Lord's life and be filled with this life so that we could wash one another's feet. Chapter 13 is also a major turning point in the book of John. Up until now, we have seen that Christ was incarnated to bring God into man to be our life and life supply. Next week we will see that this wonderful Christ was crucified and resurrected to prepare the way to bring man into God for the building of God's eternal habitation.

Works Cited

Lee, Witness. *Life-study of John*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1985. www.ministrybooks.org

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