

The Gospel of John 13:1-17

I Life's Washing In Love To Maintain Fellowship By the Lord Himself

- A. In this Gospel, the first section, chs.1-13, describes how the Lord as God Himself, as the Son of God, came through His incarnation to bring God into man that He might be man's life for the producing of the assembly. The second section, chs.14-21, describes how the Lord as the Son of Man went through His death and resurrection to bring man into God that man and God, God and man, might be built together as a mutual abode. This chapter, coming at the end of the first section, is a dividing line and a turning point.
- B. Because He loved His own to the uttermost, the Lord washed the disciples' feet. Hence, the foot washing is a matter of love, a love to the uttermost. Without this action, the Lord's love toward us would not have been to the uttermost but would have fallen short of our need. This shows the importance of foot washing. This is our uttermost need. In the nine foregoing cases, the Lord has met all our needs. After all this, we still have the need of foot washing. Therefore, the Lord has to take care of this by showing us His love to the God uttermost.
- C. The reason the Lord washed the disciples' feet was because He knew "that the Father had given all into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going to God" (v.3). The "all" that the Father had given Him was mainly the disciples, His coming forth from God had brought God into His disciples, and in His going to God He was to leave these disciples. The Father had given the disciples, and the Lord had brought God into them, but now He was going to leave them. By His coming forth from God and His bringing God into them, a relationship between the disciples and God, in Him, came into existence. Now He was going to leave them. After He had left them, how could this relationship between the disciples and God be maintained? It is to be maintained by the foot washing. Foot washing is to wash away from the feet all the dirt that frustrates the fellowship of the relationship between God and man. In doing it, the Lord showed His disciples the way for them to maintain their relationship with God in Him.
- D. Garments here signify the virtues and attributes expressed by the Lord. Hence, the laying aside of His garments signifies the putting off of what He is as manifested in His expression. To gird oneself signifies to be bound and restricted with humility.
- E. The Lord washed the disciples' feet with water (v.5). Here water signifies the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5), the Word (Eph. 5:26; John 15:3), and the life (John 19:34)...The Lord washes us spiritually by the working of the Holy Spirit, by the enlightening of the Word, and by the operating of the inner law of life. In the Scriptures, each of these three items is symbolized by water....Today we must realize the Lord is eager to wash and keep us clean from the dirt that we gather from our contact with the earth.
- F. In ancient times the Jews wore sandals, and since their roads were dusty, their feet easily became dirty. If, when they came to a feast and sat at the table, they stretched out their feet, which were dirty and foul-smelling, the fellowship would be frustrated. Hence, for the feast to be pleasant they needed foot washing. The Lord washed His disciples' feet to show them that He loved them to the uttermost (v.1), and He charged them to do the same to one another in love (vv. 14, 34). Today the world is dirty, and we the saints are easily contaminated. For us to maintain pleasant fellowship with the Lord and with one another, we need spiritual foot washing—with the washing Holy Spirit, the washing word, and the washing life—carried out by the Lord in His love and by one another in love. This is absolutely necessary in order for us to live in the fellowship of the divine life, which is revealed in the First Epistle of John, a continuation of the Gospel of John.
- G. In chs.1-12 life came and brought forth the assembly, composed of the regenerated ones. In their spirit the regenerated ones are in God and in the heavenlies, but in their body they are still living in the flesh and walking on the earth. Through their contact with earthly things they are often contaminated. This frustrates their fellowship with the Lord and with one another. Hence, there is the need for the washing with the Holy Spirit, the word, and life. Foot washing is not the washing away of their sins by the blood (1John 1:9), rather it is the washing away of their contamination, that their fellowship with the Lord and with one another may be maintained.

II Life's Washing In Love To Maintain Fellowship By The Believers.

- A. We not only need the foot washing that is exercised directly by the Lord Himself, but also the mutual foot washing of one another. The Lord told us to wash one another's feet. We must wash one another's feet by ministering the enlightenment of the Word, and by ministering the operation of the inner life....Whenever we brothers come together for fellowship and prayer, we need to minister the spiritual foot washing to one another. It is the spiritual foot washing ministered to one another that keeps us clean from the earthly touch....While you are walking and working on this earth, you not only need the Lord's foot washing ministered directly within your spirit but also the foot washing from the brothers and sisters.
- B. Whenever we come together we need to lay aside our garments. Do not keep your standard, your position. Do not consider yourself as being on a higher level than others. This consideration must be laid aside. Exercise the living water and cause it to flow and others' feet will be washed.
- C. Everything in this gospel is a matter of life, and we must practice to such an extent that among us we have an abundance of the water of life to wash one another's feet. Some saints are full of the living water. When you come and sit with them for half an hour, your feet are washed. They may not talk to you about your dirty feet or even touch the matter of foot washing, but if you stay in their presence for half an hour, your feet are washed. After that half hour you will be so close to the Lord. Your fellowship with Him will be intimate and pleasant. Also, your fellowship with others will be sweet. Among us, we need many that are full of the water of life, who can wash the feet of others.
- D. Each of us must learn how to love the brothers and sisters by ministering the spiritual foot washing to them. Sometimes when I come to visit you, you can minister some sort of foot washing to me by showing your love toward me, and I have to show the same love toward you so that some foot washing will be ministered to you to cleanse you from the earthly touch. We must do this, otherwise, the fellowship between us could not be maintained. Fellowship can only be maintained between one another when love ministers such a foot washing.