

The Gospel of John 13:18-38

I Washed But Not in the Fellowship

- A. Chapter thirteen of the Gospel of John puts together three matters: foot washing, Judas' betrayal of the Lord, and Peter's self-confidence. The fact that these matters are put together indicates that foot washing sifts the false one and also exposes the real, yet self-confident, one. Among those who claim to follow Christ, there are two problems related to fellowship. These problems are falsehood, signified by Judas, and self-confidence, signified by Peter. Today's society is full of falsehood and self-confidence. Peter was genuine, but with his genuineness there was self-confidence.
- B. Though the foot washing is for fellowship in life, it was not so with Judas. He was washed, but he was never in the fellowship because he was a false one (vv.18-31a). Before the Lord washed the disciples' feet, the devil had already put into Judas' heart that he should betray the Lord (v.2). After the Lord's washing, Satan even entered into him (v.27). After that, Judas left, and it was night (v.30). He surely had entered into the dark night for his eternity.
- C. From the very beginning, he was not in the fellowship with the Lord and he could never have been in it regardless of how much he was washed (vv.10-11). This warns us that the real foot washing is only for the people who are genuinely in the fellowship with the Lord. Consequently, foot washing also sifts the false one (13:18-30). Among Christians today there are too many tares, many false ones, because spiritual foot washing is not practiced. But whenever we practice this foot washing, the false ones are exposed.

II Washed and Willing to Remain in the Fellowship, But Failing.

- A. After the foot washing, the Lord was about to die. So He said, "Now has the Son of Man been glorified" (v.31). For Him to be glorified was to have His divine element released from within His humanity through death and resurrection. His death broke the shell of His humanity and released His divine life. This is what it meant for Him to be glorified.
- B. Here the Lord also said, "God has been glorified in Him" (v.31). This means that God the Father was to be glorified in the Son's glorification, that is, He had His divine element released in the Son. What the Lord released in His death and resurrection was the divine life element of God the Father. God the Father was to be glorified in the Son in this way, and He would also glorify the Son in Himself and He would do it immediately (v.32).
- C. The commandment to love one another is the unique commandment in the New Testament. This commandment was first given in John 13, the chapter on foot washing: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you love one another" (v.34).
 - 1. The Greek word for commandment here is the same word as in Matt.5 and Rom.7. However, those references refer to the old commandments of the law in the Old Testament; here it refers to the new commandment given to us by the Lord in the New Testament. (John 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12).
 - 2. The commandment to wash one another's feet is *related to* the commandment to love one another. Today Christians talk a great deal about brotherly love, yet not many realize that brotherly love is expressed in foot washing. If we do not have the reality of foot washing, we actually do not have the reality of foot washing, we actually do not have brotherly love. The Lord Jesus loved His disciples to the uttermost, and this love is seen in His washing their feet. Now we also need to love the brothers in washing their feet.
- D. At that time, the Lord was ready to suffer the death of the cross, but His disciples were not yet equipped to follow Him in His suffering. So the Lord told Peter that he could not follow Him then (vv.36-37) because Peter had not yet received Him as the resurrection life. But Peter would follow Him (v.36; 21:18-19) after He imparted Himself into him as resurrection life through His resurrection.
- E. Peter was in the genuine fellowship with the Lord, and the Lord's washing did keep him in this fellowship. He was willing to remain in this fellowship with the Lord, but he failed by denying the Lord three times when the Lord was being tried. He had the desire, but not the strength to remain in the fellowship, because, before the Lord's resurrection, resurrection life had not been imparted into him. To remain in the fellowship of the Lord maintained by the foot washing requires the strength of resurrection life.
 - 1. Foot washing will expose whether we are proud or humble, whether we are self-confident or trust in the Lord. Peter was exposed by foot washing. Although he was genuine, he was also very self-confident. Therefore, at the time of foot washing the Lord said to him, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster shall by no means crow until you deny Me three times" (v.38). The Lord loved Peter to the uttermost, but Peter denied the Lord to the uttermost. Before Peter denied Him, he was self-confident, and this self-confidence was exposed by foot washing.
 - 2. In the assembly life we do not practice literal foot washing, legally. We have spiritual foot washing to eliminate all defects so that we may have clear fellowship with one another and with God. Through the practice of foot washing, everything becomes genuine, frank, pure, clean, and clear. No dirt is concealed, and no falsehood or self-confidence remains. If we practice foot washing in the assembly life, no false one will remain. Moreover, the strong, self-confident ones will be subdued.
- F. The record of foot washing in John 13 is crucial in a very practical way. If there is no foot washing, we cannot have the assembly life. All the assemblies on earth need the practice of foot washing. To maintain clear fellowship with one another and with the Lord, we need the reality of foot washing.