

# Washing the Disciples' Feet

by C.I. Scofield

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*Jesus teaches that cleansing is necessary for service and communion with Him, and that this cleansing comes through His washing and our confession of sin.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:7, John 13:1, John 13:6-7, Ephesians 5:25, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Justification", "Sanctification"

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## Description

C.I. Scofield delves into the profound lesson of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, emphasizing the significance of cleansing for service and communion. He highlights the distinction between justification (cleansing from the guilt of sin) and sanctification (progressive cleansing from the habit of sin), drawing parallels to the believer's walk and the need for continual cleansing. Scofield underscores the necessity of confession for forgiveness and cleansing, pointing to Christ's work on the cross as the basis for our purification.

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## Transcript

(John xiii:1-14.)

I. The Analysis.

- (1) The unfailing love of Jesus, verse 1.
- (2) The symbolical service of Jesus, verses 2-5.
- (3) The objection of Simon, verse 6.
- (4) The explanation of the feet-washing, verses 7-14.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Cleansing, in order to service and communion, is evidently the central truth of this lesson. Our Lord makes this clear in his answer to Peter's protestation, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Our Lord answered him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" The reference is not to salvation, as the Lord makes clear in verse 10; "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet."

As this distinction is a vital one, we linger a moment upon it. It is in a word, the distinction between justification and sanctification. Justification is cleansing from the guilt of sin; sanctification is a progressive

cleansing from the habit of sin. Both these aspects meet in such passages as Psa. li:7, and Eph. v:25-27. David says: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Hyssop was the little shrub with which sacrificial blood was applied, and speaks, therefore, of the guilt of sin. Purged with blood David was "clean" before God; but, as with us after conversion, he discovered sins of habit from which he needed to be "washed" if he were to be indeed "whiter than snow." So, in the Ephesian passage, Christ "loved the church, and gave Himself for it," which was redemption by blood, justification; "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," which is progressive sanctification, and answers to the feet washing of John xiii.

The thought is of the "walk" of the believer, not of the salvation of a sinner; and the imagery is drawn, not only from the place of the laver in the temple order, which was between the place of sacrifice and the place of worship, service and communion, but also from the daily life of the Orient. In the public bath the body is washed clean, but the feet, in passing from the bath to the home, contract defilement by the way. This must be removed as a prelude to the happy fellowship of the home.

Christ, who was about to bring the disciples into the intimacy of the first Lord's supper, must have them clean first.

The lessons are obvious. As the priest could not pass from the altar on which offerings were burnt to the holy place where he offered incense, type of prayer and worship, without stopping at the laver for cleansing, so Christ would teach us that, saved though we surely are if we have believed on Him crucified, yet we cannot have His intimacy, cannot serve Him, cannot acceptably pray to Him, or worship the Father unless we, too, have been to the laver.

In I John 1:9 we find the New Testament laver: "If we confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Note the words "faithful and just." Why not kind and merciful? Because the forgiveness of the daily sins of the believer does not proceed from the general benevolence of God, but from His recognition of the work of Christ on the cross. He is just to the cross of Christ, and faithful to His covenant.

But let us not leave this all important subject without noticing our Lord's words, "Except I wash thee, thou hast no part with Me." Confession does not cleanse us from the defilements of our walk. The great passage only says that if we confess He is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse. Let us not be proud of our confessions of sin, for confession is, after all, but putting the defiled feet into the pierced hands of Jesus for cleansing.

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