

FOOT WASHING

By A. Hinchliff

When Israel setup the tabernacle in the wilderness, the whole tabernacle and their procedure of worship, was typical of our New Testament experience. Heb. 9:24 tells us that the tabernacle, was a figure of the true tabernacle, which Christ entered after His death on Calvary. He entered with a better sacrifice than the blood of bulls and goats. The earthly tabernacle was constructed with three divisions. The first one you approached was the outer court. In this outer court was found the brazen alter on which sacrifices were offered for sin. Christ offered Himself as an atonement for our sin. The brazen alter is a type of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

The only way to enter the tabernacle was past the Alter of Sacrifice. To enter an experience with God and receive forgiveness of sin, we must enter past the cross where Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for us. This alter was set before the door of the tabernacle. (Ex. 40:6)

The next thing we come to when entering the tabernacle was the laver. This was a large brass bowl or basin filled with water in which the priests were completely washed when they entered the priesthood. Exodus 29:4, "And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water." This is a type of water baptism as taught in the New Testament. This washing was for the cleansing of the flesh, as is water baptism in the New Testament. It is truly a cleansing of the flesh (carnal nature) by burial and resurrection. Hebrews 10:19-22, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

On subsequent occasions, when the priests entered the tabernacle to minister, they were instructed to wash their hands and their feet in the Laver. Exodus 30:19-21, "For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the alter to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations." A complete washing was no longer necessary. They just had to wash their hands and feet. This was a type of our practice of foot washing.

In the New Testament experience, the Scripture teaches us that we are kings and priests in the presence of God. 1 Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal PRIESTHOOD, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." Revelation 5:10, "And hast made us unto our God kings and PRIESTS: and we shall reign on the earth."

As members of that priesthood we are completely washed in water baptism. From time to time we must have our feet washed. As one of the brethren once said, we get our feet dirty walking in the world. We are so surrounded by sin and corruption that some of it contaminates our feet. It should be washed away.

In John 13:4-20 we have the account of Jesus washing His disciples' feet. One of them, because of the greediness of the world, which he had partaken of, had just left to betray Him.

Jesus got up from supper and took off his coat, wrapped a towel around Himself, poured water into a basin, and proceeded to wash and dry His disciples' feet. John 13:67, "Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Not understanding what was taking place. Peter wasn't going to allow Jesus to wash his feet. Jesus insisted, saying, "If I wash thee not thou has no part with me." Somehow in that short space of time Peter understood what Jesus was doing and asked that not only his feet but also that his hands and his head be washed.

Jesus then told him that all he needed to have washed was his feet. The same is true of us. We have been washed in water baptism and are clean except that from time to time we need our feet washed. Many people, like Peter, feel they need a complete washing when all that is required is that one of their brethren wash their feet and impart His cleansing. By walking in this age it seems to be difficult to resist its contamination. Try as we may, to keep from being squeezed into its mold, it sometimes leaves its mark on us.

Jesus then told them that they should wash one another's feet. John 13:13-15, "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

God has revealed to us, and we have experienced that by the laying on of hands, the life and anointing that is in Him is transmitted from one person to another. Elders are instructed to anoint the sick with oil and pray over them for their healing. (James 5:14) Timothy received the gift of the spirit by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. (1 Tim. 4:14)

People received the infilling of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. When Peter and John went to Samaria, after many people were saved as a result of Philip's ministry among them, this is what happened. Acts 8:14-17, "Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

So, by the touch of the person who washes your feet the accumulated contamination of life can be washed away. This is what God had in mind when He established this practice in the church. It is a way in which we can minister to one another and it helps us to realize our dependency on each other. It is Christ who dwells within, by whose authority we lay on hands or wash another's feet.

You may ask if the washing of feet works, or is it just a form or a ritual that we go through. We have seen many who have been touched by the elements of this age, cleansed and helped in their walk with God. We have seen people who have been at odds with one another wash one another's feet and have all that bitterness disappear. What God establishes, always works.

To wash another person's feet may seem to be a humbling experience. It wasn't too lowly a task for the Son of God, so why should we hesitate? Allow the Holy Spirit to move upon you as you wash one another's feet and great things will be accomplished.

There are a few guidelines that we should give you in conducting your foot washing service. The elders should watch their flock and when they feel that a foot washing service would be beneficial or necessary they should have one. The elders are in charge of the meeting. All should wait much on the Lord in preparation. Allow the Holy Spirit to move on all who take part. The deacons busy themselves with whatever help that may be required. In some places where a foot-washing service is held there is not water supply. An adequate water supply would be their responsibility, also the disposal of the used water.

The men wash the men's feet and the women wash the women's feet. The men and women should always be separated. They should either be in separate rooms or be divided by a curtain or some type of barrier.

Everyone brings their own towel and basin for washing. People will choose as they are led by the Holy Spirit whose feet they feel they should wash. The person washing your feet will use your basin for washing your feet and your towel to dry them. Then they will change and you will wash the feet of the person who washed your feet using his basing and towel. This is for sanitary reasons. For the same reason, change water between washings. You may wash one person's feet or if the Spirit leads, wash two. There is no rule on this. Be led of the Spirit of God.