

FEET WASHING.

In Eastern countries, where sandals were worn, and the feet thus exposed to the sand and dust, feet-washing was a regular custom, and an actual necessity. This service was considered very menial, and the humblest servants or slaves performed it for the family and guests.

Jesus had noticed among his disciples a spirit of selfishness; he had overheard them disputing which of them should be greatest in authority and dignity in the kingdom he had promised to share with them. He had rebuked this spirit, which he foresaw would injure them in proportion as it grew and strengthened. So indeed it did in the fourth to the sixth centuries, blossom and yield bitter fruit in the organization of Papacy, and the train of evils and errors which still flow from that impure fountain. He had taken a little child and set him in the midst of the disciples, and said, Except ye become (artless and simple) as a little child, you are not fit for the kingdom for which I am calling you. He had said, Ye know how the Gentiles lord it over one another, and recognize caste and station, but it must not be so with you. Ye have but one Master, and all ye are brethren; and he that would [R844 : page 3] be chief, let him become chief servant (Mark 10:42). They who serve you most, you must mark as your chief ones. I am the chief servant myself, for the Son of man came not to be served by others, and honored thus, but he came to serve others, even to the extent of giving his life in their service. As therefore my greatest service towards you renders me your chief, so shall it be among you. Esteem and honor one another in proportion as you find in each other unselfish sacrificing love and service. Esteem such very highly for their service sake. 1 Thes. 5:13.

But for all this, the spirit of pride and a desire to "lord it" over others, and be revered as chief, was there, even after three years and a half spent with the Master, and under his example; and as he was about to leave them, Jesus sought, even on the last evening with them, to impress this lesson indelibly upon their hearts. So after the Passover

supper was over, he arose from the table and performed for his disciples the most menial service, in washing their feet. They probably had not even thought of performing such a service for each other or for Him, and even had consideration enough to object to his thus serving them in so humble a manner.

When Jesus had finished, he said to them, "Know ye what I have done to you? 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. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." If you understand and appreciate the lesson I have given you, and will practice it, you will be blessed thereby and helped in my service, and prepared for the kingdom in which I have promised you a share. – John 13:4-17.

That the lesson had its designed effect we can scarcely doubt, as we look at the course of several of the Apostles, and see how, with much self-denial, they served the body of Christ, of which they were fellow-members, following the example of the Head, who was chief servant of all.

The question arises, What did the Lord mean when he said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done"? – was the example in the principle, and lesson of service one toward another? or was the example in the method of service, in the ceremony of feet washing? To suppose the latter would be to hide the real lesson under a form. And if the example was in the form, then every item of the form should be observed: an upper room – a supper – sandals should be worn – the same kind of garments – the towel girdle, etc. But no; the "example" which we should follow lay in the humble serving of the disciples by the Master, regardless of form. His example of serving the fellow-members in even the most menial manner, is what we should

follow – and blessed will we be, in proportion as we do follow it. In that proportion we shall be prepared for the everlasting kingdom and service of God.

Those now living in Eastern countries where sandals are still worn, may find an opportunity now to follow the example in other forms, as well as in the same form which the Master used; and those differently circumstanced may follow the "example" in a thousand forms. Some of the fellow-disciples probably live in your city and in mine. How can we serve them? How can we refresh them? How can we show them our love and sympathy according to the Lord's "example"? Not in this climate by washing their feet – this would be an inconvenience the very reverse of a pleasure, and a service to them, and therefore contrary to the "example." But we can *serve* the "body" otherwise, and truly follow the example. We can improve our various opportunities to serve them in matters temporal as well as spiritual. We can be on the lookout, and when we see sadness or discouragement, we can lend a helping hand to lift our brother's burdens, or our sister's sorrows, and we can let them see by deeds, as well as words, our anxiety to serve them – figuratively speaking, to wash their feet.

Don't wait until they ask you to assist; for in proportion as they are developed disciples, they will not beg your aid. Do not wait until they tell you of their burdens and trials, but watch to anticipate; for in proportion as they partake of the Master's spirit, they will not be complainers, but will live "always rejoicing" – rejoicing in tribulation even.

Be not ashamed of but seek and rejoice in such service of the "body" – "ye do serve the Lord, Christ." But still more important than temporal service, is our service one of another as new creatures. The washing of the body with the truth – the sanctifying and cleansing of it with the word, is in progress now. (Eph. 5:26,27.) What are you doing to cleanse and purify the faith and lives of your fellow members? Do you approach them humbly with the truth, sincerely anxious to serve

them, to bless and comfort and refresh them therewith? If so, go on; grand is your service; the Master served thus; this is his example; follow on. The more you can thus serve, and at the greater cost of time, and effort, and convenience, and self-denial, the greater you will be in the eyes of the Master, the more honored and beloved of the body when they shall come to see and know you, as the Lord sees and knows your love and its service.

Follow on then the noble "example" of Jesus; wash and be washed one of another, cleanse and purge away the defilements with which each comes in contact in the world daily, that ye may be clean "through the word spoken unto you." Purge out the old leaven of hypocrisy, and envy, and self-exaltation, even as ye have already been justified from all things and reckoned pure and holy by the merit of the precious blood which the chief servant and Lord of all gave for all.

