

"WASH ONE ANOTHER'S FEET."

IT WAS shortly after the incident related foregoing that our Lord, alone with the twelve disciples, took a basin of water and a towel and began to wash the disciples' feet. Strange indeed, this conduct seemed to them: not only their Master's words but also his actions were inexplicable riddles to them. He had acknowledged himself as the Son of God, the Messiah, their Lord and Master; and yet here he was, kneeling before them in the attitude of the humblest servant, washing their feet. Wondering and dumbfounded, but accustomed to obey the Master, no remark or protest was made until in turn he came to Peter. But Peter, as humble as he was bold, refused to allow the Master to perform the menial service, until assured that the explanation of it would be given after the service had been performed, and that unless he was washed he could have no part with the Master, whereupon he desired that his head and his hands as well as his feet might be washed.

Since literal feet-washing was frequent, the custom of that day, and almost indispensable to comfort, we may suppose that our Lord's example would be frequently followed in the early Church. But, we do not see in it any command that feet-washing should be performed simply as a ceremony – regardless of its usefulness and its convenience.

Our Lord's words to Peter, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me," certainly imply that the washing was more than a mere ceremony – more also than a mere expression of humility, as we shall endeavor to show. Nevertheless, the principle should hold good in every time and in every clime: that whatever useful service can be rendered to a fellow-member of the body of Christ, however humble or menial, it should be performed, as unto the Lord.

Having finished the service the Master explained its significance. He had set them an example (1) of humility, in being willing to perform

the most menial **[R2201 : page 243]** service to those who were truly his; (2) the washing was an illustration of a great truth, namely, that altho already cleansed by the Lord – justified freely from all things, through faith in him – yet that there were certain defilements which would attach to each of them so long as they would be in the world, from contact with its evils and besetments. While the general washing (justification) would stand good for all time, yet they would need continually (figuratively) to wash one another's feet – with the "washing of water by the word." (Eph. 5:26.) This would signify that they should have a mutual watch-care over one another's welfare; to keep each other clean, holy, pure, and to assist one another in overcoming the trials and temptations and besetments of this present evil world; – arising from the three sources of temptation, "the world, the flesh and the devil."

This cleansing work which is to be done for one another is in harmony with the injunction, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." They could not get each other into the love of God: that could be attained only in the one way; through the original cleansing of the precious blood, through faith; and no one can thus cleanse us or help us into divine favor, except the Redeemer himself. But he having cleansed us and brought us into divine favor, has commissioned us that we should help one another to "abide in his love" and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. The merit, the way and the privilege are all of God through Christ. The agencies used in applying these to one another are ourselves. "Ye ought also to wash one another's feet;" to help keep each other separate from the world, and clean through the Word he has spoken unto us, – by "the washing of water by the Word;" "building one another up in the most holy faith."

This again reminds us of the Scriptural statement, in reference to the Church perfected and glorified, – "His wife hath made herself ready." (Rev. 19:7.) While the entire arrangement for her wedding robes, the washing of regeneration (justification) and the water for her feet-washing, are all provided for the **[R2202 : page 243]** bride through

the agency of the Bridegroom, and she is thus made ready, yet the use of these means, the putting on of her adornment, the embroidering of her robes and the arrangement of the jewels presented to her through the spirit, is left for herself to do; each member of the body co-operating unto the edification of the whole body in love. – 1 Thes. 5:11; Rom. 14:19.

It would doubtless be pleasing in the sight of the Master, our Head, that we should have a disposition to help and to reform the world in general, and to wash the vilest of the vile from all their sin; but however praiseworthy such a disposition might be, we are to remember that this is not the command which he has placed before us in our text. His injunction here is not to do general washing of all the unclean, but to do special washing for those whom he already has cleansed, justified, through faith. It is in respect to the fellow-members of his body that he has given this charge; and we emphasize it here, because this fact seems to be very generally overlooked by Christian people, who give their time rather to the outward cleansing, the moral and social uplifting, of those whose hearts have never been washed by the Master, and correspondingly neglect one another, his "feet." Yet, as already seen, preceding, tho it is a great honor to render such a service to one another, the privilege will be properly appreciated and much used only by the truly humble who have much love for the Master.

But, it requires peculiar qualifications to enable us to help each other in this respect; before we can help others to remove the motes out of their eyes, and to cleanse their way of life, in all its little particulars, so that every thought as well as every word and act shall be brought into subjection to the divine will, it is necessary that we have experiences along the same lines ourselves. We must endeavor to get rid of the motes and beams that would obstruct our own vision. We must cultivate purity in our own lives, – in our deeds, words and thoughts. Only as we cultivate the various graces of the spirit, – meekness, patience, gentleness, brotherly-kindness, love, can we hope to be specially helpful to others in putting on these adornments of

character and purities of life, and to get rid of defilements of the world, and the flesh.

To this end it will be found helpful to remember the lesson of Mary in her service to the Lord's literal feet. Many who would reject well-meaning criticisms of conduct, resent well-meant efforts to wash their feet, as interferences with their private business, would be very amenable to the influences of the same person if he approached them with such evidences of true devotion and loving interest as would be symbolized by tears. It is the sympathetic ones who are most successful in helping the various members of the body of Christ out of the difficulties, besetments and defilements incident to the following of the Lord in this present time. Oh, let us study and strive and pray that we may be very successful in obeying the Master's words, "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

It will also be a great help and comfort to the fellow members of the body, if in connection with these efforts to help one another in the cleansing of our ways, by taking heed unto the Word of the Lord, we will have with us also some of the precious ointment of sympathetic and, as far as possible, commendatory and encouraging words, and helpful assistance: for all the members of the feet class who are seeking to walk worthy of the Lord need the ointment of sympathy and encouragement, as offsets to the trials, difficulties and persecutions incident to the "narrow way," coming to them from the great Adversary and his blinded servants.
