

## FEET WASHING.

SOME feel that the feet-washing mentioned in John 13:4-17 is as important as the Memorial Supper; and hence we will here consider the subject: altho only one of the Evangelists remembered even to mention it.

In Eastern countries, where sandals were worn, and the feet thus exposed to 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.

Our Lord 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; and, foreseeing that this spirit would injure them in proportion as it grew and strengthened, he had rebuked them for their lack of humility. 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.

To illustrate the proper spirit which should characterize all who would be his disciples, he took a little child and set him in the midst, 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. 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 be chief, let him become chief servant. (Mark 10:35-45.) 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 toward 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 works' 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 and a half years 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, 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? You 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 you 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, 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 [R2279 : page 88] 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*, in the 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 were in the form, then every item in 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, the same form which the Master used, as well as other forms; 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 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 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.

Do not wait until they request your assistance; for in proportion as they are developed disciples, they will not ask 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 our Master's spirit, they will not be complainers, but will live "always rejoicing" – rejoicing even in tribulations.

Be not ashamed of such service of the "body," [R2279 : page 89] but seek and rejoice in it – "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-interest, the greater will you be in the eyes of the Master, and 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 service.

Follow closely, then, the noble "example" of Jesus: wash and be washed one of another, cleanse and purge away the defilements with which each comes daily in contact in the world, 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. – 2 Tim. 2:20,21.

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