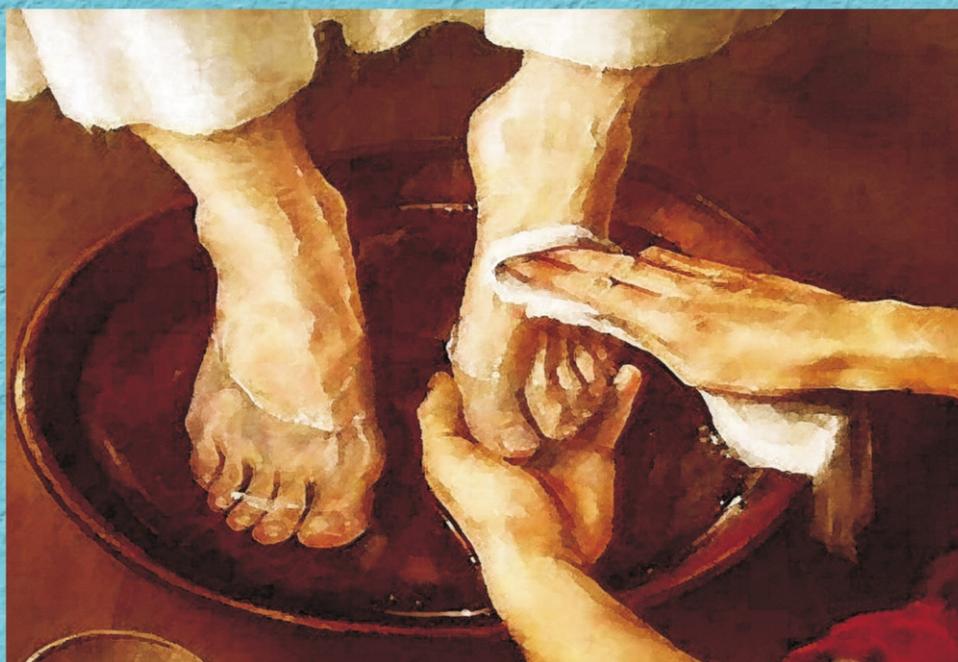


# Feet Washing

## Transforming Truths

### Article - 3



# **FEET WASHING**

**Article - 3**

# Washing One Another's Feet – A Privilege

## Jhon 13:14-15

**“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.”**

During Bible times, frequent washing of the feet was necessary as the Israelites wore sandals instead of shoes, and often went barefoot in the house. Thus, among the Israelites, it was the first duty of a host to give his guest water for washing his feet. To omit this was a sign of marked unfriendliness. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, “it was also customary to wash the feet before meals and before going to bed (compare Cant. 5:3).” Abstaining for a long time from washing them was a sign of mourning (2 Samuel 19:24).

The priests had laws about this practice (Exodus 30:18-21). Here it is explained that a copper laver was placed in the court, between the Tabernacle and the altar of burnt offering, in which the priests had to wash their hands and feet before entering the Tabernacle or approaching the altar of burnt offerings, hence before all their priestly functions. As no one is allowed to approach a king or prince without due preparation, which includes the washing of the hands and feet, so the Israelite, and especially the priest, is forbidden in his unclean condition to approach God, for if such a one came defiled, he was subject to die.

## Feet Washing in the Old Testament

The practice of providing water for guests to wash their feet is illustrated on the occasion of a mysterious visit by “three men” to Abraham.

In Genesis 18:24 we read: **“And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I**

**pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.”**

Later, Abraham’s nephew (Genesis 11:27), Lot, made a similar offer to two angels who came to the city of Sodom where he and his family lived, to destroy the city because their immorality has become “so great before the LORD that the LORD has sent” angels to destroy it (verse 13).

**“Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. And he said, ‘Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant’s house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.’ They said however, ‘No, but we shall spend the night in the square.’ Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate” (Genesis 19:13).**

(See also Judges 19:20, 21. To understand the context here, starting from verse 1 may be good).

The act of feet washing in the above cases reflects a spirit of LOVE, SERVICE and HUMILITY = WILLING SACRIFICE TO PLEASE THE HEAVENLY FATHER, who reads the heart of men.

## **Feet Washing – In the New Testament**

### **The Woman’s Tears and Perfume**

Feet washing in the New Testament is found in Luke 7:36-50. It is six days before the Passover (Luke 12:1) a Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to his home for a meal. While he was seated at the table, a woman “who had lived a sinful life in that town” came to the Master with an alabaster jar of costly perfume.

**“And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew**

that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

Dear friends, what can WE do as did this woman?

In the Mark account of another occasion, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, even poured the perfume on Jesus' head (Mark 14:3).

How can we anoint the minds of our brethren, as suggested by the head?

Perhaps by praying for our brethren's strength, that they might endure all for CHRIST.

This is so important, as would we not ourselves wish others to pray

for us to more than overcome, which is the desire of our entire existence—to bring JOY to the Father by pleasing Him more? What more than to feel his Perfect Loving counsel moment by moment?

Perhaps anointing the head of our brethren can also mean sharing spiritually edifying thoughts and asking faith-building questions as well as letting the subject matter discussed or studied, be one that feeds the New Creation in Christ so as to encourage fellow consecrated believers to be fully consumed in their thought processes upon heavenly things since **“a mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you”** (Romans 8:7-9).

How can we wash each other’s feet **as this woman did for Jesus?**

How can we show true hospitality **likewise to our fellow brethren in Christ?**

The specific and precise answer for each consecrated child of God may be unique and personal, just as each has been given by God uniquely specific talents to use in His service in the body of Christ. But how can we make sure our talents in God’s service are not buried? Perhaps by COURAGE IN CHRIST and by asking our Heavenly Father to eradicate FEAR of man from our lives while holding on to the REVERENTIAL FEAR of GOD—the fear of doing wrong in the eyes of God alone. See post titled: A Proper Fear

Does FEAR OF MAN ... fear of past mistakes (as with the Apostle Paul before he became fully enlightened) ... fear of being misunderstood and thus misrepresented and shunned or separated from the general assembly, or labelled “crazy” or “a missfit,” “the radical one,” stop us from BEING as CHRISTLIKE as we can and striving to moment by moment develop into the likeness of Christ by getting outside of the CARNAL COMFORT ZONE? Let it not!

**This means, going BEYOND the PAIN BARRIER!**

If you are not suffering for righteousness sake in some way, shape, or form, it means **YOU ARE NOT working to your full potential in CHRIST.**

**“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (2 Timothy 3:12)**

**“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps...” (1 Peter 2:21)**

The consecrated until death **“stars of heaven”** class are the **“heirs according to the promise”** (Galatians 3:29) and coheirs of Christ (Romans 8:17). But such will be heirs only if they display the forgiving, repenting, and humble spirit among men, as we find in the weeping woman who washed Jesus’ feet with her tears of remorse and reverential thankfulness in being worthy of but touching the hem of the garments of Jesus. (Matthew 6:15) She had heard among the crowds that his kingdom was not of this world, and now she was able to SERVE him and be CLEANSED from her sins by him—because of her desire to have her sins forgiven. Later, if she continued on, she would be washed in this antitypical lamb’s blood. Her REVERENTIAL FEAR wished only to do right in God’s sight, recognizing her need for a redeemer.

Since Simon was a Pharisee, he may have considered himself to be rather important and may have felt he had bestowed an honor to Jesus by inviting him to dinner.

Was Simon embarrassed or afraid of what others would think of him if he showed Jesus hospitality? This Jesus who had allowed the woman considered in the public eye as inferior, to come near him?

Do you think Simon’s attitude was one of self-righteousness? Self-importance? Do we ever allow this feeling to creep into us like LEAVEN?

To rid our minds of any such poison to the New Creation in CHRIST, let us focus our thoughts upon the Son of God who humbled

himself even to the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8).

## Anointing the Feet

In John 12:13 Mary anointed Jesus' feet with costly ointment of spikenard six days before the Passover, when Jesus came to Bethany. [Note: this would be Nisan 10th after 6pm and an appropriate time for anointing the Passover lamb—whom Jesus himself was, symbolically.] Mary displayed her loving devotion to the Master by using her hair to wipe Jesus' feet.

Although Judas' perhaps insincere words highlight his dissatisfaction with Mary's use of this expensive perfume ("worth a year's wages"), Jesus said that she should be let alone, because she did what she could.

In fact, Jesus commended Mary's actions, in Matthew 26:11-13: **"For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her."**

What a beautiful illustration how true Christians should treat their most valuable assets on earth—the feet members of Christ that remain. In these we see Christ. They profess consecration, and evidence this with acts of true loving kindness, and manifestations of concern, gentleness, patience, assistance, and sympathy. They strive to bless others as Mary did with Jesus, lavishing costly, symbolic perfume upon the body of Christ, the Church.

As the washing of another's feet is not a glamorous work, and considering the imperfections that each of us have, it takes a large measure of love, phileo and AGAPE love, and humility, to press forward in striving to serve our brethren.

Let us not allow differences along one line or another, nor misunderstandings, hinder us from seeking to do good unto all that we

have opportunity, especially the household of faith. (Galatians 6:10, 1 Peter 3:11, Psalm 34:14, Micah 6:8)

## **Washing the Disciples' Feet**

One of the marks of female saintship in the early church was, **“if she have washed the saints’ feet”** (1 Timothy 5:10). Feetwashing being necessary at that time, became a synonym of service and kind hospitality. To illustrate this same principle of service and humility, Jesus used this same custom on the night of the Last Supper:

At the end of Jesus’ ministry and “just before the Passover Feast,” and when “the evening meal was being served,” Jesus washed his disciples’ feet. The disciples must have been shocked and silent that the Great Teacher, their Lord, would do such a thing. Simon Peter did not want Jesus to wash his feet at first, until the Master said that unless he washed Peter’s feet, he could have no part with him in the kingdom. Then Peter was willing to have his whole body washed, yet Jesus pointed out that he who is clean needs only to wash his feet. Jesus pointed out that not all of them were clean, the reference obviously being made to Judas.

Jesus admonished the disciples: **“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you”** (John 13:14-15).

Jesus’ act was intended as an example in humility and a lesson to the apostles who seem still to have had a spirit of rivalry for preeminence. To our understanding, the lesson was that our Lord’s followers were not to shun any service, however menial, that would enable them to assist or comfort one another.

Jesus’ lesson is amplified by his words in John 13:34, 35: **“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”**

Not until they had received the holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost,

were the disciples of Christ able to manifest their determination to serve Christ in a way that would enable them to become pillars of the Church (Acts 2:24, 16-18, 33, 38).

## Feet Washing – TODAY

When it comes to helping brethren, let us gladly do the work of feet washing, illustrated for us by the Master himself who taught the disciplines the lesson of HUMILITY, “that they should love one another to such an extent that they would consider no service too great nor too degrading which would minister to each other’s comfort” (Br. Charles T. Russell, Biblical Expository 1).

Here are some encouraging words of Br. Oscar Magnuson from a 1932 Bible Students Reunion Convention Report:

**“If we place a limit on what we are willing to do and to bear for the Lord, the Lord might find it necessary to give us a body with limited capacities in the resurrection. In that case a divine body would not suit us, for such a body is unlimited in bodily capacities.”**

There are hundreds of opportunities of showing the meek, lowly, and loving spirit of our Master. As God’s stewards and servants, it is not self that we are to minister and serve and pamper, but it is our mission to **“do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of faith,”** remembering that we are to walk in his footsteps who **“came not to be ministered unto [served], but to minister [serve] and to give his life a ransom for many”** (Mark 10:45, Matthew 20:28).

In Reprint 1101, Br Russell writes that “the entertainment of any of the household of faith, is really the fulfillment of our Lord’s injunction, ‘See that ye wash one another’s feet.’ But none should be permitted to overdo themselves in this blessed service, nor to deprive themselves of the spiritual communion of the meetings. To this end all have been urged to make only very simple arrangements, that both visitors and entertainers may have their principal feast upon the spiritual meat. Come, then, expecting a warm welcome to such plain things as we have ourselves.”

In our sympathetic desire to help others be more than overcomers, a reciprocal washing of one another's feet can include:

- ☀ Desiring and maintaining loving fellowship with the members of Christ's body as did Jesus spend in that upper room **SERVING** his disciples;
- ☀ Praying for each other, as our Lord Jesus taught in his prayer in John 17.
- ☀ Encouraging each other to fight the good fight of faith and become transformed in newness of life by renewing the mind when we dwell on things that are above. For example, **“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”** (Ephesians 5:19).
- ☀ Within the ecclesia and among those with whom we have frequent fellowship, if we are actively engaged in promoting one another's spiritual growth and development, we should be able to appreciate that all of our brethren have certain qualities, graces, or attributes that can benefit us; and we, likewise, should be on the alert as to how we can be of help to them.
- ☀ Volunteering for ecclesia projects.
- ☀ Entertaining visitors with an offer of a booklet or Divine Plan Book.
- ☀ Witnessing to all humans at every single chat we have with another.
- ☀ Providing transportation.
- ☀ Sending messages of comfort to all who write messages on the Old Ron email list.
- ☀ Sharing tapes or truth literature.
- ☀ Typing, proofreading.

- ☀ Testifying at Testimony meetings.
- ☀ Sharing hymns, psalms, and Bible Scriptures over the phone or conference calls etc.
- ☀ Sharing bible study magazine articles or poems written.
- ☀ Sending little “keep pressing onward and upward” parcels of spiritual items to edify.
- ☀ Sending item of use to our brethren worldwide E.g. Africa, Philippines...
- ☀ Visiting the ill, hospitalized or isolated.
- ☀ Reading the Scriptures morning and evening with your own children/family.
- ☀ If you have a garden: sharing some of your garden’s edible produce with brethren and friends.
- ☀ Sharing Daily Devotions over the phone/internet with others e.g. “Daily Heavenly Manna” or “Songs in the Night.”
- ☀ Creating a one or 2 page witnessing ad/flier and distributing amongst the public as a family activity.
- ☀ Helping your children leave fliers on the tables and seats at shopping centres and at supermarkets.
- ☀ Sending in bill payments with a booklet inserted inside them letting someone know about GOD’s GLORIOUS KINGDOM to come to give the world HOPE!
- ☀ Offering to set up Convention/Camp Book Tables.
- ☀ Coordinating a class choir.
- ☀ Opening up your home for a weekday Bible Study.

- ☀ Having an email sign-off Scripture “logo” — let CHRIST be what others remember you by.
- ☀ Asking the brethren who have websites how you can contribute your skills to aid in the witnessing efforts.
- ☀ Asking your Elders how you could help lighten their load by supporting them in their preparations for the Ecclesia.
- ☀ Making bookmarks from pressed leaves to sell to raise money for some Truth related cause or to give out as gifts and reminder of Scriptural words of encouragement.
- ☀ Offering your time for Sunday School teaching and Children’s Camp/Convention lessons.
- ☀ Sitting next to someone different during ecclesia meeting intermissions at ecclesia and share Scriptures and Scriptural thoughts.
- ☀ Coming prepared to class studies.
- ☀ Finding an Elder who you can be your mentor and have Bible studies, Question and Answer email studies etc.
- ☀ Take the kids on “witnessing bike trips.”

Each of us should realize that we have something to give for the edification of the body. We should be faithful in contributing to our ecclesia studies, praying for others, and being a model of someone whose life is undergoing the transformation process; being, therefore, an example of a believer.

Let us be faithful in washing one another’s feet!

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