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Practice of Feet Washing

By Harold Turner

Recently I received a request to present a study of the religious practice of washing feet. A few of the religious groups of our day still exercise this practice as a preparation to the Lord's Supper. Those who keep this practice do so on the basis of their belief that Jesus, just prior to the instituting of the Lord's Supper, washed the feet of His disciples, thereby giving both an example and command for all disciples. The Scripture used to support this practice is found in John 13:1-17. In this article we will examine this Scripture in view of two things, (1) Did Jesus wash the feet of His disciples just prior to instituting the Lord's Supper? (2) Is this an example and command that all Christians should observe?

Let us first establish the time when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. Luke 22:11-15 clearly shows that this was done on the evening of the Passover. The Passover was observed, according to Lev. 23:5, "In the fourteenth day of the first month at evening is the Lord's passover." Hence, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper at the Passover on the 14th day of the first month.

When did Jesus wash the feet of His disciples? Was it on the night of the Passover? John 13:1-5 gives us the answer. "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world . . . And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet . . ." The first statement of this reading shows that the washing of feet and the institution of the Lord's supper was not on the same occasion. Notice, the washing of feet was BEFORE the passover. The Lord's Supper was instituted the night OF the passover.

John 13:1-5 shows that before the Passover, after a supper, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. It was from this supper that Judas went out to arrange the betrayal of Jesus. Notice John 13:26-29, "And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. After the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the

table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast;" It was at this supper that Satan entered the heart of Judas, and from which Judas went to arrange for the betrayal. When Judas left, the others thought he went to make preparation for "the feast". What feast? Obviously the Passover.

Now, in view of the above, notice Mark 14:1-3, 10-12. "After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people. And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat . . . Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him. And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover."

This shows that it was two days before the passover that Judas went out to arrange the betrayal. Jesus was in Bethany eating a meal in the home of Simon the leper. Obviously it is here that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. Notice too, from John 13:29, that the other disciples thought when Judas left he was going to make preparation for the Passover. This was two days before the Passover. Mark 14:12 shows that on the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples were concerned about making preparation for the Passover. They had believed that two days before this Judas had gone to take care of this, but he hadn't.

Jesus did not wash the feet of his disciples as a preparation to their partaking of the Lord's Supper. The Scriptures show a two day span between these two events.

Now, Did Jesus give an example and a command that all Christians should practice feet-washing as a religious practice? Notice, "If I then, your Lord

(Continued on page 4)

The Joy of Jesus

By Clovis Ragsdale

The feeling of joy is one of our most pleasurable experiences. Much time and money is expended to create joy. However, this type of joy is artificial in nature and seldom lasts but for a short time. The joy that comes to us through faith in Christ is eternal in nature, and carries a feeling of security that cannot be matched from any other source.

Before the coming of Christ, man could not know the fullness of joy in worshipping God due to the limitations both in the law of Moses and the Patriarchal system of worship. But with the birth of Jesus came the announcement, "fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11).

The personal ministry of Jesus brought a message of hope to the hearts in despair. His expressed power to heal the blind and all manner of sickness made life more bearable for thousands. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus made possible the way to forgiveness of sin and the hope of eternal life beyond the grave, thereby bringing great joy to the hearts of millions who lived after the cross and to the second coming of the Lord. The Bible pictures those who have chosen this way as going on their way rejoicing with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. (Acts 8:39, 1 Peter 1:8). Hence, without fear of contradiction, we can say that Jesus Christ is the greatest source of joy that the world will ever know.

In the Christian worship, one of the joyful experiences we share is in singing. Many of our best songs contain statements of joy that is to be found in the hearts and actions of Christians. The false religions of people lack the joyful sounds and attitudes found in songs we sing to our God and His Son. Many of the songs in false religions are for the most part mournful chants. Christians are admonished "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16). Someone has said that you can tell what a nation or group of people are thinking by

(Continued on Page 2)

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FAITH

The simple, frequently employed, diligently studied, and thoughtfully pondered five letter word - faith is pregnant with transcendent but also, thank God, "condescendent" meaning. At times it seems that the depths of faith have never been fathomed, its heights never ascended, and its expanse never crossed, yet there is simplicity within the complexity of this little word.

The noun "PISTIS" (our english word "faith") occurs at least 216 times in the New Testament (and this does not include PISTOS, PISTEUO or any of their cognates). "Faith" is seen as something which one can have little of or be full of (Mtt. 14:31; Acts 6:5; 11:24); it is something which can be kept, increased, rejected or lost (II Tim. 4:7; Lk. 5:17; I Tim. 5:12; II Tim. 2:18); it is sometimes used metonymically, what is believed, the whole body of Christians truth revealed and unappealed as God's divine will and way for all men, for all time, for all places (Acts 6:7; 14:22; Gal. 1:23; 3:23-25; 6:10; Philip. 1:27; I Tim. 4:1; 6:10; Jude 3); it is sometimes used as the standard for and of social and religious conduct (Rm. 14:23; II Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:23; I Tim 2:15; 3:9); it is also used in the sense of believe or belief (Rm. 10:17; Heb. 11:6); it is also used in the sense of commit or commitment, i.e., obedience (Rm. 1:5, 17; 3:25; 5:1; 16:26; Eph. 2:8); it is also used in the sense of salvation, i.e., the full and final realization of the Christian's life and love (Rm. 1:17; I Pet. 1:5, 9); and, it is also used in some other senses but these will hopefully suffice to the serious and cursory student.

While all of the above uses and senses are very and vitally important to the Christian it is the writer's purpose to arbitrarily extract and picturesquely analyze the last three.

First, "faith" is used in the sense of belief or believe. This is a faith which does neither end in final salvation nor full salvation, but begins one toward and is a prerequisite to salvation. The phrases "I believe" or "to believe" may best express this particular sense.

The object of one's faith is "Jesus", "Lord", the One whom "God raised from the dead" (Rm. 10:9). When one believes that Jesus is Lord, the Son of God and the Saviour of man, he is to accept that truth and confess it "unto (not to receive) salvation" (Rm. 10:10). Jesus Christ, the man Jesus and the message Jesus both integrated beyond segregation, must be preached as the whole and sole object of the sinner's faith (Jh. 20:30, 31; Acts 2:22-36; 3:12-26; 8:26-29; 10:34-43; 15:7; 16:31-34; Rm. 10:17).

To simply and solely believe puts one

on the road unto salvation but no further on that road than the devils or Agrippa traveled (Jas. 2:19; Acts 26:27, 28). If one wants, and all must desire, to be saved he must travel on.

Second, "faith" is used in the sense of commit or commitment, i.e., trust or obedience. Trust and obedience must be construed as synonyms, and not as mutually exclusive terms as some would have the world to believe. To avoid any difficulty the writer has chosen a synonym that does, without controversy, convey to all the meaning of "faith" in this sense, i.e., commit or commitment.

Commitment grows out of and necessarily follows belief. One can not act without the fact. The facts of the gospel are revealed and personal action in regard to them is the natural and proper response. One may choose to act contrary to God's way or one may choose to commit himself to God's way; it is not an arbitrary decree made by the sovereign will of God in the councils of heaven aeons ago. The free will of man must and will be expressed when he confronts Jesus.

In the primeval period of Christianity those who committed themselves to Jesus preceded their committal with faith in Him. Faith in the fact and commitment to the act is the irreducible minimum to salvation. No one can enjoy full salvation who does not first possess faith and secondly express that faith in commitment.

Commitment, which ends in full salvation, includes repentance and immersion; every conversion in the gospel age illustrates this truth (Acts 2:37-41; 3:19; 8:35-39; 16:31,34; 22:16). Those who have obeyed the gospel (II Thess. 1:7-9), obeyed the pattern of teaching (Rm. 6:17,18), i.e., committed their lives to the Lord (II Tim 1:12) are said to have been "justified . . . by . . . grave . . . through faith in His blood" (Rm. 3:24,25), "justified by faith" (Rm. 5:1), "saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). Such ones are a part of those who have rendered the "obedience of faith" (Rm. 1:5; 16:26).

However, being fully saved here does not guarantee final salvation in the hereafter. The Christian must continue to live by faith (Rm. 11:7), walk by faith (II Cor. 5:7) and die in faith (Rev. 2:10) if he wants that heavenly salvation.

Third, "faith" is used in the sense of full and final salvation reserved in heaven. Such an attainment is the ultimate object of the Christian's hope. Faith ending in salvation is the mediate object, while leading to salvation is the immediate object.

(Continued on Page 3)

THE JOY OF JESUS (Cont.)

the songs they sing. Christians sing of Jesus, salvation, and heaven. How different are these from the songs we hear on radio and TV, which are written and designed to appeal to and arouse lust and idleness. The joy that these songs create could be only sinful and of short duration. Whereas the songs of Christians are of righteousness and eternity.

The joy we find in Jesus carries no price tag in dollars and cents. It is not to be purchased at any store. Like the air we breathe it is free to all who will accept it by faith in Christ, and a willingness to live by and in His teachings. It is guaranteed to be more lasting, and to surpass all the joy our world has to offer. The value of the joy that Jesus brings is seen in that many have been willing to die rather than to renounce their faith and hope in Him. Jesus leaves this promise, "and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22).

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"Many are glad the church exists, but do nothing to help it along."

Watch For Their Souls VIII.

By W. R. Smith

"The church is on the march" if the leaders have a clear picture of their objective and if they are competent and godly enough to inspire the followers to achieve it. The easy part of this task is to determine and clearly set forth the goal. As a matter of fact, Jesus did just this in Eph. 5:25-27. Another way to express the purpose of the church is to make it identical with the reason for Jesus' coming into the world and giving his life's blood, namely, to seek and save the lost, Luke 19:10. The church which has been given its sense of direction and has been properly stimulated by good leaders to move at its maximum speed in reaching its goal will enjoy results comparable to the first church about which we read in Acts 5:14, 6:7. Zeal and teamwork will do it. Jesus said so in John 17:21.

But the unity for which Jesus prayed and on which the Holy Spirit delivered a clear cut directive (1 Cor. 1:10) can prevail in but one sort of congregation. It is one in which every member is sufficiently indoctrinated to believe and obey that part of the gospel which is set forth in 1 John 3:16. It was love which motivated Jesus to "lay down his life." Only love will cause each member to do likewise. And what is love? It is unselfishness, Mat. 7:12. A congregation, therefore, in which every member loves—is denying self (Luke 9:23), has crucified the flesh (Gal. 5:24), and has put off selfishness (Col. 3:8) is without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Christian people fashioned according to the Gospel, God's power unto salvation, make ideal citizens wherever they are and in whatsoever activities they may be engaged. In homes fathers' will love their wives (Eph. 5:28) and bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). The wives will love both their husbands and their children, Titus 2:4. The children will obey their parents in the Lord, Eph. 6:1-3. In business and professional spheres servants will obey their masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ, Eph. 6:5-8. Masters will forbear threatening and be as considerate, tender and kind as is required of the servants, for they know that they, too, have a master in Heaven. In spheres of recreation and all other activities of human interest these unselfish people are tempted as was Christ to embrace the love of the world, 1 John 2:15, but they have learned well that love of the world and love of the Father do not dwell in the same hearts. They have been thoroughly weaned from the friendship of the world by a consecrated and busy life of fruit bearing

in the Kingdom, John 15:2. They are happy, sowing bountifully (2 Cor. 9:6) of their means, liberally employing their talents for Christian gains, giving freely of their time and laboring faithfully in the cause which they love. They have neither the time nor the inclination to sow to the flesh, Gal. 6:8. They have laid down their lives, crucified the flesh, and are sowing to the spirit. They are good soldiers waging an offensive drive behind the protection of the Christian armor, Eph. 6. The enemies' defenses are easily shattered by skillfully wielding the profound power of sound doctrine in convicting the gainsayers and drawing the honest and earnest hearts to the "power of the blood."

If every member of any congregation where as diligent, loyal, and faithful as set forth in the pattern, the leaders could easily achieve a high degree of soul saving. They might approach, or even equal, the results of the first church, Acts 5:14. Of course no church which has just begun a program of this nature could hope for a membership with such a high degree of spirituality—one that is holy and without blemish. Therein lies the work of the shepherds. To achieve this coveted goal cooperation of a genuine sort must prevail among all the members. Jesus in His prayer to God, puts unity as a condition "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The task then, is to weld all the members into a closely knit unit that functions with the same precision as our natural bodies do, 1 Cor. 12:13-28.

Just because the task is hard and the doubting Thomases say its realization is impossible are not good reasons for relaxing and not trying. If we strive mightily as if this mark can be attained within a reasonable time, the salvation of many souls who otherwise would perish will be the reward. If we approach the problem with little faith and much apathy, the blood of many will be required at our hands in the judgment day. Jesus was optimistic about our reaching perfection (Matt. 5:48) as individuals. A group of individuals who have believed and followed the pattern will constitute the church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Without doubt, our salvation rests as much upon faith and obedience in this responsibility as it did upon our repentance and baptism at conversion. But we must believe that all things are possible with God.

Having been thoroughly convinced that unity is a must if the world is to believe on the Son of God, the elders vigorously begin the task. How shall they proceed?

If they "go before" the sheep as the chief Shepherd did, the members will follow. Why will they? They know and respect the voice of their shepherds. Of course, if the leaders are strangers to the flock, the sheep will not follow but will flee from them, for they know not the voice of strangers, John 10:4-5. Since shepherds of this kind are highly esteemed in love for their character and works' sake, they can and will have teamwork. For example, if the congregation convenes for worship Lord's Day morning and evenings, every member not unavoidably hindered will be there. If just one should fail to take his place, the good shepherds will rush to the aid of the ailing or absent member. If the divine prescription is followed, he will be restored to his place of fruitfulness in the vineyard. Should all efforts fail to revive the lukewarm over a reasonable period of time, the unfruitful branch must be removed. In like manner the highly respected leaders will inspire every member to take his place in the Bible classes and other activities designed to seek and to save the lost.

There is no challenge which faces the church today more serious than that of watching for the souls of church members, Heb. 13:17.

FAITH (Cont.)

Peter wrote to the brethren of the Dispersion and said that someday, after the proving of their faith even by fire, they would receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls (1 Pet. 1:1-9).

The beauties and blessedness of this salvation is depicted many times throughout the pages of God's word, but especially so in Revelation 21. One may marvel at the beauty of the Grand Canyon and wonder at the loveliness of the Florida Everglades but such earthly wonderments are infinitely transcended by the stupendous beauties and incredible blessedness of heaven's canyons and everglades.

To enjoy all of God's gracious gifts vouchsafed to His supreme creation man must begin his life in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, have faith enough to commit his life to Christ for full salvation, and live and end his life with the glorious expectation of the full and final salvation which the Lord promised to the faithful.

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Practice of Feet Washing (Cont.)

What's Right With Young People?

By P. D. Wilmeth

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." John 13:14-15. This is a conditional statement—"If I have washed your feet." Has Jesus washed your feet? IF I have washed your feet YOU ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given YOU an example, that YOU should do as I have DONE to YOU. To whom did Jesus give this example? Those whose feet he had washed. This command and example is given to a specific group, the apostles. The apostles did not teach others to keep this practice. The apostles were promised guidance into all truth (John 16:13). Jesus gave all his commands to them after his ascension (Acts 1:2). They preached the whole counsel of God and wrote it (Acts 20:27, 1 Cor. 14:37). They declared that all things pertaining to life and godliness had been given (2 Pet. 1:3). No place in their writings did they command, or give an example, of the religious practice of feet-washing. The New Testament became of force after Jesus died (Heb. 9:16-17). We must abide within it (2 John 9). We cannot practice washing feet as a religious act and abide within the teachings of the New Testament.

The Scriptures do not teach that Jesus instituted the practice of feet-washing. This was a custom of the people as far back as Abraham (Gen. 18:4, 19:2, 24:32, 1 Sam. 25:41, Luke 7:44). It was an act of hospitality (Luke 7:44). It was an act of kindness, and falls into the class of good works and not of worship. Good works is what we practice one to another, worship is the service we express unto God. The only mention of feet-washing after the death of Christ shows it to be among good works rather than a worship practice. In 1 Tim. 5:9-10, Paul wrote, "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." Like bringing up children, lodging strangers, relieving the afflicted, washing feet was an act of kindness, and classified as good works. If a person is sick and we wash their feet, we are doing what this says. If a person is tired and would like to have their feet washed when entering our home, and we do this, we are practicing what this teaches. However, when we try to bring feet-washing into the worship assembly and make it an act of worship, we are perverting the teaching of Jesus, and acting presumptuously rather than by divine authority.

It seems to be open season on young people. Someone is always saying, "The trouble with young people these days is"; and then he or she goes on a tirade of tongue lashing (in absentia, of course). There are essentially two schools of thought about young people. One says that this generation of young people is about the finest, the noblest, and the most angelic the world has ever produced; equipped with angelic wings ready to sprout from their shoulder blades. The other viewpoint holds to the idea that the younger set, horns or no horns, is plunging the world into the abyss. Without seeming to be contentious, this writer agrees with neither school. Young people today are about as they were when grandfather wore rompers—they're neither better nor worse than their predecessors.

Since no one asked that I write on this particular topic, but because I chose to write on it, let me put in my two cents worth now and tell you what I think is right with young people.

(1). Modern Young People Are Enthusiastic. This is a remarkable virtue, which in every generation has removed mountains of difficulties, produced and promoted worthy reforms, widened horizons, and substituted old worlds for new ones. Copernicus was thirty years old when he became convinced that the sun, not the earth, was the center of the solar system. Jesus of Nazareth was about thirty when he began his world shaking ministry, which has influenced more of mankind than any other solitary individual. Dr. Salks, discoverer of polio vaccine, was a young man, scarcely past forty. The problems which baffle us—the cure of cancer, heart disease, atomic control, racial animosities, world peace, are being enthusiastically tackled by young people. New worlds cannot be built without the burning fires of youthful enthusiasm.

(2). Modern Young People Are in Love with Life. In a world so tattered and torn, modern youth looks upon life with boundless and reckless abandon. By and large young people are congenial optimists. They are madly in love with life. Life for them is a glorious adventure, and for them, they are determined to make the most of it. While life may be filled with shadows, they, like the sunflower naturally gravitate toward the light.

(3). Modern Youth is Frank. They are quite candid and frank about everything. Their brazen ways are often the open expressions of what their fathers before them did in secrecy. If they rebel against our conventional systems, they do it with

candor. If they have doubts, they express them. There is an openness about their lives that is quite admirable.

(4). They are Fundamentally Good. Young people believe in fair play, they believe in our democratic rules, believe in themselves, in God, in their future. They are relatively free from prejudice. Boys and girls are more often than not, the reflection of the world in which they live, duplicates of parents, who made them as they are.

(5). They Didn't Make the World in Which They Live. Our Modern young people inherited their world from US. It seems that we have given them a pretty sorry mess. If they're going to make it better, we'd better praise them rather than criticize them; understand rather than misunderstand, believe in them rather than berate them.

Don't tell my children, but I have a suspicion this generation of young people is a wee bit better than the last. Don't you?

"The best way to make the congregation better is to improve yourself."

"The narrow way of which the Bible speaks is broad enough for any man who is not given to wobbling."

"You have life's machinery in reverse when you try to exalt yourself by lowering the other fellow."

"The man who rides a hobby generally wants the whole road to himself."

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