

# The example of Christ's foot washing

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- [ 0 : 00 ] We shall sing now to God's praise from Psalm 51. Psalm 51 and from verse 14 to the end.
- O God of my salvation, God, me from blood guiltiness set free, then shall my tongue aloud sing of thy righteousness.
- My closed lips, O Lord, by thee let them be opened, then shall thy praises by my mouth abroad be published. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it thee, nor wilt thou with burnt offering at all delight in thee.
- A broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice, a broken and a contrite heart, Lord, thou wilt not despise. Show kindness and do good, O Lord, to sigh on thine own hill.
- The walls of thy Jerusalem build up of thy goodwill. Then righteous offerings shall he please, and offerings burnt which they with whole burnt offerings and with calves shall on thine order lay.
- [ 1 : 18 ] We shall sing these verses, Psalm 51, from verse 14 to the end. O God of my salvation, God, me from blood guiltiness.
- O God of my salvation, God, me from blood guiltiness.
- Take me, Father, my salvation, my salvation, Lord. Sing, O God, my salvation, my salvation, my salvation, my salvation, my salvation.
- My closest lips, O Lord, by Thee, let them be whole to earth.
- Then shall I be present, I, my Lord, upon Thee, let them be whole to earth.
- [ 2 : 42 ] For love desires no sacrifice, as O thy charity.
- Nor bread or bread, many ■■■■■■ Monica County was raved in, A broken place to God, a teaching sacrifice, A broken place to God, a broken place to God.
- Your love will come to life, A broken place to God, a broken place to God.
- Your love will come to life, A broken place to God. The walls of the Jerusalem, Builder all the people, And writers on this heavenly place, And all things were used, With all the love in the hand of God, And all my love can be.
- I'd like us to turn again to the passage that we read, The Gospel of John chapter 13, And we can read at verse 13.
- [ 5 : 22 ] John chapter 13 at verse 13. He called me Master and Lord, And he say, Well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, Have washed your feet, He also ought to wash one another's feet.
- For I have given you an example, For I have given you an example, That ye should do as I have done to you. For I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord, Neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.
- If ye know these things, Happy are ye if ye do them. If I then, your Lord and Master, Have washed your feet, Ye also ought to wash one another's feet.
- The passage that we've read here is a much loved portion of the scripture.

And it comes, it records for us the events leading up to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 6 : 41 ] The well known preacher Jonathan Edwards said of the occasion where these words are found, That it is on many accounts the most remarkable night that ever was.

The most remarkable night the devil was. That is his opinion. And in these verses we find the Lord give to us by way of example or by way of symbol, Three things that stand out.

He partakes of the Passover. He institutes the Lord's Supper. And he washes the disciples' feet.

Three symbolic actions which are designed to speak to us.

Now usually the main focus of a study of this passage, apart from focusing on this evening's activities on the part of the Lord, which is what you would expect, it tells us about what he is about.

[ 8 : 35 ] It tells us what he intends. It tells us in very clear language what he is in the world to accomplish.

It tells us what it means to his disciples. And these teachings are essential.

Most commentators, most preachers would focus on the way he uses water. The primary teaching they say is the teaching of the need for regeneration.

Jesus taught us in John's Gospel that we must be born again. And that this is something that must take place in the experience of every person in order to be saved.

Professor Finlayson, I've got two quotations from him which are worth noting. He speaks first of all of the doctrine of regeneration and he says, He that is bathed, he who has had sin dealt with, with his guilt and condemnation removed, is now and forevermore in the sight of God clean every wood.

[ 10 : 08 ] He is accepted, He is accepted, justified from all things, freely and completely forgiven. That work will not need to be done again.

It is a once for all transaction. Eternity is written upon it. And surely Jesus does speak about regeneration.

And the way that the person who comes to the Lord Jesus Christ has sin dealt with in that way.

But the second part of what Jesus is saying here is equally important. And is consequent upon regeneration. It is the washing of sanctification.

If there is a washing of regeneration, there must also be a washing of sanctification. As our feet walk in this world.

[ 11 : 13 ] It is clear that there is a need to be bathed. The example we are given here, the conversation that is held between the Lord and Peter.

We can't doubt that Peter was born again. We can't doubt that Peter experienced regeneration. And yet Peter was a victim of the devil's wiles.

He was someone who was ensnared by the devil. Peter was someone who was bold.

Bold enough to say, not I Lord. I'll never betray you. I'll never go away from you. Death will take me first.

And that's the very route that the devil took. To take Peter out of the path of obedience. And we all know from the scripture what that meant.

[ 12 : 30 ] The second quotation from Finlayson applies to Peter as much as it applies to any person that the Lord deals with. Who has experienced the wickedness of the enemy of our soul when it gains the better of us.

Jesus, he says, loves us too much, too dearly to leave our cleansing to another. He will drag us into the searchlight of his own presence.

He will uncover our pollution and lay bare our sin. He will pass nothing by. He will excuse nothing. He will condone nothing.

For it is his will that no sin should find a hiding place in your nature and mine. As usual, Professor Finlayson hits the nail on the head with regard to both of these doctrines.

And he reminds us of the essential teaching of this passage.

[ 13 : 44 ] And yet there is a third teaching here. Dare I say that it is a teaching that is equally important.

Although not as often highlighted or referred to. In verse 15, Jesus says, I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you.

Now, if we are thinking of the main body of teaching that we have in this passage.

We can't follow the example of Jesus as far as regeneration is concerned. This is the activity of the divine.

This is the role of God. Whether it is directly through the intervention of the Lord Jesus or the Holy Spirit acting in that role where he brings the sin that is in the experience of the sin.

[ 15 : 05 ] The sin to light. And he convicts and he converts. Nor can we believe it to be that Jesus is saying that we are to follow the example that he has in sanctification.

Because again, it is the role of the Holy Spirit. Because again, it is the role of the Holy Spirit to sanctify the sinner. To bring the evidence of sin to light.

So that the sinner turns from it to God. So how then can we look at this passage and consider an example that is set before us?

And an example that we are to follow. So we know that the Lord Jesus Christ and mostly emphasis on this, the emphasis of the servitude of Christ.

The willingness that he portrays where he takes a basin and he wraps a towel around his waist and he washes the feet of his disciples.

[ 16 : 24 ] And the focus of most, falls upon that. The example of Christ's willingness to serve. And the insistence that those who are his followers should serve in the way that he serves.

In this way. In this way. We know that the New Testament highlights for us. The way Christ came into the world. He took our nations.

Not long since we considered or referred to his incarnation. And the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians.

Where Christ is described as one who humbled himself. And that humbling of himself was not just simply summed up in his incarnation.

But in what he endured as a result of his incarnation. That he went to the cross. That he suffered death on the cross. That he experienced the grave.

[ 17 : 35 ] And all of that is part of his humiliation. Now, does he call the believer to follow that example?

There are situations perhaps that experiences the believer may have. May correspond in a measure to the sufferings of Christ.

But never in the extent or to the extent that Christ had to endure them. Nor can they experience humiliation to the degree that he experienced humiliation.

So the question follows. If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet. Ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

We have to see if there is a specific way in which that washing of one another's feet. Is something that we should do.

[ 18 : 39 ] In the example that Christ offers to us. Now, maybe not everyone will agree with this. And not everybody certainly highlights it.

But I believe that if it is an example that Christ has set us. Then we are expected to at least ask the question.

How are we meant to follow that example? In what way? And I suppose the most obvious thing that we can say is.

That you can't wash somebody's feet. Without being in close proximity to that person. Is that not obvious? Maybe it is so obvious it doesn't need to be said.

But you have to remember it. Christ asks us to wash one another's feet. And if we are engaged in that activity.

[ 19 : 42 ] We must do it as he did it. In the presence of his disciples. Not just in their presence. But actively engaged in doing this very thing.

He took a basin. He took water. He took a towel. He knelt down. He washed their feet. It is a very deliberate picture that we are given.

So that must be where we begin. How can we follow this example with regard to those that we are expected to show.

Or to follow this example. And we need to find out or explore what the symbolism is saying to us.

Now some people have ignored the symbolism. If you remember we quoted the words of Jonathan Edwards.

[ 20 : 51 ] He saw three things being symbolised here. The symbolism that is contained within the Passover. The symbolism that is contained within the Lord's Supper.

And the symbolism that is contained within the washing of feet. Now we can and it is possible to restrict the symbolism purely to the two areas that we have already mentioned.

The washing of regeneration and the washing of sanctification. But it is also possible because of the specific emphasis that he puts upon it.

As something that we must do. To understand this as being something that we are required to pursue. Some have deliberately ignored the symbolism and taken a literal understanding of it.

Some churches for example. Some churches for example. They have this literal understanding. And they have put the washing of feet almost as a sacramental thing.

[ 22 : 08 ] That the church is meant to engage in. They will have the sacrament of baptism. They will have the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But they will also have something akin to that.

Which is the washing of one another's feet. Within the context of a congregational activity. The Roman Catholic Church for example.

On one occasion during their liturgical calendar. The bishops, the hierarchy will take water. And they will wash the feet of the lesser clergy.

And some who are impoverished or whatever. Now that's taking a literal understanding of what is presented to us here in the scripture.

I don't believe for one minute that is what Christ expects of us. He doesn't expect of us to take, physically take water and bathe each other's feet.

[ 23 : 19 ] There may be occasions within the climate where this record belongs to. Where such an activity is praiseworthy.

Because if you are in the desert as we already heard mentioned in prayer. Who would want to live in a desert? Who would want to live in the wilderness?

Because there are many challenges to such an existence. But the Christian lives in a wilderness. And they beat downtrodden paths that they must walk in.

And their walk within that wilderness. Symbolically represents to us the need that there is for the feet of those walking in that path to be washed.

And it is something that we need to understand that this is Christ telling us this thing. It is probably something that not everybody will agree with.

[ 24 : 33 ] That as I said, if you are not walking with that person. If you are not in company with that person.

The opportunity to bathe their feet will not be yours. They will not have the opportunity of you bathing their feet. You will not have the opportunity of doing that for them.

If you think about it. You may disagree with this. But I don't think there has been a generation as clearly marked out as this one.

Where such opportunities are so scarce. We have never been so much estranged from our brothers and sisters in the Lord as we are currently.

Now you may blame Covid. You may blame circumstances and say. This is the reason why we don't have the opportunity to be in company with each other.

[ 25 : 51 ] For us to wash each other's feet. We will come to what it means to do that. But we cannot even think of doing it without first of all understanding that this is something that we can do.

And we are required to do. And we can only do it in company with those for whom we are able to do it. And if we are not fellowshiping with one another.

If we are not in company with the Lord's people the way we should be. This is not something we can do.

How if you were asked the question. Maybe you disagree. Or maybe you say. Well minister you are saying something there. And it is not true of me. I am often in company with the Lord's people.

I am very often in their company. I am often spending on sharing fellowship with them. Well if that is true of you then can I ask you a direct question.

[ 27 : 00 ] How often is the basin brought out? How often in that time of fellowship do you produce the basin to wash the feet of those you are fellowshiping with?

One of the commentators Ronald Wallace refers to the New Testament church in its origin. And he says this.

The early church had to depend continually on the fellowship of the community of believers. For the strength and courage needed to resist falling back into the seductive paganism of the local culture from which Christ had rescued them.

You understand what he is saying? You understand why the church in its early years saw it as important to be in fellowship with one another.

To keep each other. To protect one another. To ensure that those who are part of the fellowship would not revert back to the paganism from which Christ had taken it.

[ 28 : 29 ] It is a simple analogy. This had several advantages. The people of God encouraged one another. The strong supported the weak.

Those who needed to be instructed were instructed. I am not a fisherman. But I believe that if a salmon is in the river.

It needs to keep its nose going into the stream. If it is turned on its tail it will probably drown.

It is not designed the gills would fill it with water. We have people who are fishermen here who will tell you if that is true or not. But the Christian is someone who is designed to keep their nose in the stream facing forwards.

And there is always something battering you to turn you out of the way. And the Lord's people encourage one another so that together they go on.

[ 29 : 40 ] Together they go forward. Together they resist what it is that comes against them. One of the older bishops.

There were good bishops and many of them had many good things to say. And he said this. No true Christian is his own man.

No true Christian is his own man. Because that Christian is somebody who constantly sets himself up so that by example to others.

He is able to support others. Sometimes to admonish. Sometimes to pray with them or for them. Sometimes to just be there and let others know that that is what they are.

Now, if you refer to most of the commentators, they will all highlight the fact that Christ was doing what he was doing here out of love.

[ 30 : 58 ] The love of Christ is highlighted. The love of Christ is all important. If you read on in this chapter, you get down to verse 33.

Little children, yet a little while am I with you. You shall seek me. And as I said unto the Jews, whether I go, you cannot come. So now I say to you, a new commandment I give unto you, that you 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 loved one to another. What Christ is saying to them, what the commentators are saying here, is that Christ is epitomizing somebody who is loving in what he is doing.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that who so help believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life. It was a loving act on the part of God. It was a loving act on the part of the son to give himself to death.

It is a loving act on his part here, as he drapes the towel around his waist and washes the disciples' feet. When we wash our friends' feet, how do we go about it?

[ 32 : 21 ] Well, I think there is a warning that comes. If we want anyone to wash our feet, we make sure that the water is at the right temperature.

That might seem obvious. I remember when I was growing up, I was washing my feet in a basin.

And my mother called one of my brothers and said, go and get the kettle. But he didn't take my feet out before he poured the water in.

And I was pretty scalded, I can tell you. It was just thoughtlessness. We cannot be thoughtless when it comes to washing our brethren's feet, our sisters' feet.

We use water because water is what washes. But we don't scald and we don't use freezing cold water either.

[ 33 : 28 ] We are conscious of what we are about. How we respond. How do we wash? That's the key question as at once.

This is what this is all about. What are we actually doing when we wash one another's feet? Well, what we are doing is, we are ensuring that the dirt of this wilderness is taken away.

And that the dirt of this wilderness is not going to adhere to us. And to ensure that we kept away from what will pollute and what will stain.

We have often heard it said about some. That they can't dish it out. And that's when it comes to being critical of somebody.

That they can't dish it out but they can't take it. What's important about what Christ is asking us to do here. To wash one another's feet.

[ 34 : 40 ] What he did was loving. What he did was more than was expected of him. What he did, he probably didn't understand at the time.

But when we wash each other's feet, we need to be willing to do it first of all. And we also need to be willing to have it done to ourselves.

And both things are important. And both things are not easy. Because sometimes when you go about washing the feet of your brother or your sister, it may be that you are doing something there that needs to be done.

You may need to highlight something about that person's life. About that person's behaviour. About that person's relationship with Christ that is not as it ought to be.

But you are doing it out of love. You are doing it because you are exercising your charitable duty as a Christian, following the example that Christ has set.

[ 36 : 02 ] And the other side of that is when a brother or a sister comes to you with a word of rebuke. What do you do?

Do you throw the water back in the face? More often than not, that's what we would do. Because we are not ready to receive the correction that our misbehaviour merits.

That requires grace. It requires grace to give it. The advice given by a minister of a long standing was this.

Seek to wash others lovingly and quietly. Lovingly and quietly.

I've seen Christians and they said about this business with great vigour. They are following the commandment.

[ 37 : 06 ] They are following the injunction to wash the feet of the disciples. But they are more or less encouraging them to come and see me do this. That's not the right spirit.

That's not the way Christ would have us do it. We can do it quietly and effectively. And we can do it with love at the heart of it.

But we are to do it. We should not be engaged in this with any unnecessary ardour if it's not the ardour of love.

I remember a Christian elder in our own congregation. I don't think he ever went about to deliver a word of rebuke in a way that you would think it was a word of rebuke.

But if the rebuke was merited, you knew it was there. Very often he would turn things on its head. And he would be the culprit.

[ 38 : 23 ] He would be the criminal. He would be the person who had wronged or done wrong. But really you understood. He was highlighting a deficiency in what you were doing or not doing.

And he was bringing you back gently. He was correcting your behaviour in a way that benefited you far more than somebody who came along with a sledgehammer and tried to ram home something that you instinctively resisted.

Christ encourages us to wash one another's feet. We must begin to be in a place where we can do that.

Whatever, we can't do it from a distance. Even if we're reduced to phoning one another or texting one another or emailing one another. if that's what we have so be it but you cannot do that and administer the water that Christ means us to apply without having the relationship necessary to allow that to happen you can't go to a stranger and tell them I'm going to wash your feet they would look at you and see if you were out of this world but when a friend comes when a brother or sister in the Lord comes they've got to have won that right they have got to earn your respect they've got to know that what you're doing they know the heart behind it and that is not something that we're cultivating the way we should we often talk about the need for discipleship and this is where it begins within the church of Christ this is where it begins where we are got to know each other got to know where we are where we've come from where we expect to go you cannot do that to strangers well may God bless to us these few thoughts let us pray

Lord help us to overcome our many shortcomings we pray that you would dismiss from our sight anything that we have said that is amiss or not in keeping with your own word help us to recognize the needs that we have for being in fellowship with your people to be isolated from them to be cut off from them it's not healthy it's not wholesome it's not advantageous remind us of the need that we have not only to walk with you our Lord but to walk with those who have you as their Lord continue to watch over us and remember our congregation here remember those who fall part of it as we heard those who are of that number who are unwell at the present sanctify every dealing that you have with us in providence cleanse from sin in Jesus name

[ 41 : 57 ] Amen we're closing psalm in Gaelic we're going to sing from Psalm 119 Psalm 119 and at verse 63 Svearcomen mees campano to an raan to an yegolub ston aehtion gout a choinatis fos di rangen tan gout ló u heoan an alo van tot a graas tot a rochot hair tigshig siolus tabadho at a statjishiv ron eiv Svearcomen mees campano ton raan thanjakob at a miracle so we always as we

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 46 : 02 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Amen.