

March 24, 2023

Why the Foot-Washing Service?

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Last Friday evening, we took a closer look at Christ's explanation of why he instituted the Foot-Washing part of the Passover service. The last statement by Christ gave us insight into His mind and how we are to be and follow His example.

Tonight, this Friday evening, we'll continue and I'll answer the question, *Why the foot-washing service?* I'm going to share several scriptures to look up and read as we go through this evening's letter. Many of you have mentioned "how helpful it is to have these letters to be able to aid in your study on the Sabbath."

First, I'd like to read John 13:14. *"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet"*. So many gloss over this clear statement and/or ignore it all together.

Here are the reasons Christ gave us by His example why the foot-washing should be part of the Passover service.

- 1) Because Christ commands us (you and me) to do it.
- 2) It is at its core an ordinance of humility. Even subliminally, God wants this humility to occur, to put our mind in the proper mood and perspective. Serving also means an attitude, not just a physical act or thing. If we are not careful, we can be involved in all kinds of "church activities" and miss what our heart and mind must be doing and do so without even being in a serving attitude.
- 3) We learn through the foot-washing that the servant is not greater than the master. This part of the Passover service places you in the literal position of a servant. Jesus Christ symbolizes His office of being a servant, and not simply to be

served.

You see, when God, He, the Father, and the Word decided to make the plan of bringing all mankind into the family of God, to be children of God, one of them chose to be subservient, and come to earth to die for all of us. From the very beginning, that plan they created, and agreed to, was about service, and giving up for all.

What He says can apply both to earthly relationships of masters and servants, as well as to a human's spiritual relationship to Christ. We can see in the pages of the gospels that it also describes how Jesus approached His relationship with God the Father.

Christ, the one sent, is not greater than the one who sent Him (God the father).

But that's not the way most of the world sees it - is it? As I've mentioned in messages over the years - "the world ignores the Father". Some even teach that "He was that mean old God of the Old Testament." Although that perspective shows a misunderstanding of who the God of the O.T. was...it was the Word, the Logos, the one that became Christ. (John 1:14)

4) Another lesson that the foot-washing teaches us, is that Christ cleanses us. Christ is the Word of God. The disciples were washed by the water of the Word.

Notice Peter's reaction when Christ came to him. *"You shouldn't wash my feet"*. Christ said *"if I don't wash you, you have no part in me"*. Peter said, *"Not just my feet, but wash me thoroughly"*.

Remember David's words in Psalm 51:2, where David prays, *"Wash me thoroughly"*.

Before we can symbolically eat Christ's body and drink his blood, we have to be washed by him. Each year as our feet are washed, we need to remember that a servant (one of your dear family or brethren) of Jesus Christ is acting on His behalf to wash our feet.

5) Another lesson we can learn, is that we have an intricate role to play in washing

one another's feet. Christ does the washing, but we help our brethren be clean. To wash and be washed. So, foot-washing demonstrates Divine Love. Its purpose was designed for showing selfless love for people, (all mankind) and being willing to forgive others.

In John 13:14, Christ says, "*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*"

- Is this just teaching the disciples to serve one another? Jesus made it clear that the washing of feet symbolized forgiveness of sin, or being clean.
- Do you and I have a responsibility to forgive one another? Yes, we do!

Jesus Christ was betrayed by one of the people whose feet he washed, and deserted by the rest. All mistreated him. And because of their actions, he had to die.

Yet he served them. We offend one another don't we? We do things we shouldn't, or don't do things we should. We need to be both the ones forgiven, (made clean) ...and those who forgive, (or by example we wash feet.)

When the scripture says "*Happy Are you...*" there's a very profound reason it says that!

Finally, let's again notice John 13:17, where Jesus concludes His comments on foot-washing: "*If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.*" We observe that His emphasis is on their application, not on whether we know about them or even understand them.

In this verse, Christ makes a very positive statement: We will be happy if we put this teaching into practice.

He knew that grudges, hate, anger, and lack of forgiveness - do nothing but shackle us and hinder our spiritual growth. Forgiving those who have done things against us releases us from feelings of animosity. It allows us to be happy.

So, you and I need to wash feet, as much as we need to be washed.

Friends and brethren, most people in this world do not do it. Why? Because washing one another's feet is too embarrassing for them. Today we do not wear sandals, (although flip flops are becoming more and more popular) so we do not have to have servants in our homes, or wash our own feet for that matter when we enter into our homes as they did then. But...the principal is the same.

We find SERVICE-LOYALTY-FRIENDSHIP all in a foot-washing attitude of service.

God is called "Father" in the Bible because He wants "children" ...not just one child, but as He states "many sons to glory".

The foot-washing service conveys in us the attitude God wants us to have...that He already has! We should desire to be part of a family.

He also wants us to have a face to face relationship with Him. The foot-washing service gives us a face to face relationship with each other. You cannot get much closer to each other physically, than when washing one another's feet. Might I recommend looking into the eyes of the person whose feet you are washing? As parents, we look at our children, holding them, and we desire a relationship with them. God is no different with us.

Another important aspect of the foot-washing service is that it also shows us that none of us is better than another. We are to serve God and serve one another.

John 13:1 Here we read the Passover account. For 3 ½ years Christ had served His disciples. He loved them until the end. Hanging on the cross or stake, He thought about them.

We learn that love, outgoing concern, obedience...all are tied together. Friends, we can, and must learn that we have an opportunity to have a unique relationship with people within the body of Christ or the family of God. Even extending out to this world, do we reach out to others as future children of God?

Unfortunately, this world rubs off on us, and we often become abrasive, hard, and develop an outer shell that some cannot break into. What are we afraid of? That others will see our humanity?

When was the last time you or I honestly served one of the members of God's family? I hope that we are not so busy in our lives, we only "serve" when we come to the Passover and wash feet.

Let's look quickly at John 13:2-3. During verse 3 Christ was thinking about returning back to the Father. It's quite thought provoking to read this.

Perhaps we might think it would have been a good time for Him to have said, "Ah, forget this part of the Passover...I am going home" But, Christ didn't do give up on the plan He and the Father had designed and agreed to fulfill.

Vs 7 Peter did not totally understand what the Foot Washing symbolized. The disciples knew that Christ was representing the servant that washed feet at the door.

Vs 8 It boggled their minds to see Christ stooping this low, down to their level (His students) to wash their feet.

A couple more verses to consider please.

Matthew 20:25-27, In verse 24 we see a very intense feeling. In verse 25 i.e. "dominion", that word meant harsh rulership. Verse 26 in the original Greek, meant a "servant, minister".

And what can we learn from verse 27? It's asking us, have we come into the church or body of Christ to serve?

We come to the Passover, partly because we all have made mistakes, and sinned, and we need reconciliation. But there is a lot more to it.

Notice Luke 12:31. Here we see a very graphic point about service. In verse 32 The Father is excited about giving us the Kingdom. In verse 33 we read the word "sell"- we are showing an attitude of self-sacrifice and service. We might ask, where is our focus, you and me?

Vs 36-37 He girded himself, with special clothing, showing a willing attitude of service, in which the end result will be the same. Christ will serve at the Marriage Supper! He won't sit at the head table expecting to be served, or have reserved

seating and a roped off area.

When we gather together to take the Passover this year, and begin to do the foot-washing, may we remember and consider these things we've discussed.

- 1) Christ Commands us to do it.
- 2) It is an ordinance of Humility.
- 3) We learn through the foot-washing that the servant is not greater than the master. This service places you in the literal position of a servant. Christ symbolizes His office of being a servant.
- 4) The foot-washing is symbolic of Christ cleaning us. It reminds us that He is the one who washes us. Before we take the bread and the wine, we need to be clean.
- 5) Foot-washing reminds us that we need to forgive. We have a part in helping others be cleansed.

May we all look forward to the Passover with Joy, and realize that Christ wants us to be unified, one mind, one body, and one Spirit. Foot-washing gives us the opportunity to truly serve God and one another, and to become like our Lord and Savior, High Priest, elder brother, and friend...Jesus the Christ. May we all remember John's words penned under inspiration from God in John 13:12. *"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?"*

Then finally in verse 17, He clearly states, *"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."*

In a little over a week, you and I will take part (as the body will as a whole) in the Passover service. May it be a joyful experience reflecting on the blessing of what He has revealed to us.



Scott Hoefker
Pastor, CGM

Church of God Ministries (CGM)
(Ministerios de la Iglesia de Dios)
tshoefker@cogministries.org
www.cogministries.org

P.O. Box 983
Daphne, AL, 36526-0983
251-930-1797 Office