

Footwashing

Having a Part with the Lord



Basic Beliefs //
GOSPEL SERIES

Footwashing

Having a Part with the Lord



Booklets in the Gospel Series

Our Basic Beliefs: An Introductory Brochure
Holy Bible: Word of God
Jesus Christ: Lord and Savior
Salvation: Gift of Grace
Baptism: Cleansing of Sins
Footwashing: Having a Part with the Lord
Holy Spirit: Helper and Counselor
Holy Communion: Remembrance of the Lord
Sabbath Day: Holy Day of Rest
Church: Body of Christ
Coming of Christ: Judgment Day

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ON THE WAY TO THE CROSS

In a matter of hours, Jesus would be betrayed by one of His own, tried before the Jewish council, and sentenced to death. And Jesus knew that. He would have to leave behind His followers and carry the cross to the execution site.

There He would suffer ridicule, torture, and most bitter of all, God's rejection. He would die as a ransom for the sins of the world and be buried. Then He would be raised to life and return to His glorious kingdom in heaven.



At this moment of departure, the Lord Jesus shared an evening meal with His disciples. John, a disciple of Jesus, recorded an important event that took place during this meal. The Lord Jesus “rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded” (John 13:4–5).



A PERFECT LOVE

Jesus' action was more than just a departing gesture. In washing His disciples' feet, Jesus demonstrated His deep concern for the spiritual lives of His disciples. It was an act of love.

"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13:1).

The master was going away. He wanted to show His disciples that He loved them to the end. He did so by washing their feet.

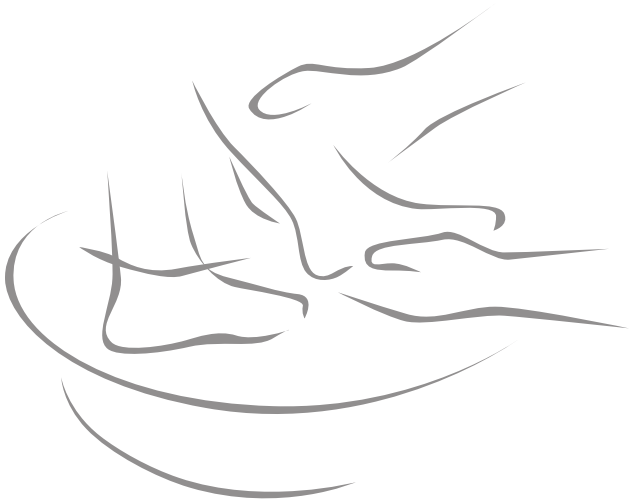


THE SACRAMENT OF FOOTWASHING

Like baptism, footwashing is a sacrament: a divine act which the Lord commanded the believers to receive and imitate.

Jesus said, “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean” (John 13:10). With this analogy, the Lord demonstrated that a believer needs to accept footwashing after he has been baptized.

When we receive the sacrament, a brother or sister in Christ performs the footwashing, but in spirit, it is our Lord who washes our feet. It is the Lord’s reminder to us of His eternal love and a call to live forever under His love.



HAVING A PART WITH THE LORD

According to the Lord's command, the church today washes the feet of the baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The person administering the sacrament follows the example left by Jesus and washes each new believer's feet and dries them with a towel.

The observance of footwashing is not merely symbolic. It is a command from the Lord. Its effect is to "have a part" with our Lord Jesus (SEE John 13:8).



To have a part with Jesus is to have a part in His life. God's saving grace does not end at baptism—it is a life-long gift.

In order to participate in this lasting relationship, we need to accept the footwashing by our Lord. Behind this act of washing lies the full extent of Christ's unfailing love.



IN OUR MASTER'S FOOTSTEPS

God calls on Christians to forsake the sinful influences of our society. He also commands us to walk daily in the footsteps of Christ, imitating Him in our words and deeds.

Peter explains that God enables us to imitate His nature.

“His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:3-4).



Footwashing is a call to such a godly Christian life.
We are to walk daily with our Lord, following His
example each step of the way.



Participating in His Holiness

Our feet represent our behavior and lifestyle. The Lord Jesus cleanses all our past sins through baptism. But we still need to continue our lives in a world filled with temptation, immorality, and godless values. We must leave our former life of sin and detest sin as much as God detests it.



To continue living in sin after we have heard the truth is to “trample the Son of God underfoot” (Hebrews 10:29) because it is disregarding our Lord Jesus’ sacrifice.

It grieves our Lord to see His children sin, knowing that sin brings on us troubles and hurts. Sin is a serious matter to God, so serious that He “did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all” (Romans 8:32). God loves us so much that He paid the greatest price to deliver us from sin. If we are willing to rely on Christ to help us overcome sin, He will create in us a new heart after the image of God.

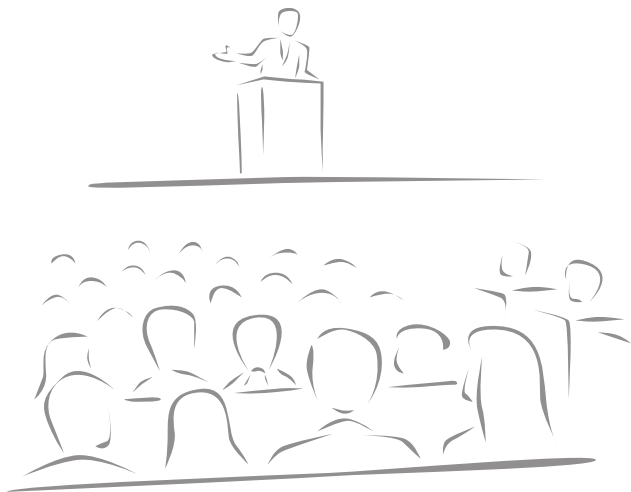


We also need to let the word of God “wash” our feet, by listening to and obeying the teachings of the Bible. The word of God keeps our feet from straying. A psalmist writes, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). God’s word directs the way that we should go in life.

Participating in His Body

Jesus commanded His followers to wash each other's feet. He expected His followers to live with each other as He lived with them—gentle, patient, and loving.

He also wanted them to teach all who were to be baptized in His name to obey everything He had commanded them. "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20 NIV). Jesus Christ continues to live among believers through the teachings of the church.



David, a king in Israel, said, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.' Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!" (Psalm 122:1-2). Jerusalem was where God's temple resided. For Christians, Jerusalem symbolizes the church, the body of Christ. To let our feet stand within the gates of Jerusalem is to remain in the community of believers and adhere to the gospel of salvation which God has given to the church.



Christian life goes hand in hand with church life. When Christians gather and worship in Jesus' name, the Lord is there among them. The grace of the Lord, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit flow out through the church to each member. The church, by means of sermons and Bible studies, imparts Christ's teachings in order that we may live by them. Having part with Christ, therefore, also means being part of the church.

Participating in His Love

After His last meal with the disciples, Jesus left them these words:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35).

Love is the mark of Christians, because “God is love” (1 John 4:8). When we receive footwashing, we receive Christ’s call to share God’s love. We are to love others with the love of God.



We must love by humbly serving others. Jesus exemplified such humility. In the ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman world, the washing of feet was often the lowest form of servitude, a task delegated to slaves. But Jesus, the glorious king of heaven, got down and washed the feet of sinners. Most amazing of all, He even washed the feet of His betrayer!



The loving example of our Master compels us to do likewise. Jesus said, “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:15–17). If our Master bows down to serve us, His unworthy followers, how much more ought we to serve each other!

True love is not merely a feeling or a philosophy. It is demonstrated through actions. By washing our feet, Christ sends us the message that we should love our neighbors, and even our enemies. Christ laid down His life for us while we were still His enemies. He wants us in turn to lay down our lives for others, even if they are ungrateful. We must determine to send our feet into the world and bring the good news of salvation to everyone. May our footprints be the imprints of God’s love in the world.

“YOU WILL BE BLESSED...”

Our Savior wants you to accept His unceasing love and have a part in Him. He offers to wash your feet. When Peter heard the Lord’s words, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me” (John 13:8), he wasted no time in accepting the washing.

Having a part with Christ means everything; it means your share in His promises; it means your share in His kingdom. Commit your life of faith to the loving care of the Master and let Him wash your feet.

And after you have done so, put into practice the teachings of footwashing by humbly loving, serving, and forgiving others. To those who obey and follow the example left by our Lord, this is His promise, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:17).



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