

## 006: Keeping Your Feet Clean

*(based on Ch. 5 from The End of the Pilgrimage)*

### Have you ever had a paradigm shift?

- Oftentimes, God allows events and circumstances in our lives for the purpose of instructing us, impacting us, and changing our perspective.
- I look back on my own life at certain times when something significant occurred, and God used it to change my thinking about life and eternity.
- I had a paradigm shift, if you will.
- In John 13 I believe Peter has a paradigm shift.
- His way of thinking about discipleship is radically changed, thanks to an illustration used by Jesus.
- Peter begins to understand a spiritual truth he had not previously grasped.
- His new understanding matures over the course of his life and more than thirty years later resonates from the epistles he writes as an older, wiser man.
- Let's first examine Peter's encounter with Jesus and then fast forward to his inspired writings.

### I will read John 13:1, 4-7

- **1** 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.
- **4** He rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.
- **5** 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.
- **6** Then He came to Simon Peter. And *Peter* said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

- **7** Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

### The context, of course, is the last supper in the upper room.

- Later this evening Judas will betray Jesus, resulting in His trial and crucifixion the next day.
- But presently Jesus is with His disciples, and because of His great love for these men, He spends several of His final hours teaching them about discipleship, preparing them for life and ministry.
- I marvel to think that Jesus is able to stay focused on discipling others, knowing His hour has come.

### Notice the statement at the end of v. 7:

- "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."
- Certainly, Peter will learn more as Christ's foot-washing illustration unfolds, but it seems Jesus is pointing to the more distant future.
- As if to say, "Peter, you don't understand this fully right now, but one day you will understand completely."
- Some commentators point out what Peter will come to understand is the importance of humility and service.
- Undoubtedly, that is part of the lesson.

### According to the parallel passage in Luke 22, the disciples have been arguing at the dinner table about who will be greatest in the kingdom.

- needless to say, none of the disciples have volunteered to wash feet upon arriving in the upper room, though it would have been customary to wash at that time.
- foot washing was necessary in their day because of the dusty roads and their sandal-type shoes
- their feet would get quite dirty while walking about

- so upon entering a home, then would wash their feet, or the host would provide a servant to do so
- Simply put, the disciples are too self-focused to even think about washing the feet of the others
- they are more concerned about who will be greatest in the kingdom
- Thus, Jesus teaches and demonstrates the importance of humility and service.
- And certainly, Peter does come to understand that principle in a greater way as time passes and he matures in the Lord.
- However, there is a greater truth here, I believe, that Peter needs to embrace, and it indubitably results in a paradigm shift for Peter.
- it is found in v. 8

8 Peter said to Him, “You shall never wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.”

- Peter protests, “You will *never* wash *my* feet!”
- He cannot fathom having the Messiah serve in such a lowly way.
- But Jesus cautions, “If you do not allow me to wash your feet, you will have no part with me.”
- Ah! Herein lies the truth Peter must learn.
- To have part with Christ, a believer — for Peter is already a believer — must have clean feet, so to speak.

Peter’s response is impetuous, as usual.

- **9** Peter said to Him, “Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head!”
- Peter seems to get the point partly, but not entirely, for he blurts out, “Lord, if having a part with you requires me to be clean, then wash my entire body!”

- I want to be in complete connection with you, Lord, so make me squeaky clean, from head to toe!”
- Jesus graciously and patiently continues to instruct His disciples in this truth.
- Christ says in vs. 10-11:
- **10** “He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.”
- **11** For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, “You are not all clean.”

From this text it becomes obvious there are two types of washing, representing two spiritual truths.

- The first is complete, thorough washing — head to toe — represented by the phrase, *He who is bathed ... is completely clean.*
- In fact, the Greek word for *bathed* means completely bathed, the whole body
- and the tense of the verb suggests the phrase should be read, “He who HAS BEEN bathed.”
- it is something that has already happened in the past
- Some say the spiritual truth conveyed by this image is regeneration, when you believed on Jesus for eternal life and your spirit was transformed

at that point, Jesus completely cleansed you, bathed you, washed you head-to-toe

- **Titus 3:5** not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,
- Jesus may very well be talking about regeneration long ago in their past
- but that is viewing the text through our NT lens

- we have to put ourselves in the shoes of these OT Israelites were already believers in an OT sense
- what would they have been thinking when hearing a reference to head-to-toe washing?

I personally think that within their cultural context, they were thinking of John's baptism of repentance

- many had heard the preaching of John the Baptist and his call to repentance
- John urged the nation to get right with Jehovah in the spirit of 2 Chron. 7:14
- the Jews were already OT believers, but their hearts had wandered in disobedience and they needed forgiveness and cleansing
- Jesus wanted the first century Jews to get right with Jehovah so they could become inheritors of the heavenly realm of the kingdom
- thus, those who heeded John's message were then baptized by immersion in the Jordan River to signify their sins had been cleansed
- it was ritual cleansing, head-to-toe, much like the OT priests experienced initially, when they entered the priesthood

Peter and the other disciples were baptized by John, and so was Jesus

- not that Jesus had any sins to cleanse – of course, He did NOT
- but he submitted to baptism we are told, "to fulfill all righteousness"
- He desired to picture the ritual cleansing that was symbolized by immersion

- baptism doesn't save anyone, of course, but in the case of first century Jews, they submitted to water baptism by immersion after they had repented of their sins –
- which had nothing to do with salvation
- it was like a believer getting right with God
- John's baptism of repentance for the remission of sins signaled their seriousness about going forward as a disciple
- I believe that is the head-to-toe cleansing Jesus is referring to here in John 13
- thus, Jesus is likely saying to Peter, "You don't need for me to wash you head-to-toe, because you've already been baptized by John"

In fact, 11 of the disciples in the room are completely clean, for they have been baptized

- But one is not, and that is Judas
- apparently, he had not submitted to John's baptism
- thus, Jesus says, "You are not all clean"
- So the first spiritual image is being completely washed, referring either to initial salvation in the sense of regeneration OR, more likely, John's baptism by immersion
- either way, the point Jesus is about to make going forward is the same
- that brings us to the second spiritual image, which is symbolized by cleansing of the feet only, not the whole body
- interestingly, the Greek word Jesus uses for THIS washing is different than the one He used previously when talking about head-to-toe washing

this Greek word conveys the idea of cleansing only a part, not the whole, much like what the OT priests would do before offering sacrifices in the tabernacle

- they didn't wash the whole body – that happened only once when they began their priesthood
- thereafter, they would only cleanse their hands and feet before sacrificing
- The eleven disciples, who are already completely washed, need only to have their feet washed.
- as I mentioned earlier, their feet would get quite dirty because of walking on dusty roads with sandal-type shoes
- Jesus is using this cultural reality to picture the temporal dirtiness we experience in our soul when we sin as a believer
- we get contaminated by the world and the flesh and we choose to sin

The defilement must not be allowed to remain.

- Sin must be confessed.
- In a manner of speaking, our feet must be washed regularly to cleanse away the temporal corruption of sin in our lives.
- King David, after sinning with Bathsheba, cried out in confession to God, *Create in me a clean heart, O God!*
- In other words, "Lord, wash my dirty soul that has been tainted by sin."
- Of course, such sin does not affect one's eternal standing as a child of God, but it does affect one's temporal fellowship with God.
- Our fellowship with Him can only be restored through confession, and it can only be maintained by walking in the light as He is in the light.

- **1 John 1:7** But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.
- **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We need to understand that Jesus was not establishing an ordinance of foot washing, nor was He merely teaching about the importance of being a servant.

- He was primarily giving a simple illustration that sin in the lives of saints will keep them from having a part with Christ.
- It is critical that we understand this word *part* in John 13:8, for it is a key word.
- One of Strong's definitions of this word is an "allotment, division or share" of something.
- It is sometimes translated *portion* in the New Testament.
- In fact, when the prodigal son decided to leave home, he went to his father, and asked for his *portion of goods that falls to me*, Luke 15:12.
- What was the prodigal requesting? He wanted his inheritance, his portion of the father's wealth.

Having a part with Christ is the idea of close communion and fellowship with Jesus.

- It is co-participation with Christ.
- It is becoming a joint-heir with Him and sharing His authority.
- According to Rom. 8:17, we know that to become Christ's joint-heir requires that we suffer with Him.
- That is what Peter will have to learn and understand later.
- In fact, most Christians don't grasp that concept up front.

- It takes time and maturity to have part with Christ.
- It is the heart-cry of a mature saint, for example, the apostle Paul in Phil. 3:10-11
- **Phil. 3:10** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
- **Phil. 3:11** if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

In summary, Jesus illustrates two spiritual truths in John 13, using the picture of two types of washing:

- **1. Washing of the whole person** — in the context of these first century Jews, it was likely the time when they got right with God and submitted to John's baptism of repentance
- of course, they were already believers when that happened
- their previous regeneration is assumed
- by way of application for you and me, this is not merely a reference to regeneration – that is the starting point, of course
- but if you have since wandered from the Lord it is the time of your repentance and seeking God's complete cleansing

for example, I distinctly remember a year in high school when I wandered away from the Lord in sinfulness

- I was a believer and had been for many years
- but I remember that day the Holy Spirit dealt with me, and I repented of my sins, asking God to forgive me and cleanse me
- he did – from head to toe – I had a clean heart again
- from that point forward, I didn't need head-to-toe cleansing, but needed to keep my feet clean, which, by

the grace of God, I have done through the years after sinning

- and that leads me to the second spiritual truth Jesus is illustrating in John 13

**2. Washing of the feet only** — representing cleansing from sin, in your soul, as a believer, when you confess sin, so that your fellowship with God is restored.

- When your feet are clean, you are walking in the light and the blood of Jesus continues to keep you cleansed in a sanctification sense.
- But if you, dear Christian, do not continue to keep your feet clean — if you continue to live in sin — then your fellowship with God is marred and your soul is NOT being saved.
- You will lose your soul, that is, your reward, at the Judgment Seat.
- You do not now, and will not then, have part with Christ.
- You will not co-participate with Him in his kingdom.
- The bottom line: you will not inherit the kingdom.
- What a lesson for Peter and the other disciples!
- Does Peter catch the truth as illustrated by Jesus in foot-washing?
- To answer that question, we must explore Peter's epistles

Listen to his words from 1 Peter 1:3-9

- **3** Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- **4** to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

- **5** who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
- **6** In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,
- **7** that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,
- **8** whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,
- **9** receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.

You already know from a previous study that there are two inheritances in the Scriptures.

- One is unconditional and refers to our eternal standing — we are children of God and, since children, then heirs.
- But the other is conditional, based on our spiritual works for Christ.
- If we are faithful, then we are considered inheritors of the kingdom, firstborn sons, co-heirs with Christ, in the sense that we will rule with Him in His coming kingdom.
- Thus, in every scripture passage where inheritance is mentioned, we must look contextually and see how it is being used — whether in the unconditional sense or in a conditional sense.
- Upon first glance, the *inheritance incorruptible* in 1 Peter 1:4 appears to be unconditional, for all saints.
- But I do not believe that is the case, as I hope to demonstrate.

What often confuses people is the phrase at the end of v. 4, *reserved in heaven for you.*

- The tendency is to assume that phrase is referring to eternal life.
- However, the reward is not Heaven, per se; the reward is *reserved* (i.e., held) in Heaven for the faithful.
- It is something other than Heaven itself.
- Jesus made this clear in the Gospels:
- **Matt. 6:19-20** Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Treasures on Earth do not refer to Earth itself, but rather to things that people value and store up on Earth.

- Obviously, these treasures are not available to everyone.
- For instance, your bank account cannot be accessed by me or anyone else.
- So treasures in Heaven do not refer to Heaven itself, but rather to rewards that Christians value and store up in the age to come that will not be available to all.
- They are reserved for the one who stores them up.
- Incidentally, laying up treasures in Heaven has nothing to do with initial salvation of one's spirit.
- If it did, then salvation would be by works.
- Storing up treasures in Heaven is a sanctification concept, a matter of salvation of the soul.
- In the text in 1 Peter, we find at least five evidences that inheritance is conditional.

#### 1. According to v. 9, soul-salvation is in view

- **9** receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.
- The salvation focus in this passage is not the salvation of the spirit that occurred in the past; it is the progressive

salvation/sanctification of the soul that culminates in the future, resulting in reward.

- It is what one receives.
- The word *receives* carries the idea of obtaining that which one rightly deserves, as demonstrated in the following verses where the same word is also used:
- **2 Cor. 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may **receive** the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
- But he who does wrong will **receive** (will be repaid) for the wrong which he has done: and there is no partiality. Col. 3:25
- **Heb. 10:36** For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may **receive** the promise:
- **1 Pet. 5:4** When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will **receive** the crown of glory that does not fade away.
- we find a second evidence that inheritance in 1 Peter 1 is conditional.

## **2. The reward is conditioned upon your faith**

- v. 9 says, "*receiving the end of your faith.*"
- The reward is the climax of a life of dependence on God.
- The word *end* means goal or consummation.
- It is the same basic word used by Jesus on the cross, when He cried out, "It is finished!"
- The end had come; the goal had been reached.
- The end of salvation for Christians is the Judgment Seat.
- At that time, our works will be judged and rewards will be given.
- The end of a faith-filled life will be positive reward, whereas the end of an unfaithful life will be negative reward, as we shall see in a future study

- we find a third evidence that inheritance in 1 Peter 1 is conditional.

## **3. The reward is contingent on enduring through sufferings**

- **7** that the genuineness of your faith ... though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,
- This clearly demonstrates that Peter's focus is on the Judgment Seat and rewards, not a so-called ticket to Heaven
- Notice that rewards are based on enduring in suffering.
- Other Scripture passages corroborate this point also.
- **Rom. 8:17** and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.
- **2 Tim. 2:12** If we endure (in sufferings), we shall also reign with *Him*.
- According to **James 1:2-4**, It is the trying of our faith that produces patience (endurance

If we cooperate with God in our suffering, having a sweet, enduring spirit, He will make us complete and mature, ready to meet Him at the Judgment Seat.

- Those saints who have endured their fiery trials on Earth will be equipped to endure the Judgment Seat fires (1 Cor. 3:13-15).
- To endure does not mean simply to make it through.
- To endure is to bear up under the pressure with joyfulness. **James 1:2** Count it all joy when you fall into various trials,
- Those who do will *be found unto praise and honor and glory*, when Christ appears (1 Peter 1:7).
- Those who do not endure their sufferings will be ashamed, the very thing John warns about in 1 John 2:28.

- we find a fourth evidence that inheritance in 1 Peter 1 is conditional.

#### **4. The reward is conditional in v. 5.**

- Our tendency is to put a period at the end of v. 4, like this:
- *To an inheritance incorruptible ... reserved in heaven for you.*
- PERIOD – but that is incorrect
- the sentence does not end there.
- It continues on into v. 5.
- the inheritance is reserved in heaven for you ...
- **5** who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
- It is only for those who live by faith and are, therefore, kept or preserved by God’s power unto soul-salvation at the Bema.
- Those who are not preserved by God’s power, through faith, will be ashamed; they will receive a negative reward.
- we find a fifth evidence that inheritance in 1 Peter 1 is conditional.

#### **5. Peter admonishes, not merely to look forward to Heaven, but to prepare for the Judgment Seat.**

- let’s read on a bit later in the 1 Peter 1 text:
- **13-16** Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance; but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, because it is written, “*Be holy, for I am holy.*”

#### **According to these verses, how are we to prepare?**

- First, by getting sober about life and the prospect of meeting Jesus at the Judgment Seat.
- Second, by hoping for — confidently anticipating — the grace Christ will bestow at His judgment bar.
- Incidentally, this is not looking backward to the grace by which you were saved.
- It is looking forward to the grace by which you will be rewarded.
- God is loving and gracious to shower His grace upon those who are faithful, though we do not deserve it.
- Third, we prepare by leaving off the old life of lust and living holy unto the Lord.
- Interestingly, the word *holy* in the Greek is the same basic word as *sanctification*.

#### **Much more could be said about this passage, but the main point is that it is a sanctification text, a salvation-of-the-soul text, resulting in reward for the faithful**

- Here we have Peter, thirty-plus years after having his feet washed by Jesus, now understanding the concept of having a part with Christ and receiving an inheritance incorruptible.
- This inheritance is NOT a portion that will be received by all Christians, for NOT all Christians have chosen to participate with Christ.
- Many have no part with Christ in the sense of fellowship and so at the Judgment Seat will be ashamed.
- Here’s the bottom line: the only way you will be rewarded by Jesus at the Bema is by keeping your feet clean
- your feet will get dirty throughout life, to be sure, but are you regularly confessing sin, consistently making things right with God so that your feet are kept clean?
- I challenge you to Think on these things