

Peter: Failure to Forgiveness

DIRTY FEET

Tuesday, March 22

Reading: John 13

***John 13:5** After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him. **6** He came to Simon Peter, who said to Him, "Lord, are You going to wash my feet?" **7** Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." **8** "No," said Peter, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me." **9** "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"*

It is the night before the crucifixion. Jesus and His disciples are celebrating Passover in an upper room in Jerusalem. Jesus began the evening by telling them "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of heaven" (Luke 22:15-16). But while Jesus is speaking of suffering, the disciples are arguing about who would be the greatest in the kingdom (see Luke 22:24-27). It is probably this argument that prompted Jesus to the action recorded in John 13.

It was customary for a host to provide a servant to wash the dust from a guest's feet. However, the disciples had felt this menial task was beneath them so Jesus took the role of a servant and began to wash their feet. In stunned silence, the disciples watched as their Master washed their dirty feet. Peter, as usual, could not keep his mouth shut. He refuses to let Jesus "humiliate" Himself by washing his feet. Even Jesus' assurance that he will understand later would not persuade the apostle.

Jesus turned Peter's rejection into an opportunity to teach a spiritual truth. He told Peter that unless he is washed, he can have no relationship with Christ. He is not talking about physical washing or baptism, but of Christ washing away his sin. Peter now does an about-face and requests that Jesus give him an entire bath. Jesus continues His spiritual lesson by saying that once one is washed from their sins (bathed) they do not need to be washed again. All that is necessary is to confess the daily sins (wash his feet) that they commit. After His object lesson is finished, Jesus reaffirms the major purpose of His actions - to teach His followers the importance of humility. Since Jesus Himself came to be a servant, we as His followers should follow His example.

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. While "foot washing" may not be a command, the principle Jesus was teaching is! The New Testament is full of commands to display a humble servant attitude. Humility cannot be a planned action observed at a particular time. It is the spontaneous outflow of a servant's heart. This inner attitude of the heart is far more important than the outward action which is meaningless without a heart behind it. How's your humility meter? How can you display a servant's heart toward others?
2. Jesus' "new command" is the basis for a servant's heart (13:34-35). The old command "Love your neighbor as yourself" is elevated to a higher standard. Believers are not to love others merely as they love themselves, but are to love "as Jesus loves." That is a much higher standard! The world should be able to identify we belong to Christ by our love. How's your love meter? How can unsaved people see the love of Christ in your life?

READ THRU THE NEW TESTAMENT: Acts 23-24