

Feetwashing

- I. Feetwashing was ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ. **JOH 13:1-17.**
- A. This rite is particularly intended for the church, inasmuch as it was done to *disciples* (v. 5) as an example of something to be done *amongst themselves*. vs. 14-15.
 - B. Christ's disciples were commanded to do *as He had done unto them*.
 - 1. He had washed their feet.
 - 2. He had then wiped their feet with the towel wherewith He was girded.
 - 3. THIS is what disciples are to do one to another.
 - C. Jesus said they would be happy in knowing of and doing these things. v. 17.
- II. Feetwashing is to be continued in the churches of Christ.
- A. Christ commanded the apostles to teach believers to *observe all things whatsoever* He had commanded them. **MAT 28:20.**
 - B. He had commanded the apostles to wash feet. vs. 14-15.
 - C. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ who taught His commandments. **GAL 1:1; 1TH 4:1-2.**
 - D. Paul is especially the apostle to the Gentiles who are to follow Paul as Paul followed Christ. **ROM 11:13; 1CO 11:1; PHIL 4:9.**
 - E. Paul wrote Timothy instructing him in CHURCH behavior. **1TI 3:15.**
 - F. Paul instructed Timothy regarding washing the saints' feet. **1TI 5:10.**
 - G. Timothy was to commit THESE instructions to other teachers. **2TI 2:2.**
 - H. Feetwashing is to be done repeatedly inasmuch as **1TI 5:10** says "the saints' feet" rather than "the saint's feet."
 - I. Feetwashing is listed among the *good works* in **1TI 5:10.**
 - 1. Good works are ordained of God. **EPH 2:10.**
 - 2. The other works therein mentioned are all ordained of God in Scripture:
 - a. *Bringing up children* is ordained in **1TI 5:14** and **TIT 2:4-5.**
 - b. *Lodging strangers* is ordained in **HEB 13:2.** See also **MAT 25:35.**
 - c. *Relieving the afflicted* is ordained in **LUK 10:30-37** and is obviously an aspect of true religion. **JAM 1:27.**
 - 3. Likewise, the work of washing the saints' feet is ordained in **JOH 13:14-15.**
 - J. Christ taught feetwashing to Paul, who taught it to Timothy who was to teach it to others.
 - K. In **JOH 13**, Christ was teaching His apostles doctrine about their fellowship, a fellowship into which believers are to enter and continue. **ACT 2:41-42.**
 - L. There is nothing in Scripture to indicate that this rite has been done away.
- III. Following is a list of objections that are made to feetwashing in the church.
("O" = objection; "A" = answer)
- A. O: *Feetwashing was just a domestic custom in that region.*
A: It was customary for guests to wash their own feet. **GEN 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24.**
 - B. O: *Jesus was speaking to apostles and therefore only apostles were to wash feet.*
A: **1TI 5:10** teaches that women are to wash the saints' feet (and there were no female apostles).
 - 1. Further, Christ also only served and instructed the apostles re: Communion.
Does that mean only they were to do it?
 - 2. Obviously, communion is an ordinance for churches, not only apostles. **1CO 11.**
 - C. O: **1TI 5:10** *only refers to general domestic duties, not church rites.*
A: Feetwashing pertains to *saints* whereas lodging pertains to *strangers*. Why the emphasis only on the saints' feet? Further, remember that Christ's example was done to

disciples/church members/saints that they might do it amongst themselves.

JOH 13:5, 14-15.

- D. O: *Feetwashing is only symbolic.*
A: Baptism and the Lord's Supper are also symbolic. Can we dispense with their observance?
- E. O: *Something other than literal feetwashing was intended because Jesus said to Peter "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter" (v. 7).*
A: Christ's explanation enjoined literal feetwashing. **vs. 12-17.**
- F. O: *Feetwashing is only an example of humility that need not be literally followed.*
A: Should **1PE 2:21-23** not be literally followed?
- G. O: *Christ said we should do AS He did, not WHAT He did.*
A: So, what's the difference? See **JDG 9:48; 7:17.**
- H. O: *It is sufficient simply to be willing to wash another's feet.*
A: Is it sufficient simply to be willing to be baptized or to receive communion? God expects us both *to will* and *to do*. **ISA 1:19; PHIL 2:13.**
- I. O: *Jesus washed the disciples' feet because they were dirty.*
A: They were quite capable of washing their own feet.
- J. O: *Jesus only mentioned feetwashing once.*
A: How many times does Jesus have to say something to make it valid? Jesus only once instructed the disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (**MAT 28:19-20**). Does that mean He wasn't serious about it? *Forsaking assembling* is only mentioned once in Scripture (**HEB 10:25**). Does that mean we can just overlook it?
- K. O: *Christ did not say we had to wash feet. He merely said we "ought to..." (v. 14).*
A: Note "ought" in **ACT 5:29; 1JO 4:11.**
- L. O: *Feetwashing was confined to the apostolic era, like the command to preach the gospel to every creature, and the use of sign gifts.*
A: A limitation or cessation can be found that do apply to the latter two. Where is there such a limitation or cessation of the command to wash feet?
- M. O: *Feetwashing was never intended for general observation by disciples, else what would be the significance of it for qualifying a widow for church support in 1TI 5:9-10?*
A: If general church members are exempted from feetwashing in **1TI 5:10**, what about lodging strangers or relieving the afflicted? Are the rest not obligated to do those things? Try this line of reasoning on qualifications for the office of a bishop and you end up concluding that church members in general can be greedy drunks. **1TI 3:2-3.**
- N. O: *References to feetwashing in church history are very scanty.*
A: The Scripture is our only rule of faith and practice.
- O. O: *Feetwashing seems rather silly.*
A: What about getting dunked in water for baptism?
- P. O: *Feetwashing is gross; the thought of it freaks me out.*
A: Have you ever cleaned a hairball out of a plugged tub drain? plunged out a plugged toilet? mopped up puke? changed a dirty diaper? given an enema? lanced a boil? excised a huge cyst? stopped a bleeding wound?
1. Our personal dislikes must take a backseat to duty. Naaman was dismayed at the waters of Jordan as opposed to the rivers of Damascus but yielded to the command nonetheless. **2KI 5:10-14.**
 2. Being made an object of derision is repulsive to our instincts, but our Christianity may require that of us also. **1CO 4:9; HEB 10:32-34.**
 3. Jesus Christ despised the shame of what He had to bear but went through with it anyway. **HEB 12:2.**

- IV. There are several lessons set forth in footwashing.
- A. It is an act of servitude. **1SAM 25:41.**
 - B. Footwashing vividly sets forth the humiliation of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who took upon Him the form of a servant. **PHIL 2:5-8; LUK 22:27; MAT 20:28.**
 1. This was none other than God Himself washing the feet of men.
 2. It is humbling for God simply to behold the things in heaven and earth. **PSA 113:5-6.**
 3. How much more humbling that God should wash the feet of rebellious men! The ironic words of John the Baptist are appropriate here. **ACT 13:25.**
 4. Christ in glory continues to minister to His disciples. **2CO 9:10; COL 2:19; LUK 12:35-37 c/w 2PE 1:11.**
 - C. Footwashing sets forth the cleansing of the believer's walk.
 1. **JOH 13:8-11** clearly shows that Jesus had a spiritual washing in mind on this occasion.
 2. The justified, regenerated saint is washed and made clean every whit. **EPH 5:25-26; HEB 10:14; TIT 3:5-6; REV 1:5.**
 3. Those thus cleansed *eternally* still need regular *temporal* cleansing. **PSA 119:1, 9; 2CO 7:1; 1JO 1:7, 9.**
 - D. By this means Jesus demonstrated His love for His own. **JOH 13:1.**
 1. In the same setting, He taught His disciples to love one another AS He had loved them. **vs. 34-35.**
 2. By loving one another thus, the saints show that they are Christ's disciples.
 - E. In washing one another's feet, the saints confess that Christ is their Lord and Master. **vs. 13-16; LUK 6:46; 1JO 2:4.**
 - F. Those who wash the saints' feet demonstrate that they are not above their Lord. **JOH 13:16 c/w MAT 10:24-25.**
 - G. By washing one another's feet, the saints demonstrate that they are *subject one to another*. **EPH 5:21; 1PE 5:5-6.**
 1. Saints are to submit one to another only so far as it is in keeping with the fear of God.
 2. Such mutual submission is an act of humility.
 - a. A recognition of the might of God should invoke humility which is submission to God. **JAM 4:6-7.**
 - b. They who submit to God will submit to their own brethren.
 - c. In *lowliness of mind*, each is to esteem others better than themselves. **ROM 12:10, 16; PHIL 2:3-4.**
 - d. Christ is the pattern for this humility. **PHIL 2:5-9.**
 - e. Those who are too proud to submit to their brethren will meet with resistance from God. **1PE 5:5.**
 - f. Humility results in exaltation. **1PE 5:6.**