

**HWMR: LOVING THE LORD AND LOVING ONE ANOTHER FOR THE ORGANIC BUILDING UP
OF THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST, (Week 5)**

Scripture Reading: John 13:1-17, 34-35

LIFE'S WASHING IN LOVE TO MAINTAIN FELLOWSHIP

John 13:1	Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come for Him to depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost.
John 13:2	And while supper was taking place, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, that he should betray Him,
John 13:3	Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all into His hands and that He had come forth from God and was going to God,
John 13:4	Rose from supper and laid aside His outer garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself;
John 13:5	Then He poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.
John 13:6	He came then to Simon Peter. Peter said to Him, Lord, do You wash my feet?
John 13:7	Jesus answered and said to him, What I am doing you do not know now, but you will know after these things.
John 13:8	Peter said to Him, You shall by no means wash my feet forever. Jesus answered him, Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me.
John 13:9	Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.
John 13:10	Jesus said to him, He who is bathed has no need except to wash his feet, but is wholly clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.
John 13:11	For He knew the one betraying Him; for this reason He said, Not all of you are clean.
John 13:12	Then when He had washed their feet and taken His outer garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, Do you know what I have done to you?
John 13:13	You call Me the Teacher and the Lord, and you say rightly, for I am.
John 13:14	If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.
John 13:15	For I have given you an example so that you also may do even as I have done to you.
John 13:16	Truly, truly, I say to you, A slave is not greater than his master, nor one who is sent greater than the one who sends him.
John 13:17	If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.
John 13:34	A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
John 13:35	By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

Day 1 & Day 2

<i>John 13:3-5</i>	- Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all into His hands and that He had come forth from God and was going to God, Rose from supper and laid aside His outer garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself; Then He poured water into the basin and began to <i>wash</i> the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.
<i>Titus 3:5</i>	- Not out of works in righteousness which we did but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit,
<i>John 15:3</i>	- You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

I. Since John is a book of signs (2:11), what is recorded in John 13 concerning **foot-washing should be considered a sign, which is a symbol with **spiritual significance**(vv. 1-17):**

- A. Foot-washing should not be taken merely in a physical sense but rather, and even more intrinsically, in a deeper, more important, and **spiritual sense**.
- B. In John 1—12 the Lord as life came and brought forth the church, composed of the regenerated ones; in their spirit the regenerated ones are in God and in the heavenlies, but in their body they are still living in the flesh and walking on the earth; this shows us the necessity of the **Lord's fellowship** in John 13.

II. “Jesus knowing that His hour had come for Him to depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost...Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all into His hands and that He had come forth from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His outer garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself; then He poured water into the basin and began to **wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded”—vv. 1, 3-5:**

- A. The **outer garments** that the Lord laid aside **signify** the **Lord's virtues and attributes** in His expression; hence, He was putting off of what He is in His expression.
- B. The **Lord's girding Himself** **signifies** His being **bound** and **restricted with humility**—cf. 1 Pet. 5:5.
- C. In ancient times the Jews wore sandals, and since their roads were dusty, their feet easily became dirty; if, when they came to a feast, they sat at the table and stretched out their feet, the dirt and smell would certainly frustrate the fellowship; hence, for the feast to be pleasant they needed **foot-washing**.
- D. The Lord washed His disciples’ feet to show them that He loved them to the uttermost (John 13:1), and He charged them **to do the same to one another in love**:
 - 1. “If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to **wash one another's feet**”—v. 14.
 - 2. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also **love one another**”—v. 34.
- E. The Lord's washing of the disciples’ feet was the washing away of their dirtiness so that their **fellowship** with the Lord and with one another could be **maintained**.

III. In our experience the defilement of the feet signifies separation from God and from one another through contact with the world; foot-washing **signifies the recovery of **spiritual freshness and vitality** and the recovery of our **fellowship** with the Lord and with one another:**

- A. In our experience the **washing water** in John 13 signifies the **Holy Spirit** (Titus 3:5), the word (Eph. 5:26; John 15:3), and life (19:34; 10:10; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:6; 1 John 5:16); the Lord washes our feet by the work of the Holy Spirit, by the **enlightenment of the living word**, and by the **operation of the inner law of life**.
- B. This is not the washing away of our sins by the blood (1:9); this is why, after John 12, there is the need for such a sign in chapter 13; spiritual foot-washing saves us from **staleness** in our fellowship with the Lord.
- C. Today the world is dirty, and we, the saints, are easily contaminated; for us to maintain pleasant fellowship with the Lord and with one another, **we need spiritual foot-washing carried out both by the Lord in His love and by one another in love**.
- D. This is absolutely necessary for us to live in the fellowship of the divine life, which is revealed in John's first Epistle, a continuation of the Gospel of John.

In John 13:14 the Lord said, “If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” The Lord washed the disciples’ feet. Today He wants us to do the same thing. The washing of sins by the blood is God’s work, whereas the **washing of feet by the water is man’s work**. God has not charged us to wash the whole body; He only charges us to wash the feet. We cannot give others a bath, because we cannot redeem them from their sins; we cannot save anyone or cause anyone to perish. The work of salvation is God’s work alone. Our only responsibility is to preach the gospel. At the same time, the Lord wants to wash man’s feet today. This washing is an indirect washing. **He washes us through the brothers and sisters**. With what does He apply the washing? We have mentioned previously that the Lord washed by pouring water into the basin. What does water signify? When the Lord died, blood and water flowed out of His side. The blood signifies the redemptive aspect of His death, whereas the water signifies the non-redemptive aspect of His death. The blood washes away our sins, whereas the **water becomes the source of our new life**. In the Bible water sometimes denotes death and sometimes denotes life in the Holy Spirit. This life is the new life that we received at the time of our salvation. This life comes out of death. The water in the basin signifies that the life is in the Holy Spirit. When we sin, we need to go to the Lord for our washing. But when our feet are defiled, **we need to go to the brothers for our washing**. The Lord said, “You also ought to wash one another’s feet.” This shows that the foot-washing is carried out by the brothers and sisters, that is, **by the church**. No one can say that he does not need his feet washed. “One another” includes all the believers in Christ. Not only you and I need the washing, Paul and John needed the washing also. Every believer, as long as he lives on this earth, will find his feet defiled. It is different in the case of sin. Many believers can completely overcome sin. But no one in this world can avoid having his feet defiled. (CWWN, vol. 42, chapter 36)

Day 3

- John 13:14-15* - If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to **wash one another’s feet**. For I have given you an example so that you also may do even as I have done to you.
- John 13:34-35* - A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

IV. For us to experience the washing, we need to **spend time in the Lord’s presence and with the saints** who are full of the Spirit, the word, and the divine life—cf. Matt. 6:6; 1 Cor. 16:17-18; Acts 6:5, 8; 2 Cor. 1:15:

- A. If we remain in the Lord’s presence, the Lord will come to us and wash us, not with the blood but with the **Spirit**, the **living word**, and the **inner life**:
 1. Whenever we are in need of such a washing, we can just **open ourselves** up to the Lord as we spend time in His presence and allow the inner life to flow within us.
 2. Spontaneously, something living will water, flow, and wash us, and we will become **clean** again; our spirit will be **uplifted**, and our whole being will be so **pleasant** in the Lord’s presence.
- B. “You also ought to wash one another’s feet”—John 13:14:
 1. In our experience, the Lord Jesus Himself and the saints who have much life can afford us such a washing.
 2. It is the spiritual foot-washing ministered to one another that keeps us clean from the earthly touch; while we are walking and working on the earth, we not only need the Lord’s foot-washing ministered directly within our spirit but also the **foot-washing from the brothers and sisters**.

- C. Whenever we are about to wash others' feet, we need to follow the Lord's pattern by "laying aside our garments"; this is to **lay aside our attainments, virtues, and attributes**:
1. **We must humble ourselves and empty ourselves**; many wear a garment of spirituality and look down on others; they are proud of being spiritual.
 2. To lay aside our garments means to **dethrone ourselves**.

If we do not have the washing, both our fellowship with the brothers and our fellowship with God will be broken. We cannot maintain our fellowship with God if the fellowship with our brothers is broken. We need to be impressed with the fact that there are not two fellowships. There is not one fellowship with God and a different fellowship with the brothers. No, **our fellowship with the brothers is actually part of our fellowship with God**. Therefore, we should not regard our fellowship with God as one thing and our fellowship with the brothers as another thing. This fellowship is absolutely one matter. Hence, if our fellowship with our brothers is broken, that means our fellowship with the Father is also broken. At least, one link of this fellowship is broken. In order for our fellowship with God to be broken, it is not necessary that every link be broken; it is enough that just one link is broken. By this we see that a problem with a brother or sister can cause our fellowship with God to be broken. A problem with another saint hinders us from entering the tabernacle.

Whenever our fellowship has been broken, **we need foot-washing in order to recover this fellowship**. You may not have any problem with God directly. But you may have a problem with God indirectly through the problem you have with your brother. The problem with your brother also becomes a problem between you and God. This indicates that **we need foot-washing in order to maintain our fellowship with God and with one another**. Day by day, we all need foot-washing. However, many Christians do not realize what the significance of foot-washing is. (*The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings in the Writings of John, chapter 34*)

Day 4

<i>Psalms 23:2-3</i>	- He makes me lie down in green pastures; / He leads me beside waters of rest. He restores my soul; / He guides me on the paths of righteousness / For His name's sake.
<i>Acts 3:20</i>	- So that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and that He may send the Christ, who has been previously appointed for you, Jesus.

- D. To be girded with a towel means that we are **bound** and are **willing** to lose our liberty; we give up our liberty for the purpose of ministering life to our dear brothers and sisters.

V. Each of us must learn how to **love the brothers and sisters by ministering the spiritual foot-washing to them to cleanse them from the earthly touch; this keeps them new, fresh, and living; our loving one another in this way is a sign that we belong to Christ—vv. 34-35:**

- A. We can summarize defiled feet as staleness in our fellowship with the Lord; clean feet, however, denote **fresh fellowship** with the Lord:
1. Not many can say today that they treasure and love the Lord as much as they did five or ten years ago; many people have to say that they do not have the same feeling that they had a year ago.
 2. Their feet are **defiled**, and they have become weary; this is spiritual weariness; it is the **loss** of spiritual freshness and vitality.
- B. The **Lord is always fresh**, and He wants us to be fresh all the time, not spiritually enervated; this is why He makes us lie down in green pastures, He leads us beside waters of rest, and He restores our soul; foot-washing sustains an intimate fellowship between us and the Lord and rekindles our spiritual vitality and spiritual freshness—Psa. 23:2-3; Acts 3:20; cf. Deut. 34:7.

- C. **We should never allow ourselves to become old**, which is to be set, settled, and occupied; we must keep ourselves empty, open, fresh, new, living, and young with the Lord; we need to pray that the Lord as the Spirit of reality would guide us into the reality of Psalm 110:3—“Your people will offer themselves willingly / In the day of Your warfare, / In the splendor of their consecration. / Your young men will be to You / Like the dew from the womb of the dawn.”

Day 5

2 Corinthians 4:16 - Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being **renewed** day by day.

Romans 6:4 - We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in **newness of life**.

VI. There must be an enigmatic freshness, power, nourishment, and supply within us that will drive others to seek after God by our presence; others should desire to seek after God, and their spiritual energy should be revived as a result of meeting us and speaking to us—cf. Acts 20:20, 31:

- A. We need the renewing of the Holy Spirit day by day so that we can **always be fresh and invigorated**—Titus 3:5; 2 Cor. 4:16-18.
- B. Foot-washing means recovering our former feelings, **bringing us back to the freshness and newness of life** (Rom. 6:4), and giving us fresh strength (Psa. 27:1, 4) to recover how we previously treasured the Lord as our first love by giving Him the first place in all things (Rev. 2:4-5; Col. 1:18b).
- C. We cannot wash others' feet unless **we enjoy the Lord as our overcoming life** and obtain the Spirit's help to live out such a life; the Spirit within us is our Comforter, the One who takes care of our case, our cause, and our affairs—John 14:26; Phil. 1:19-21a.
- D. Every one of us needs our feet washed, and every one of us needs to be prepared to wash others' feet; among all the services that Christians minister to one another, nothing is more crucial or precious than **foot-washing**—“If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them”—John 13:17.

Brothers and sisters, you need to **aspire to be ministers of life to others**. Do not ever be disappointed that you are not as eloquent as others, or that you do not have as much Bible knowledge as others. **As long as you live in life, you will be able to supply life to other members**. Some people begin to pray in the prayer meeting right after they are saved. Their prayers may be very awkward, but when others touch them, they receive light and supply. Yet after these ones have been Christians for a period of time, the life supply in them becomes less and less. Having lived the Christian life for a few years, they pick up much knowledge and many doctrines, yet there is a lack of the supply of life. The supply of life is not a matter of knowledge but a matter of **freshness**. It is better to have less knowledge and less doctrine than it is to lose the supply of life. We should ask the Lord to deliver us from our inability to supply life and should pray that we live before Him in a genuine way. If we live before the Lord and are in touch with life, we will supply others with life and wash their feet every time we contact them. They will receive the freshness of life and be recovered spiritually.

We must also remember that foot-washing is a mutual matter. **We should learn before the Lord to supply others, and we should also learn to receive the supply from others**. The reason we need to be humble is so that we can receive help from others. We need to wash others' dark spots, and we should be willing to let others wash our dark spots. Through this mutual foot-washing, mutual serving, and mutual supplying we can be built up, helped along, and run the race before us. (CWWN, vol. 37, chapter 18)

Day 6

Ephesians 5:18 - And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be *filled in spirit*,

Romans 15:32 - So that coming to you in joy through the will of God, I may *refresh* myself and rest with you.

VII. Foot-washing is a matter of the Lord's loving us to the uttermost in order to meet our uttermost need; each of us must learn how to **love the brothers and sisters by ministering the spiritual foot-washing to them**:

"How can we wash one another's feet? Suppose you have completed your day's work and feel tired. You cannot utter any praises from your mouth. In the evening when you come to the meeting, someone asks you to pray. Halfway through your prayer, you cannot go on, and you stop. You feel as if your prayer is nothing more than a composition. However, perhaps one brother in the meeting has a *fresh* spirit, and his prayer *refreshes your spirit*. Your spiritual energy is renewed. This is washing one another's feet. Many times when we come to the meeting, we find the saints' spirit weak and downtrodden. We pray and read the Word, but nothing seems to work. The reason for this is that every- one's feet are *defiled*, and there is no basin to wash the feet. It is as if something is quenching our spirits. If someone would stand up at this point and wash everyone's feet by *offering a prayer or saying a few words*, the whole meeting will be refreshed. With- out the basin and without the foot-washing, everyone's spirit is bound. The same is true in our family life. A brother or sister may unexpectedly drop by your home and *fellowship* a short while or give a testimony, and everyone in the family is brought into the presence of God. Before that time there was a separation between them and God, but after such a simple conversation, all the separation is gone. This is washing one another's feet. Those who do this are precious in the Lord's eyes.

"We should have an ambition before the Lord to wash others' feet. In order to wash others' feet, we must have the water; that is, *we must be filled with the Holy Spirit and be in constant fellowship with the Lord*. For this cause we must live in the Holy Spirit daily. Only then will we have the living water to wash others' feet. Every time we come to the meeting, we must have the living water to wash others' feet" (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 42, pp. 281-282).

VIII. Without the **spiritual foot-washing**, the church life cannot be realized, and the reality of the church life would be gone:

- A. In order to wash others' feet, *we must daily be filled with the Holy Spirit*, be in constant fellowship with the Lord, and live in the mingled spirit—Eph. 5:18; 3:19; 2 Cor. 3:16-18; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:4, 6.
- B. Therefore, the daily foot-washing definitely needs to be exercised by the Lord Himself on the one hand and by all the saints on the other hand; then we shall be able to *maintain an excellent fellowship* with which we shall have the real church life.
- C. "Now I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because these have filled up the lack caused by your absence; for they refreshed my spirit and yours. Acknowledge therefore such ones"—1 Cor. 16:17-18; cf. 2 Cor. 7:13.
- D. May we have fresh spiritual experiences every day; Romans 15:32 says, "I may *refresh* myself and *rest* with you"; this is the result of foot-washing.

Once our spiritual condition becomes sullen, **we need to be washed with water**. Therefore, the Lord Jesus not only wants us bathed, but He also wants our **feet washed again and again**. The one-time “bath” enables us to have life. The **foot-washing recovers the freshness of life**. Once a man is bathed, he has life. Hallelujah! We have all been bathed. If we have not been bathed, we are not Christians yet. One day, the Lord washed me not only with the blood but also with water. I received God’s life, I touched God, and I touched the Lord. At that time, a spiritual world opened to me, and I touched spiritual reality. I felt that the Lord’s death was not something that happened two thousand years ago; it was something for today. I felt that the Lord’s death did not take place only at Golgotha but right where I was. The limitations of time and space were broken, and spiritual reality was present. This is what it means to be bathed. But how many Christians have a continual sense of the freshness of this bathing? Many people say that they will be content as long as they can keep their first love. Many people aspire to return to the condition of their initial salvation. This means that they are not as fresh as when they were first bathed. This is the reason there is the need of foot-washing. **Foot-washing brings us back to the condition of being bathed**. Foot-washing brings us the freshness of life; it brings us **new feelings, new strength, and spiritual revival**. These are the things foot-washing brings us. Foot-washing not only cleanses a person but also refreshes him. After a man has his feet washed, he is refreshed and revived. Foot-washing recovers our spiritual freshness and causes us to be full of life. Brothers and sisters, foot-washing is a crucial thing. It is crucial to be recovered in life and in spiritual vitality. (CWWN, vol. 37, chapter 18)