

# JESUS WASHES HIS DISCIPLES' FEET

By Stacy Perkins

## SCRIPTURE

John 13:1-15

*It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God, so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 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. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean. When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

## OBSERVATION

Jesus is the ultimate servant-leader. In this passage we see Him get up, pour water into a basin, take off His outer garment and stoop down and begin to wash the feet of His disciples. This was done unannounced and much to the surprise of the disciples. He humbly did this for them, and they didn't know how to respond. How could He, their leader, be doing this for them? It was so abrupt and definitely socially awkward for them!

In these days of "social distancing," we are all trying to stay away from each other in order to minimize the effects of the coronavirus within our homes, communities and the world at large. That is totally understandable in these uncertain days. But when we are through all of this, are we going to keep doing it because we are afraid that it might come back? I certainly hope not. If nothing else, it should make us desire to be around people more and more! So many are by themselves at home, unable to make contact with the "outside" world for fear of contracting this dreaded virus. They long to see other people and have contact with them. Lord willing, this will pass, and we can get back to our normal daily lives soon. When we do, I hope it is not business as usual. I pray we will

take on our role as servants to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, our community and the world. How do we do that? Follow the example of our Lord!

In the Old Testament, foot washing was a regular activity after someone had come into a home from a journey. It was cleansing and refreshing to the weary traveler. The ordinary home would have a basin of water and cloth ready for the person to wash their own feet. But in a rich man's home, he would have a slave whose task was to wash the feet of the traveler as they entered the home. It was the lowliest of tasks. If you were that slave, you were the least thought-of person in the household—talk about humbling!

In the New Testament, we see a couple of different examples of foot washing. First, there was the woman who came to the Pharisee's house and wet Jesus' feet with her tears, wiping them clean and drying them with her hair. She then anointed His feet with expensive perfume. The Pharisee rebuked Jesus for allowing her, a sinful and unclean woman to do that to Him. Jesus responded by telling him that he had not even provided the simplest of courtesies by having water for Him to wash His own feet with. This woman had done it with her tears of confession and brokenness and had gone even further to anoint His feet with the expensive perfume. She was humbled by the mere presence of the Savior and understood who He was and what He could do for her—and He DID forgive her and told her she could go in peace!

The other example is the passage at the beginning of this devotion. Jesus was trying to show His disciples what it was to be a believer and true follower of His. He humbled Himself and took on the lowliest of tasks and washed His disciples' feet. Why did He, their leader and teacher do this? Because He wanted them to understand what it takes to truly be one of His followers. The ever-bold Peter told the Lord he wouldn't allow Him to wash his feet, to which Jesus replied, "If I do not wash your feet, you have no part of Me." That immediately knocked Peter off his pedestal, and he told Jesus to wash his head and hands, as well! Jesus explained to His disciples that He was setting the ultimate example for them to follow—wash one another's feet...in other words, serve one another in love, and put others before yourself. Mark 10:45 tells us, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life as a ransom for many." This was Jesus last night with His disciples before His crucifixion, and He was leaving them with the most important thing He could share with them—serve others!

## **OBEDIENCE**

In the midst of His "crisis," Jesus humbled Himself and served others. That is the way we should be conducting ourselves as we walk through this world-wide epidemic called COVID-19. Whatever our position in society, in our occupations or in our families, we are never above serving others. Jesus' example calls us to service! How are you going to be obedient to His call to serve others, starting even today? Let's not be like the group of little boys who were playing war. When someone asked them why they were so quiet, one boy replied, "We're all generals; we can't get anybody to do the fighting!" (Vance

Havner). Let's go and fight for the Kingdom in the name of the Savior by humbly serving others, knowing that we are following the example of the King Eternal in the war that has already been won! We are victors already, so there is no need to fear!

## **PRAYER**

Lord, we are facing such uncertain days. May we seek Your face and Your will as we look to the days ahead. We pray for Your presence in our lives, Your provision in our need, and Your protection over this pandemic. As we seek You, Father, help us find ways to serve others. Help us to humble ourselves and look to see their needs and fill those needs the best we know how in the name of Jesus.