

**LOVING THE LORD AND LOVING ONE ANOTHER
FOR THE ORGANIC BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH
AS THE BODY OF CHRIST**

(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

Life's Washing in Love to Maintain Fellowship

RA Hymns 373

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

- 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.

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):

- John 2:11 This beginning of signs Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed into Him.
- John 13 be omitted.
- 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;

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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.

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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.

- 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.
John 1:13 be omitted.

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.
1 Pet 5:5 In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders; and all of you gird yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.
- 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:
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.
 - 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.
- John 13 be omitted.
 Titus 3:5 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,
 Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
 John 15:3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.
 John 19:34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.
 John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.
 1 Cor 15:45b ... the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
 2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
 1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.
- 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.
- 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 John 123 be omitted.
 John 13 be omitted.
- 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.

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:

- Matt 6:6 But you, when you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.
 1 Cor 16:17 Now I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because these have filled up the lack caused by your absence;
 1 Cor 16:18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Acknowledge therefore such ones.
 Acts 6:5 And the word pleased all the multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon and Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch,
 Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.
 2 Cor 1:15 And in this confidence I intended to come to you previously that you might have double grace,

- 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.
- 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:

[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.

- 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.

[Psa 23:2](#) He makes me lie down in green pastures; / He leads me beside waters of rest.

[Psa 23:3](#) He restores my soul; He guides me on the paths of righteousness / For His name's sake.

[Acts 3:20](#) 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,

[Deut 34:7](#) And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor had his freshness left him.
- 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.”

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:

- Acts 20:20 How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house,
- Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.
- 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.
- Titus 3:5 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,
- 2 Cor 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.
- 2 Cor 4:17 For our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory,
- 2 Cor 4:18 Because we do not regard the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
- 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).
- Rom 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.
- Psa 27:1 Jehovah is my light and my salvation; / Whom shall I fear? / Jehovah is the strength of my life; / Whom shall I dread?
- Psa 27:4 One thing I have asked from Jehovah; / That do I seek: / To dwell in the house of Jehovah / All the days of my life, / To behold the beauty of Jehovah, / And to inquire in His temple.
- Rev 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.
- Rev 2:5 Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.
- Col 1:18b ... He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- 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.
- John 14:26 But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and remind you of all the things which I have said to you.
- Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
- Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
- 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.

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 everyone’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. Without 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.
 - Eph 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit,
 - Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.
 - 2 Cor 3:16 But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.
 - 2 Cor 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.
 - 2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.
 - Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
 - 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
 - Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
 - Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- 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.
 - 2 Cor 7:13 Because of this we have been comforted. And in addition to our comfort, we rejoiced more abundantly over the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you.
- 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.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE MEANING OF FOOT-WASHING

The Feet Touching the Earth, Which Signifies the World

Now let us look at the meaning of foot-washing. We know that our feet touch the earth all the time. Our hands, head, and back do not have to touch the earth. But our feet come into contact with the earth all the time. We can say that as long as we are men, we have to touch the earth. As long as we live on this earth, we will come into contact with this earth. The head is for thinking, the hands are for working, the heart is for loving, the legs are for exercising, the back is for resting, and the feet are for contacting the earth. Here the Lord was not washing the hands. The Jews washed their hands before they ate. Yet the Lord washed the disciples' feet before they ate. He did not wash the head, the back, or the hands; He washed the feet. Why? This is a profound lesson, and I hope that I can express it adequately. Brothers, on this earth man is alienated from God because of sin. However, this problem is solved through the Lord's shed blood on the cross; the sins that we committed as a sinner have been washed away. After being saved and becoming a believer, the Lord's overcoming life enables us to overcome all sins. The judgment on sin was settled on the cross, and today the power of sin can be overcome through Him as the overcoming life within us. However, let me ask a question: Other than sin, is there anything else which separates us from God? Those who are honest will say that there are many things which separate us from God. These things may not be sin, but there may be worldly elements that are produced through our contact with the world.

The Defilement of the Feet Signifies Separation from God through Contact with the World, While Foot-washing Signifies the Recovery of Spiritual Freshness and Fellowship with the Lord

Suppose this morning you had a quiet time before the Lord; you read the Word and prayed. The prayer time was sweet and the Lord's Word was precious. You felt that heaven was so close to earth that you could almost touch it with your hands. This was between five and seven o'clock in the morning. By eight o'clock, numerous affairs of the day began to occupy you. Some have to conduct their businesses; others have to teach at school or go to their offices. Some have to go to school, while others have to visit the sick, shop, clean the house, or do laundry. There are many things which are waiting to be done. When you read the Bible and prayed in the morning, you felt that heaven was very close. But as a businessman who spends three to six hours in your office doing many seemingly "proper" things (you may not have lied or sinned at all), are you still as close to God in the evening as you were in the morning? No, you are not.

Students busy themselves in schoolwork at the schools, and housewives engage themselves in their household chores at home. Once a person occupies himself in these affairs, he feels as if heaven has moved away. It is no longer as close as it was in the morning. He may still be able to set aside some time to pray, but he has nothing to say. He can only touch the superficial letter of the Word; he can no longer touch the inward reality. When the prayer meeting comes, he may want to pray, but he is short of words. Even when he does manage to think of some words to say, his conscience bothers him. He may still shout hallelujah, and the words and sounds may still be the same, but the meaning and taste are different. He feels that something has separated him from God, but he cannot pinpoint any sin. It seems as if confession does not help the situation either. If he was separated from God through sin, he should deal with it through the application of the blood shed on the cross. But this does not seem to be a question of sin. He only feels somewhat dimmed and has lost the former brightness. There is the need of something else to deal with this problem. This is different from ordinary sins. What is needed is the foot-washing. What is foot-washing? It is dealing with everything apart from sin that separates us from God.

This happens to us all the time. We do not sin, but neither do we touch God. It is understandable when a person is separated from God through sin. But we do not know what to do when we have not sinned, yet cannot touch God. Thank the Lord that He has not only washed us of our sins, but washed our feet as well. This is not the washing of our hands; the hands signify the things we do. Whether or not we do things is our responsibility. This is not the washing of our head; the head signifies our thoughts. Whether or not we think certain things is our responsibility. This is not the washing of our backs. Whether or not we lie down is our responsibility. If our head, hands, or backs have a problem, we have sinned because the activities associated with these parts are under our control. Our feet however have no choice but to stand on the ground; this is something that is not up to us. What do the feet signify? The feet signify our contact with our family, business, and schools. These are unavoidable contacts in our daily life. As long as we are human beings and live in this world, we have to stand on the ground and touch the earth. This will continue until the day the Lord comes back to rapture us away. When Jacob was about to die, the Bible says that he gathered up his feet into his bed (Gen. 49:33). This meant that from that day on, he would no longer need to use his feet; he could go to his fathers. Before we go to our fathers, our feet are still on the ground; they are not gathered up into our bed.

The feet signify our inevitable and non-sinful contact with the world. This contact is not sinful, yet it can separate us from God and make heaven less near to us and our prayers less sweet. While living on this earth, our feet are easily defiled. We have to use our feet whether we are standing up or sitting down. Of all the members of our body, the feet tire us out the most easily. I am not saying that the other parts of the body will not tire us out; but the feet tire us out most easily. In the same way, it is very easy for a spiritual man to become defiled. How many spiritual men sitting here tonight have feet that are defiled? I know that many of our feet have been defiled.

Now that you are clear about the significance of the feet, we have to go on to consider the meaning of defiled feet. Defiled feet are feet that have to be washed. It is not wrong for the feet to be defiled; this is something that is inevitable. This defilement has nothing to do with sin; sinning is something else. We are not talking about sin, we are talking about the things that separate us from God, the things that tire us out spiritually. This is having defiled feet. Suppose we come to the meeting and say something in an old and habitual way. Although we have opened up our mouth, nothing is touching us inwardly. Or we may be reading the Bible and know what we are reading, yet we may have no feeling about what we have read. This is having defiled feet. We can summarize defiled feet with a few words—staleness in fellowship with the Lord. Clean feet, however, denote fresh fellowship with the Lord.

One day someone said to me, “Mr. Nee, when I was in Chuenchow, I had a wonderful time. I felt that the Lord was very precious to me. But today all those feelings are gone. I still believe in the Lord, I still pray to the Lord, I still love Him, and I am still consecrated to Him. I have not lost any of these things. Yet I must admit that something within me is not the same as it was before.” This is having defiled feet. A man defiles his feet through contact and communication with the world, and through working and conducting business in that realm. If you ask such a one if he has sinned, he may answer, “No.” Outwardly he is the same as he was before, but inwardly he is different. He can still say that the Lord is precious and that he loves the Lord very much. However, this only describes his condition last year, the year before last, or five or ten years ago. How many can say today that they treasure the Lord 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. Their feet are defiled, and they have become weary. This is spiritual weariness; it is the loss of spiritual freshness and vitality. This is why the Lord says that we need foot-washing. What does foot-washing mean? It means recovering our former feelings, bringing us back to the freshness of life, and giving us fresh strength to treasure what we previously treasured. This is the meaning of foot-washing. Thank the Lord that He washes our feet all the time.

Many times when we speak, our words do not match our inward feelings. Today many believers in Christ have become stagnant in their spiritual growth. They sing, praise, and pray reluctantly. Sometimes this is the result of sin, but many times this is not the result of any sin. They simply have defiled feet, and

they have become spiritually enervated. We have to realize that the Lord wants us to be fresh all the time. This is why He says that He leads us to the green pastures (Psa. 23:2). We have a brother in Shanghai who is a manual laborer. He lost his job a few months ago but recently found another job. His work involves cutting grass. For every thousand catties [a Chinese unit of weight] of grass he cuts, he gets a dollar. After the grass is dried, it is bundled up into bundles of six hundred catties and sent to the dairy farms. He gets fifty cents a day for this. He cuts, dries, and delivers all day long. Last month I met him while he was drying the grass and asked him about his job. He said, "I have to dry the grass and deliver it to the dairy farms. The farms store it in their barns and feed the cows with it in winter." I then said, "The dairy farmers feed the cows with yellow grass, but the Lord feeds us with green grass." The Lord wants us to be fresh; He wants us to be fresh every day. We may have been yellow yesterday, but we can be green again today. We may have been yellow this morning, but we can be green this afternoon. The Lord is fresh running water; He does not flow for five minutes and then stop. He flows continuously, daily, monthly, and yearly. There is not a minute in which He is short. He is always fresh, and He is constantly refreshing us. This is the life that the Lord is leading us to live. Here is power, joy, peace, and holiness. Only by living this way can we express the Lord's life. After the victory at Jericho, there is still the victory at Ai. After great victories, there are still small, daily victories. This should be our daily experience before the Lord.

The Bible says that Saul was taller than any of the people from his shoulders and upward (1 Sam. 10:23). Yet God was not pleased with his reign. Eventually, God did not choose him. Instead, He chose David to be the king. The Bible does not indicate David's height; it merely says that he was ruddy and of a beautiful countenance (16:12). This implies freshness, like the freshness of a newborn baby whose face does not have any wrinkles; there is freshness and vitality, God wants our life to be fresh. Psalm 1 says that the blessed man is one who is like a tree planted beside streams of water, yielding fruit in its season, and whose foliage does not wither (v. 3). We have leaves, which are our outward conduct. We may be patient, meek, humble, and perfect in our conduct and virtues. But the question is whether this conduct and virtues are green or whether they are wilting and yellow. Are they fresh, or are they old? Leaves denote our conduct. If we are not under the fresh operation of the Holy Spirit, we will be doing the same things that we have done in the past. The result will surely not be green and fresh, but dry and old. A person may have risen at five o'clock in the morning yesterday. He may do the same thing today. But yesterday he felt God's presence very near to him, yet today he does not touch Him at all. Outwardly, he is doing the same thing, but inwardly the feeling is gone. The inward freshness is gone because the leaves have dried up like the things in Noah's ark that belonged to the old creation. They are not like the fresh olive branch that appeared after the flood receded. Such people are of little use to the Lord.

Creating a Thirst within Man for God

Tonight I have a word specifically for the co-workers. We have to know why God has put us in the world. He has put us in the world so that our presence would create a hunger and thirst for righteousness in sinners, believers, and the world. In our work, we have to create a hunger within others. 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 have a desire to seek after God as a result of meeting us and speaking to us. If we always see others and communicate with them without creating a desire within them for God, it means that we have failed. If our reading of the Bible, prayer, service, and gospel preaching do not produce such a powerful hunger within man, our work has failed.

Many who knew Miss Barber can testify that she was very different from others. Whenever someone went to her and sat in front of her, spontaneously he would realize how much he was off. He would realize that he did not have what she had and would aspire for what she had. Fifteen years ago (1921) when I first became a Christian, I was very proud. I thought highly of myself because I was able to read one or two chapters of the Bible a day with some understanding. (Very few people are proud outwardly; most people are proud inwardly.) I went to her to tell her about this. After I prayed a few

words with her, I saw my pride before she even opened her mouth to rebuke me. I knew that I did not have what she had. This is foot-washing. My feet were washed by her presence. I met God. Prior to that I was living outside of God, and I was old and dark. But once I came to her, I was refreshed and enlightened. I often felt that I was washed by her presence. We often have the same sensation—we feel that we are washed after talking to certain brothers. Our spiritual energy is revived; we can touch and feel God once more. This is foot-washing.

A few days ago, I felt that my feet were defiled. At first I thought that I had sinned, and I proceeded to deal with my sins. But God was still very far from me. I felt that there was a separation between myself and God. I could do nothing about it. While I was praying I was secretly saying to myself, “You are just composing your prayer. This is not something from your heart.” Later, I saw a sister who had been saved for only two or three months. She told me of her salvation experience and told me how she was persecuted by her family. She hoped that I would give her some help. When I heard this, I said, “Thank the Lord. When I came, my feet were defiled. But when I leave, my feet will be clean because your testimony has washed away the oldness in my experiences.” The book of Titus mentions the renewing of the Spirit (3:5). This is a very precious expression. We need the renewing of the Spirit so that we can always be spiritually fresh and invigorated.

A bronze flower vase needs constant polishing to make it shine. If there is no polishing, there may not be any rust, but there will be a coating of dust and the vase will not shine. The same is true with us. We may not be sinful, but we may have a coating of dust that prevents us from shining. The Lord said to Peter, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me” (John 13:8). What does this mean? Having no part with the Lord does not mean perdition; it means having no part in the fresh fellowship of the Lord’s life. If our feet are not washed, there will be a separation between us and the Lord, and we will not be able to enjoy the freshness of His life and the freshness of His supply. This is the meaning of having no part in the Lord. The Lord wants to wash our feet. Therefore, we must be willing to be washed and renewed.

Aspiring to Wash Others’ Feet

At the same time, we have to aspire to wash others’ feet. However, we cannot wash others’ feet unless we have the overcoming life and the Spirit’s help to live out such a life. Some can wash others’ feet, while others cannot. You may live with someone for over a year and yet still not have your feet washed once. Washing requires that we live an overcoming life before the Lord. We have to be fresh all the time before we can wash others’ feet.

Who are the ones who need washing, and who are the ones who have to wash others’ feet? The Lord said, “You also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14). This tells us that we all need the washing. Those who were spiritually fresh but who have lost their freshness need the washing. Every one of us needs our feet washed, and every one of us needs to be prepared to wash others’ feet. The Lord said, “If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” Among all the services that Christians minister to one another, nothing is more crucial or more precious than foot-washing. “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (v. 17). I love what Brother Yu has said many times: “The Bible today is more precious than the Bible yesterday.” 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. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 42, pp. 232-240)