

# If I Wash Thee Not

John 13:1-8, 13-17



## Rock Hill Baptist Church

605 Rock Hill Road  
Lexington, Tennessee 38351

Brother David Buffaloe  
731-845-6104

online at [bibleteacher.org](http://bibleteacher.org)

### **FOCAL Read Responsively** John 13:1-8, 13-17 <sup>KJV</sup>

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. (2) And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; (3) **Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; (4) He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.** (5) After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. (6) **Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?** (7) Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. (8) **Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. ...** (13) Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. (14) If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) **For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.** (16) **Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.** (17) If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Our Lord Jesus Christ never ordered anything that He did not first do Himself. Here is the perfect Teacher. Never did our Lord say one thing, then do another. No, Jesus always did first what He directed later. So it is with

our text today.

When Jesus knelt down to wash His disciple's feet, He gave us two *grand illustrations* that we need to explore today. The *first* illustration is this:

### **1. You Must Be Washed By Jesus If You Will Serve Jesus**

**FOCAL** John 13:8 <sup>KJV</sup> Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, **If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.**

I do not want to stand here in this pulpit and tell you a lie, nor be a hypocrite, so I want to be clear on this. I know nothing about football. I was raised in North Carolina where *basketball* is king. Though I know little about football, nor do I generally watch the sport, I read an interesting story about the game just the other day told by Bible Teacher *Josh Hunt*. Mr Hunt recalled how the Green Bay Packers came out of a ten year losing streak. Coach *Vince Lombardi* joined the team and, at one of the very first practices, after watching the men flail around on the field, stumbling over each other, the coach blew his whistle calling the team to the sidelines. Coach Lombardi then said:

**"Everybody stop and gather around," he said. Then he knelt down, picked up the pigskin, and said, "Let's start at the beginning. This is a football. These are the yard markers. I'm the coach. You are the players." He went on, in the most elementary of ways, to**

**explain the basics of football.**<sup>1</sup>

It's good to go back to basics, not just in football, but also in our faith. Jesus went *back to basics* when He knelt down to wash the disciple's feet. The Lord tells us:

**If Christ has not washed you, you have no part with Me. You must be washed by the Savior if you will serve the Savior!**

The *foot washing* that Jesus was doing is a perfect example of salvation by faith in Christ. Why? Well, look at the example the Master used.

**ILLUSTRATE** In the ancient world people traveled from *point a to point b* by (1) *being carried* from one place to another, or by (2) *walking* to where they wanted to be. If you were *carried* then you rode an animal. Now use your imagination for a minute. Animals quite naturally *pollute the environment* as they pass through it. They leave dirt behind themselves (also called manure, filth,, or dung). The streets of any city was often littered with filth. If you walked, you stepped in animal filth. When you got to your house you had a choice: carry the filth into the house, or *wash your feet*. This is where the custom of *foot washing* came into being. The host of the house either had a servant to wash your feet, or (if the host was poor) offered you water and a towel so you could clean your own feet before entering the house. People were familiar with the custom of foot washing. So when Jesus grabbed a towel and a wash basin, the disciples knew what He was doing. However, the foot

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.joshhunt.com/mail23.htm>

washing that Jesus did was *not* like the regular foot washing. We read:

**FOCAL** John 13:1, 2, 4, 5 <sup>KJV</sup> Now **before the feast of the passover .... (2) And supper being ended ..... (4) [Jesus] riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. (5) After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.**

Did you notice the timing of this foot washing? The disciples had *already eaten* their meal, and were getting ready to worship the Passover. Their feet were cleaned when they came in the house. Just as our parents made us wash our hands before eating, the disciples would have cleaned their feet *before* they came to the dinner table. The disciples *cleaned themselves* up, made themselves presentable. Jesus said:

**FOCAL** John 13:8 <sup>KJV</sup> ... **If I wash<sup>2</sup> thee not, thou hast no part<sup>3</sup> with me.**

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2G3538 (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries), *νίπτω*, niptō, *nip'-to*, To *cleanse* (especially the hands or the feet or the face); ceremonially to *perform ablution*: - wash. Compare G3068.

3G3313 (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries), *μέρος*, meros, *mer'-os*, From an obsolete but more primary form of *μείρομαι* *meiromai* (to *get as a section* or *allotment*); a *division* or *share* (literally or figuratively, in a wide application): - behalf, coast, course, craft, particular (+ -ly), part (+ -ly), piece, portion, respect, side, some sort (-what).

When we look at the original Greek text we see that Jesus literally said:

**"If I do not *ceremonially* wash you[r feet], then you have no partnership or share with Me".**

The purpose of the foot washing Jesus did was symbolic. Look at the exchange between Jesus and Peter:

John 13:9-10 <sup>KJV</sup> ... Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. (10) Jesus saith to him, **He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.**

Let's read that from another Bible version. The *Holman Christian Standard* reads:

John 13:10 <sup>HCSB</sup> **"One who has bathed," Jesus told him, "doesn't need to wash anything except his feet, but he is completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you."**

May I submit that this foot washing symbolized *the washing of salvation*? Why do I believe this? Because God in the Scripture frequently refers to the *way we live* as *walking*. God uses **walk** to describe our **way of life**. God told Israel:

**Deuteronomy 8:6** <sup>KJV</sup> **Therefore thou shalt keep the**

**commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.**

How does God often use the verb *walk* in Scripture?

Scripture uses the verb **walk** as a synonym meaning "**to live**". When God uses that verb **walk** in partnership *with Himself*, He is calling His people to a way of life that is honoring to Him. God told Israel in another place:

**Deuteronomy 10:12 <sup>KJV</sup> And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul**

When Israel was commanded to **walk in all God's ways**, this was the same as saying **live your life for God**. Joshua warned Israel before they entered into the Promised Land:

**Joshua 22:5 <sup>KJV</sup> But take diligent heed to .... love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.**

Israel was commanded to **walk in God's Ways, to guard and do His commandments**, yet Israel time after

time failed to do this. Why? The reason that Israel kept failing God is because *Israel was full of Israel, and not full of God*. Jesus Christ had not yet come. He had not yet made payment for our sins. He had not yet went to the Cross, nor had He sent the Holy Spirit of God to live inside of us.

It is impossible to serve God in a way that pleases Him unless Jesus Christ has washed you!

Unless you have come to Christ and surrendered yourself to Him for salvation, unless you have asked Him to *clean your walk*, then you yet walk in darkness.

Every one of these disciples had washed their feet before coming into this house to eat supper. Yet Jesus must yet wash the feet. Oh Beloved, hear His words:

**FOCAL John 13:8 <sup>KJV</sup> ... If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.**

If I do not wash you, you cannot work with Me. The *unsaved*, those who have not surrendered their lives (and their walk) to Jesus *still walk in darkness*. The Bible says:

**Ephesians 2:1-2 <sup>KJV</sup> And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the**

**prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Before you knew Jesus Christ as Savior you **walked according to the manner of this world**, and lived your life according to the devil. You

**John 11:10** <sup>KJV</sup> **walk[ed] in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light..**

There are too many people today who assume that Christianity is a *self help project*.

In fact, some pitiful so called ministers of the Gospel make salvation out to be a work of man, not a work of God. But Beloved, salvation has *never* been a work of man. The Bible teaches us that a person comes to Christ Jesus by faith and, calling on Him and Him alone, they are saved. The *overwhelming creative power of God in Salvation* is seen in the way the Bible describes salvation. Salvation is something that God must do. Just as God **commanded the light to shine out of darkness** on the first day of creation:

**2 Corinthians 4:5-7** <sup>KJV</sup> For **we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord**; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For **God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge**

**of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.** (7) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the **excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.**

Jesus Christ must come to the sin darkened life and bring light to it. The Christian is created by the hand of God, not made by the hand of man. Jesus Christ has to wash your feet, has to change your way of life, or you are yet dead in your sins.

If you are saved, if He has washed your feet, your *way of life*, and now shines in your heart, then this second point applies to you.

## **2. If You Are Washed By Jesus, You Must Walk As Jesus Walked**

**FOCAL** John 13:1-4 <sup>KJV</sup> Now before the feast of the passover, when **Jesus knew** that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. (2) And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; (3) **Jesus knowing** that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; (4) He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

Two words characterize this section: **Jesus knew**. Jesus

Christ **knew** that it was time for Him to go to the Cross. Jesus **knew** that Judas was going to betray Him. Jesus **knew** that **the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God**. Jesus **knew** Who He was, and what His purpose was. Knowing all these things, Jesus wanted to give His people that same knowledge of *their purpose*. Jesus said:

**FOCAL** John 13:14-15 <sup>KJV</sup> If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; **ye also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.**

What does the Master bid us do? To **wash one another's feet**. To serve one another no matter what may come. Consider those whom Jesus washed. Were these men all cut from the same cloth? Were they humble men, deserving of what Jesus did? Absolutely not! Look at **Peter, brash Peter, arrogant Peter**. He was so full of pride that a rooster had to break him before the Lord Jesus could use him. What about **James and John**, the two brothers who wanted to have thrones right next to Jesus in Heaven? They thought so much of themselves that they even got their mother to go and ask Jesus for this special privilege in glory. What about **Judas Iscariot**. Jesus called this one **a devil**:

**John 6:70-71** <sup>KJV</sup> **Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? (71) He spake of Judas Iscariot**

**the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.**

and yet Jesus still washed His feet. There was **Thomas**, who doubted the resurrection of Jesus - though to be fair, all hid in a locked room until our Lord presented Himself to them. These were not perfect men, they were men just as you and I are. We infer therefore that:

#### **a. We Are Commanded To Serve As Jesus Served**

When Jesus knelt on that floor to give us this wonderful illustration, He did not *qualify* what He did based on *whether his action was received or not*. Jesus said:

**FOCAL** John 13:15 <sup>KJV</sup> **For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.**

This is not based on *deservedness*. No one there that day *deserved* to have their feet washed by Jesus. He just did it, and asked us to do the same thing. We serve one another, not because those around us deserve it, but because Jesus Christ commanded it.

The Church is a *society of servants*, each one imitating Jesus Christ.

If we have been *washed by Jesus*, then we are called to *serve as Jesus served*. If we are saved by faith in Him, then Jesus Christ lives within us. We do as the Scripture

says:

**Colossians 2:6<sup>KJV</sup> As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:**

Jesus didn't kneel down on that dirty floor and say, "All right, who deserves to have their feet washed?". No Beloved, the service that the Christ gave has nothing to do with the deservedness of those served. Remember, Jesus washed **the feet of Judas Iscariot as well as the feet of the other disciples**. Judas certainly didn't deserve what Jesus did for Him - but neither did the other disciples. The Bible says:

**1 John 2:6<sup>KJV</sup> He that saith he abideth in [Jesus] ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.**

or to put it another way,

If you are saved, *wash the feet of those around you.*  
Serve them, just as Jesus served.

**ILLUSTRATE** The response of the world should have no impact on whether you serve or not. You serve others because Jesus in you says so! Period! I know that we live in an increasingly *rude society*, and it grows ruder (if that's a real word) every day. When I was growing up my parents taught me certain things called *manners*, a thing

sorely lacking in our world today. People are rude. They will shake your hand while looking at someone else. They will break into your conversation. I have had people call me on the phone and, once I answered, put me on hold while they can talk to some one else on the other line. In traffic people will ride your bumper while you are maintaining the speed limit, then blow their horn at you when they pass by. I often see two people at lunch, and one of those people ignoring his or her partner while talking on their mobile phone. Rude!

Even though we live in a rude society, and even though many of those who are rude *are reportedly Christians*, this does not give us the right to ignore their needs. We are to serve others whether they deserve that service or not. We are to serve others whether we *feel like* serving others or not.

**b. When We Serve As Jesus Served,  
We Honor Our Lord Jesus Christ**

**FOCAL** John 13:15-16<sup>KJV</sup> For **I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.** (16) Verily, verily, I say unto you, **The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.**

When we serve as Jesus Christ served, we

**1 Peter 2:9<sup>KJV</sup> ... should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light...**

**ILLUSTRATE** When Jesus Christ lives through us, then others see that Christianity is more than *mere lip service to God* - it is a joyous way of life! The great preacher C.H. Spurgeon wrote<sup>4</sup>:

**"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." This saying ennobles the weary routine of earthly employments, and sheds a halo around the most humble occupations. To wash feet may be servile, but to wash his feet is royal work. To unloose the shoe-latchet is poor employ, but to unloose the great Master's shoe is a princely privilege. The shop, the barn, the scullery, and the smithy become temples when men and women do all to the glory of God! Then "divine service" is not a thing of a few hours and a few places, but all life becomes holiness unto the Lord, and every place and thing, as consecrated as the tabernacle and its golden candlestick."**

Oh my Beloved, when we *wash one another's feet* by serving each other in love, we follow the Master's example. The Bible teaches that those who are saved are to:

**Romans 6:4** <sup>KJV</sup> .... **walk in newness of life.**

The unbeliever remains an unbeliever when he doesn't see a practical outworking of our faith. When the unbeliever doesn't see Jesus Christ living through us,

then there is nothing there that he would want. We must show the world:

**Colossians 1:27** <sup>KJV</sup> ... .. **Christ in you, the hope of glory:**

When you serve others without expectation of return, you show that you are:

**Galatians 2:20** <sup>KJV</sup> ... **crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:** and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

**Galatians 5:24** <sup>KJV</sup> And **they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.**

We who are Christ's have been crucified with Christ. We have died with Him, He paid the penalty for our sins, and He now lives inside of us. We who are Christ's are required to serve Him, to mirror Him, to live for Him, to love Him. As we do this, as we lift Him up, this will draw others to Christ. Only when others see the reality of Christ in us, serving and loving even *the unlovable*, will they believe what we say about Jesus. If I look in the mirror and do not see Jesus, then how can I expect to lead my loved ones to that Throne of Grace?

**c. When We Serve As Jesus Served,**

## **We Prove To Ourselves That We Know Where We Are Going**

**Illustrate and Close** John Huffman writes:

In January 2000, leaders in Charlotte, North Carolina, invited their favorite son, Billy Graham, to a luncheon in his honor. Billy initially hesitated to accept the invitation because he struggles with Parkinson's disease. But the Charlotte leaders said, "We don't expect a major address. Just come and let us honor you." So he agreed. After wonderful things were said about him, Dr. Graham stepped to the rostrum, looked at the crowd, and said, "I'm reminded today of Albert Einstein, the great physicist who this month has been honored by Time magazine as the Man of the Century. Einstein was once traveling from Princeton on a train when the conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of each passenger. When he came to Einstein, Einstein reached in his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his other pocket. It wasn't there, so he looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it. Then he looked in the seat by him. He couldn't find it. The conductor said, 'Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it.' Einstein nodded appreciatively. The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket. The conductor rushed back and said, 'Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don't

worry. I know who you are. No problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one.' Einstein looked at him and said, 'Young man, I too know who I am. What I don't know is where I'm going.'" Having said that Billy Graham continued, "See the suit I'm wearing? It's a brand new suit. My wife, my children, and my grandchildren are telling me I've gotten a little slovenly in my old age. I used to be a bit more fastidious. So I went out and bought a new suit for this luncheon and one more occasion. You know what that occasion is? This is the suit in which I'll be buried. But when you hear I'm dead, I don't want you to immediately remember the suit I'm wearing. I want you to remember this: I not only know who I am, I also know where I'm going"<sup>5</sup>

Unless Jesus Christ is living in you and through you, you truly have no certainty of salvation. Can you, like Billy Graham, say "I not only know who I am, I also know where I'm going"? Can you say the same thing today, that you know who you are and where you're going? If you can't, please go back to our *first point* today, and make sure that Jesus has washed you. Surrender your life to Him, and ask Him to come into your heart. He will, you know.

May God touch your hearts with these words.

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<sup>5</sup> original source: *John Huffman*, Preaching Conference 2002