

WHY DON'T WE PRACTICE "FOOT WASHING?"

Garland M. Robinson

Whatever is done in word or deed must be done by the Lord's authority (Col. 3:17). Nowhere in the New Testament is "foot washing" authorized as a church ordinance or function.

The record of our Lord washing the disciples feet is found in John 13:1-5. A careful reading will note this to be an example for individuals, not churches. It is an act of service, humility, not an act of worship!

It was a well established custom in Bible times for one to wash their feet upon entering a house. The wearing of sandals allowed the feet to become soiled from the hot dusty roads. Washing one's feet was a menial task and usually performed by a servant.

The incident of John 13 took place in the context of the disciples discussing who should be greatest among them (Luke 22:24). Instead of merely telling his disciples what they should do, the Lord translated the principles of humility and service into practice. On other occasions he had taught them this lesson; now, they were seeing it performed by the Lord's own hands. The example was one of humility and servitude. Instead of seeking positions of pre-eminence, they should follow his example of service to others.

To practice "foot washing" as a part of worship places it in the category where it belongs — **Vain Worship**. It is a doctrine and commandment of men, not a doctrine or commandment of God (Matt. 15:9).

Acts 2:42 says the disciples "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine..." But, you never read of them having a "foot washing" service for there is no command or example of it in the New Testament. It was not until the fourth century that foot washing began to be practiced as a church ordinance in the apostate church. It was not a part of the apostles' doctrine! It was not a part of the truth to be practiced in worship. See John 16:13 and 2 Peter 1:3.

There is no command, example or implication in all the New Testament for washing feet as an act of worship. What is practiced by some religious groups today does not match what was done by our Lord. He washed all the disciples' feet and he washed both feet! It was a practice of hospitality.

The lesson is one of humility and Christian service, not a church ordinance or part of Christian worship. Christian "service" and Christian "worship" are two separate things.

Let us be humble servants of our Lord.