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THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT

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Paul Omar Campbell

Chapter Four

“YE ARE CLEAN”

JESUS was the antitypical Paschal Lamb. At the Passover He desired that His disciples begin to understand the significance of His spilled blood and its relation to justice, mercy, and forgiveness. But their understanding was dulled by selfishness. They must understand that what He taught about being clean was more than body cleansing. That is why He washed their feet. His actions seem like a contradiction, but they are not.

Had the washing of their feet been done by a slave under the compulsion of a whip, it would have had no spiritual effect. It would have been an example of righteousness by works. But Jesus washed their feet under the compulsion of love, and the impact on them of His attitude was tremendous. He put confidence in them although they knew they were unworthy. His example of humility brushed away their selfishness so that He could call them clean.

This idea poses a problem to some people, for many wonder how He could call them clean. Part of the answer is that by example He began a cleansing process that continued in spite of occasional interruptions. God judges men by the direction in which they are going, however fast or slow they may be traveling.

After washing their feet Jesus said, "Ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him" (John 13:10, 11). He called Peter clean even though Peter had tried to murder a man and had denied his Lord, because Peter's over-all direction was right even though he temporarily stumbled. He called Thomas clean even though he struggled with unbelief until he touched the scars of Jesus. Jesus called them clean because He saw them according to their potential.

This is not the first time God the Son had shown forbearance. Israel was delivered from Egypt but longed for the fleshpots left behind. They made a golden calf to worship, murmured at the lack of bread and water, fell in love with Midianitish women. Yet when Baalam tried to curse Israel for a price, God put words of blessings in his mouth. "He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them" (Num. 23:20, 21).

Did God see their perverseness? Yes, but He did not fasten His eyes on it, for He looked beyond it at their potential.

The honor roll in Hebrews 11 is filled with the names of people like Moses, who killed a man; Noah, who got drunk after coming out of the ark; Abraham, who lied twice about his wife; Jacob, who tricked Esau out of their father's blessing; David, who stole another man's wife; Elijah, who was frightened and ran from Jezebel; Rahab the harlot; and Samson, who committed suicide. How did their names get onto such a roll? They stumbled, repented, and continued to go in the right direction. The Father viewed their potential through His Son's blood.

When Jesus washed His disciples' feet He found

no fault in them, and called them clean. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17).

Baptism and foot washing are alike in some respects: both use water and both are symbols of cleansing. Part of the gospel commission was to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. (See Matthew 28:19.)

The Father loved the world enough to give up the Son to be a scarred human and never again to be a God only. Are we willing to be immersed in that kind of love? The Son loved us enough to risk heaven. Are we willing to be completely taken over by that kind of love? The Holy Spirit was selfless and never talked about Himself but always about the Father or the Son. Are we willing to be baptized into that kind of unselfishness? Well, that is baptism.

Both baptism and foot washing are voluntary outward signs of inward cleansing. One is ministered to and for us; the other is ministered by and for us. Once we have been baptized into love, foot washing is a recurring outward sign of our dedication to service made possible by our having been immersed in love. In this respect foot washing becomes rebaptism.

Baptism and foot washing are only symbols, and without the inward work they are meaningless. These symbols are to keep us thinking of our needs and goals. Baptism comes early in the Christian experience. Foot washing is a constant reminder of our privilege to serve others. The ordinance of humility "is to clear our moral horizon of the rubbish that has been permitted to accumulate."—ELLEN G. WHITE, *Review and Herald*, June 22, 1897.

Jesus said, "He that is washed [bathed or baptized] needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John 13:10). "The true version reads,