

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX
HOW GOD DEALS
WITH THE BELIEVERS' SINS—
FOOT-WASHING
THE ASHES OF THE RED HEIFER
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In Numbers 19 God shows us that if a man touches a dead body, he is defiled and must cleanse himself with the ashes of the red heifer. The way to apply the ashes is to put them in the running water (Num. 19:17). If a man has any impurity, the water with the ashes can be sprinkled on him, and the man will be cleansed. The work of Christ is completed. There is no need for Christ to be crucified again. Our need now is to apply the ashes to us, that is, to apply the efficacy of this work to us. The way to apply it is to mix it with the Holy Spirit. Only the work of the Holy Spirit can transfer its effectiveness over to us.

Hence, at issue today is not the work of the Lord Jesus. At issue today is the work of the Holy Spirit. There is no question about the Lord's dying for us. The question is whether or not this work has produced an effect on us, whether or not the Holy Spirit has applied the work of the Lord Jesus to us. When we confess our sins, the Holy Spirit applies the Lord's work of redemption to us. He will cause us to think of the Lord and to realize how complete His work is. The Holy Spirit reminds us in our heart of the redemptive work of the Lord. He causes us to remember and to enter into this truth. By this our heart will have peace and joy. The Holy Spirit comes and applies the work of the ashes, that is, the eternal work of the Lord Jesus, to us. The Lord has accomplished all the work. There is no need to ask for anything or to do anything. Now when we confess our sins, the Holy Spirit comes and causes us to consider this truth so that we can receive the benefits of the Lord's redemption.

FOOT-WASHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Not only does the Old Testament show us the cleansing by the death of the Lord Jesus, but in the New Testament the Lord Jesus also did something to show us the same thing. John 13 shows us a picture of what a Christian should do when he sins. John 13:1 says, "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." After this word, the Lord Jesus did something which shows not only His love, but His love to the uttermost. John 13 is different from John 3. John 3 is about God's initial love. John 13 is about God's uttermost love. Once God loves His children, He loves them to the uttermost.

John 13:3-10 says, "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. He came then to Simon Peter. Peter said to Him, Lord, do You wash my feet? Jesus answered and said to him,

What I am doing you do not know now, but you will know after these things. 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. Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus said to him, He who is bathed has no need except to wash his feet, but is wholly clean."

Foot-washing has two meanings in the Bible. Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet has one meaning, and the disciples' washing of each other's feet has another meaning. To wash each other's feet is to recover one another and to revive one another. Jesus' washing the disciples' feet has another meaning.

All of us have shoes and socks; therefore, foot-washing is not that necessary for us. But some of us come from the southeast Asian countries. There foot-washing is necessary because many wear sandals only. They do not wear socks. The Jews were like the southeastern Asians; they wore sandals and did not have socks. Often they walked through desert lands, and their feet were constantly dirty. Not only did their feet get dirty when they traveled, but sometimes their feet got dirty when they walked across the hall immediately after a bath. Even when their body was already clean, their feet still needed washing before they would be wholly clean.

What does the Lord Jesus want to show us in this picture? Verse 10 says, "Jesus said to him, He who is bathed has no need except to wash his feet, but is wholly clean." Who are those who are bathed? Ananias told Paul to rise up and be baptized for the washing away of his sins (Acts 22:16). Bathing in the Bible signifies the full cleansing from sin of a person when he believes in the Lord Jesus. Last night we saw the slaughtering and the burning of the heifer. The slaughtering is for our redemption, and the burning is for our cleansing. Tonight we also have to consider two kinds of cleansing. One is foot-washing. The other is bathing. There are two sides to the Lord's work—the slaughtering and the burning; and when we apply the effects of this work to us, there are also two sides—the foot-washing and the bathing. He cleansed us with His own blood. This work of redemption was accomplished once for all. When we believe in and receive Him, we are washed in the pool of His blood and are fully cleansed. Thank the Lord that we have all taken the bath. All our sins have been washed away by the Lord Jesus. But now that we have believed in the Lord and have been washed, while we are on our journey in the wilderness, we cannot avoid coming in contact with the world. We cannot avoid picking up impurities. In our journeying in the wilderness, spontaneously we come into contact with the world, and spontaneously the dust of the earth defiles our feet.

BATHING AND FOOT-WASHING

Although we Christians are bathed once only, the Bible shows us that foot-washing happens many times. There is only one bathing, but there are many foot-washings. It is like the cleansing: There is only one cleansing by the blood, but there are many cleansings by the water of the ashes. The accomplished redemption of Christ occurred once only. But there are many applications by the Holy Spirit of this accomplished work to us. We are bathed only once, and all our sins are washed. But it takes many foot-washings to wash away all the dirt that we pick up on the wilderness journey. There needs to be only one bathing. But foot-washing is a daily work before the Lord. Foot-washing is a washing that comes about by the Word of God, through the work of the

Holy Spirit, and based upon the work of the Lord Jesus. If we have been cleansed once by His blood, we must continue to be washed daily by His blood as well. The Lord Jesus does not have to come and do another work. We are cleansed again and again based on that one work. It is not the ashes that are cleansing us but the water of the ashes. The ashes of the red heifer are the mark of our judgment.

God did not substitute our judgment with the judgment of the Lord Jesus. Rather, He judged us in Christ Jesus. Today man thinks that the Lord Jesus died in place of man; but actually, we died in and with the Lord Jesus. In other words, we are judged in Christ. This alone will cleanse us. My daily cleansing is based on the death of the Lord Jesus.

We know that we have taken a bath, that is, our sins have been cleansed. Once we are saved, we are eternally saved. All the problems are solved. What then should we do when we touch the dirt while living on earth and coming into contact with the world every day? We all cannot be like the thief on the cross, who went straight to Paradise without his feet ever touching the earth after he was cleansed by the blood. Most people are not saved while on their deathbeds. Most still have to take the wilderness journey. Every one of us knows that while we take the wilderness journey, we should not sin. But sinning is a fact with all of us. As a result, our feet get dirty. Many times we are rash and speak words that we should not speak. Many times we have improper thoughts. Thus, we admit that we are defiled. But God has prepared the foot-washing of the Lord Jesus for us. This is not just a sign of His love for us, but a sign of His love to the uttermost. He loved us; hence, He was crucified for us. Now He loves us to the uttermost; hence, He washes our feet. Figuratively speaking, foot-washing is not the love before marriage. Foot-washing is the love after marriage. He causes us to be continually clean before Him. This is why the Lord said that he who has been bathed will be wholly clean once his feet are washed. We thank the Lord that His Son has given us a bath already.

The Lord allowed Peter's foolishness to be manifested as a lesson for us. When He came to Peter, Peter said, "Are You going to wash my feet?" Peter thought that this was a matter of politeness and courtesy. The Lord said that Peter would not understand what He did then but would understand later. There is much spiritual truth here. When the Holy Spirit comes, we will see. Now we are bewildered. All we see is a basin of water and the Lord's washing. We do not see what they mean. In the future, however, we will understand. But Peter always had his opinions. He exclaimed that the Lord would never wash his feet. The Lord told him that the foot-washing was very important. If the Lord did not wash Peter's feet that night, Peter would have no part with Him.

Do not think that it is enough to have a bath once and be cleansed by the blood of the Lord once. Do not think that we can get by loosely when we are defiled by the dirt on our way through the world. The Lord said that if our feet are not washed, we will have no part with Him. This means His fellowship with us today will be terminated. His fellowship with us in the future kingdom will also be lost. How important are the daily cleansings. We must allow the Lord to wash our feet every day. We have to come back every day to be recovered and to get the application of the power of Christ's redemption. We do not need the blood of the Lord Jesus to wash us again before God. The Lord's work before God has been finished once and for all. But we can experience the washing many times. The blood of His Son washes our sins again and again

continuously. Therefore, we must have our feet washed every day. We have to take care of the cleanliness of our feet every day.

Peter was like we are. He always went to extremes. He went to one end at one time and then to the other end at another time. At one moment he said that the Lord would never wash his feet. Then when he heard the Lord say that he would have no part with Him if there were no foot-washing, he asked that his head and his hands be washed as well. The Lord Jesus showed him that this other extreme is wrong also. The Lord said that he who is bathed has no need except to wash his feet. No one can repent and believe in the Lord twice. No one can be regenerated twice. No one can receive the Savior twice. Once you come to the Lord Jesus and accept Him as Savior, that is enough. Perhaps you doubt for a few days. Perhaps you think that when you accepted Him as Savior the last time, you did not do a good enough job, and perhaps you begin to doubt after a few days; you want to accept Him again. But the Lord said that there is no need. The head does not need to be washed again, and the hands do not need to be washed again. The Lord Jesus said that those who have taken a bath only need to have their feet washed in order to be wholly clean. We only need one bath for the whole body. Although we touch the world and dirty our feet often, this does not affect the cleanliness of our whole body. There needs to be only one bath for the whole body. The bath cannot be repeated. Hallelujah! Even if you walk in the mud and your feet become black, it will not affect the cleanliness of your whole body. Your body does not need to be cleansed again. Once you have received the Lord Jesus as the Savior, your body is cleansed. From then on, you do not need to wash your body again. When a man is cleansed once, he is cleansed forever. No one can deny this. One's feet can get dirty, and he can be cut off from the fellowship of the Lord. He can have no share in the kingdom, but the whole body is still clean. All those who are bathed need to wash only their feet, and they will be fully clean. What we are doing day by day is looking back at our Savior. The Lord Jesus has done an eternal work. Day by day as we live on earth, we need to keep only our feet clean and free from dirt. If we pick up some dirt by accident, we can still receive a daily washing, so that we can enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with the Lord and reign with Him tomorrow. This is our way. May the Lord keep our feet clean day after day, so that we can glorify His name here on earth.