

the earmarks of a degenerate life; but will God? Hardly! The big surprise in heaven will be an aching absence of many folks who on earth certainly gave the impression that they would be in heaven without fail.

BIGGEST SURPRISE

Briefly, I will tell you the third and biggest surprise that I shall find in heaven: that I got there! This confession is no mock humility . . . but a statement of honest facts . . . by which I mean simply, that whether or not I get there isn't the point. I settled that point a long time ago . . . in fact when I was twelve years old . . . but the simple fact that it is so incredible. No, the final judgment is not to determine whether or not we shall be saved, but the degree of reward or punishment . . . The fact of eternal life begins here and now and those who have been twice born are now indisputable candidates for that eternal city. Let there be no doubt about it! Jesus made this point as clear as a morning sky after a rainfall.

But just to think: that mankind—this strange makeup of atoms, protons and neutrons . . . this chemical equation of flesh and blood could somehow by God's fashioning be made into an image for eternal life with God. That seems incredible doesn't it. Of one thing I am quite sure, that there is nothing in the nature of God that requires human association to complete it. Yet, God being a creator of creative love has made this provision for man, not for Himself. No, I am not depreciating human nature I am just trying to understand it and put it in its rightful place. Wondering why God

worked this miracle for human salvation is as futile as trying to understand how the dew appears. But just as I can feel the dew's presence, I can accept this profound truth of God's provision. To think that anyone person could live eternally with God is a fact to confound us yet to encourage our anticipation since it is doubtless true.

I close the message with another man's words:

"My life is a wearisome journey;
I am tired of the dust and the heat;
The rays of the sun beat upon me,
And the briars are all around my feet.
But the city to which I am going
Will amply the trials repay,
And the toils of the road will seem nothing
When I get to the end of the way.

There are so many hills to climb upward,
That often I am weary for rest;
But he who appoints me my pathway
Knows just what is needful and best.
I know in His word He has promised
That my strength shall be as my day;
And the toils of the road will seem nothing
When I come to the end of the way.
He loves me too much to forget me,
Or give me one trial too much;
All of his children have been dearly
purchased.

But Satan can never say as much.
By and by I shall see and praise Him
In the land of unending day,
And the toils of the road shall seem nothing
When I get to the end of the way."

And that is no surprise.

FEET ONLY

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Scripture: John 13: 2-9

As He walked into the room He knew something was wrong. The air was strained with emotion; feelings were worn on their sleeves insomuch that the men sitting there had dispensed with the common niceties akin to good manners. Jesus looked about Him in that upper room to see a

group of Apostles arguing among themselves as to order of rank, privilege and precedence. On this last night together Christ had counted to cement the bond of true affection 'twixt him and them into one indissoluble tie.

Their last night together: my, what a time for the right atmosphere, for under-

standing and heartfelt emotion. The very opposite however, was the case. Among them sat a traitor—Judas—yet for the enormity of his crime, it wasn't much worse than the other sins among the remaining eleven who were so obsessed with vain ambition that while they did not bargain to sell Him to the high priests, they had sold themselves to greed, egomania, and preferment.

The meal began and in the midst of eating and drinking a very strange thing occurred. Jesus stepped down from the table, took off the outer garment, and with basin and water began to wash the disciple's feet. The record makes no mention from any of the disciples except from Peter. Judas' feet, those that would be blue in death a little while hence were washed in loving care. No skirting him by ignoring on the part of Jesus. . . ; rather, the same solicitous love that continued right up to the end, even after having been crucified. And that even though Jesus knew that Judas was on his way to betray him then.

HUMBLE ACT

That is the settings: an upper room, the last night before His death on the cross. Knowing that nothing spiritually can be accomplished in an atmosphere rife with angered words, He sought to clear the air, not by preaching a sermon, but the humble act of washing their feet. Can you imagine how such a singular act must have struck them? A sermon in deed! A powerful rebuke though it was not accompanied by a single word. You know, friends, sometimes that is the most persuasive argument on earth: merely to remain silent. Especially, when there have already been too many words. Many a family feud would be settled if one party learned the cultured art of remaining silent. Oh, it takes a lot of courage to swallow our pride in order not to cut back, but the price paid still is small compared to the results achieved.

Then Jesus came to the feet of Peter—to Peter that big fisherman, who through history has rated a favored berth in the history of Christendom. The man who has been canonized by history, the favorite name of a million boys, the subject of a thousand books and the admiration of the

millions. Before this disciple Jesus knelt and began to bathe his feet. Hardly had the first drop touched his feet before Peter exploded in his customary impulsive self. "What are you doing, Master? After all, you are to be our king and this is no place nor position for the King of Israel!" "Why, Peter, I am washing your feet." "But you will never wash my feet! Not you!" In effect Jesus answered him by telling Peter that he didn't know what He was doing.

As a matter of fact, do we ever know what God is doing for the moment? When some strange turn of circumstances, some door slammed in our face, some sun failing to shine, or opportunity blocked; some loved-one taken, some unexplainable illness—do we ever quite know, like Moses, what these burning bushes signify? The only trustworthy answer I can give you is that there are times when we must trust God implicitly, even when we cannot figure out where He is going for the moment. Trust Him in the dark! That is about the size of it because the dark is often the shortest route to the morning light of divine purpose.

THE TIME WILL COME

To this dissenting disciple Christ said, "You don't know what I am doing, Peter. But there will come a time when the import will dawn on you and then you will see why I must wash your feet now. Way out in the far tomorrow when the going gets tough, when to stand up for Me and My cause will result in insult, jeers, ridicule, ostracism and sometimes—death . . . then Peter, you will know. You will learn that real life consists not so much in personal preferment as in personal renunciation; not so much in accumulation, but in outlay. That superlative living is summed up in service, not substance. Peter, you must walk that lonesome highway, but here's my promise that you shall have divine accompaniment in the process."

Then the words of Christ became pointedly severe: Said He, "If I don't wash your feet, you will have no part with me." That is, if you insist on being separate and self-sufficient, then that kind of attitude renders my presence out of order. But if I wash your feet as a token of humble service, even the Master becoming ser-

vant, then you will be one with me. When Jesus said those words, Peter must have leaped from his seat while embracing the Christ and shouting, "Then wash not only my feet, but my hands and my head." In short, wash me all over—not only my feet. That's the need of us today . . . wash us all over—not just feet. Feet only . . . is partial cleaning.

Religion all the way . . . not just feet, or just mind, or just emotion . . . but all that we are and have. The curse of fragmented religion is everywhere in evidence . . . people who have responded to the calls of Christ only with their emotions, or their intellect, or their financial resources. But the need is for total response—all there is of a man, for it doesn't take much of a person to be a Christian, but it takes all there is of him!

STILL A STRANGER

Among the ugliest facets of Christendom is the host of people who were satisfied with merely having their feet washed. People who have been exposed to this Stranger of Galilee to this day yet know Him as a stranger. Religion that contents itself with the leftovers of human thought, disposition, and time; such neither qualifies as a soulchanger in this life nor a soul-saver for the next.

Recently I saw a striking illustration of this truth of fragmented religion. During one of our revivals two adults, among others, came on profession of faith. That has been nearly a year now, and I haven't laid eyes on them since they joined the church. One hasn't even shown up to be baptized. Now, is it that they didn't quite understand what was involved? Did they have time later to think it over and decided that they had been a bit hasty? Or what happened? The answer is easy: theirs was a case of feet only . . . if you please, a partial conversion that knew nothing about changing head, heart, emotions, will and yea, the whole personality. Fragmented faith, feet only!

The heart-rending cross that every minister has to bear is that splintered beam hewn by the hands of partially converted people . . . with only clean feet. What is needed in such places is not to be better informed, or to possess more money, or even to be better known; what is needed is an honest-to-God, all-the-way, sin-forgiving, mouth-confessing, experience with

Jesus Christ inasmuch that they, like Peter, would shout, "Lord, not only my feet, but wash my hands, my head, my whole body!" Religion all the way, since God must be God of all or He will not be God at all.

BARREN SOUL

Just such happened to a fashionable lady not long ago who had grown up in a religious communion that made ritual, liturgy, and religious mechanics the central crux of the matter. She visited our church a time or two and then I noticed that her attendance became regular. Weeks became months and I knew nothing about what had happened until I received a fourteen page letter from her. In short, here is what she said; after having related her background. She said that she heard the preacher say a strangely peculiar thing: that being a Christian was first a personal experience with God through Jesus Christ—and that when such happened one would know it without any reasonable doubt—that life does an aboutface, moves toward different goals and adopts a totally different sense of values. Said she, "When I heard that, I wondered what on earth is he talking about." You know, she went on to say, that at least she was so irked by her lack of knowledge that she agreed in herself to try it—strictly as an experiment out of curiosity. Then something happened: in the midst of her little religious game of trying to satisfy her curious nature, she heard the still small voice speak inside, "Margie, you are not a Christian." Such rude shock came over her till she refused to admit that God had spoken to her barren soul. Next time in church the same thing happened, and she continued to resist. Finally, seeing the futility of kicking against the pricks of God, she gave in and walked the aisle in childlike repentance. The best part of that letter concludes thusly, "What has happened to me since bears out the wonderful truth that God is a living reality in my life each day. I wake up in the mornings with a spring in my step, a holy zest for living, and a clean anticipation of each oncoming day."

That is precisely what happens when Christ is permitted to wash us completely clean. Religion all the way . . . not just our feet!