

INTRODUCTION

These are truly historic days. I'm only 67 years old, but this is the first Sunday of my life that most church buildings in America are closed. But this isn't the first time in our history public worship was temporarily stopped. Early in the 20th Century, church buildings were closed because of the Spanish flu that killed almost 700,000 Americans. But just imagine, those fellow believers, who are all in Heaven now didn't have the possibility of online worship. This was even before radio was widely used. People were asked to stay home and only have family worship. What a blessing we have to gather online to worship God and study His Word! Our Livefeed is interactive, so if you are watching from somewhere other than East Texas, please make a comment and let us know where you are.

As I said. These are amazing days. Who would have thought three weeks ago that we'd be looking at a time when we'd have a toilet paper shortage? Someone sent me a text that said, "Because the grocery stores shelves are empty of toilet paper, the rapture must have happened and we missed it. Because the song says, 'When the rolls are called up yonder, I'll be there.'" Sorry, but we need to keep smiling.

Seriously, I read an article written by a professor at Baylor University who lived through the Spanish flu. He suggested there were two reasons why Texans were less affected by the Spanish Flu than the rest of the nation: Because Texans ate onions and they stayed happy. So keep eating those onion and keep smiling.

If you're looking for a message on how to deal with fear, I preached that last week, and you can find it in our message archive. But today, I just want us to get back into a steady diet of the Word of God. We've been studying the Gospel according to John verse by verse for almost two years. In John 13 we come to the last night of the earthly life of Jesus before He goes to the cross. Jesus washed the disciples' feet.

John 13:1-17 CSB. Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

Now when it was time for supper, the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray him. Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into his hands, that he had come from God, and that he was going back to God. So he got up from supper, laid aside his outer clothing, took a towel, and tied it around himself. Next, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel tied around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who asked him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered him, "What I'm doing you don't realize now, but afterward you will understand."

"You will never wash my feet," Peter said.

Jesus replied, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me."

Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."

"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." For he knew who would betray him. This is why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

When Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer clothing, he reclined again and said to them, "Do you know what I have done for you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you.

"Truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

Now, how do you picture Jesus and the disciples at this last meal? Most of us have grown up thinking about a long table with Jesus at the center and the disciples on either side. This is because Renaissance artists, including Leonardo da Vinci painted the scene that way. Almost everyone has seen a painting like the famous one by da Vinci that was painted on the wall of a dining hall in a monastery in Milan, Italy in about 1495. Can't you picture the monks sitting there sipping their soup in silence and looking at Jesus sitting at a table just like where they were sitting?

But that wasn't the real scene at all. This wasn't fifteenth century Europe; this was the first century in the Middle East. And diners reclined around the table, supporting themselves on their left arm—which freed their right hands—which were the clean, kosher hands, to take the food and drink.

So this is the setting where Jesus got up and put on a towel and proceeded to go around with a basin of water. He gently washed the feet of the disciples and took the towel to dry them. He even washed the feet of Judas, who would betray Him in less than six hours.

So what was Jesus doing? In this message, I'm going to first dig out a couple of spiritual truths, the first is about salvation and the second is about sin. Then I want to end with a practical truth about servanthood.

First let's look at the truth about salvation.

I. SALVATION IS LIKE A BATH FOR YOUR SOUL.

Jesus approached Peter and he said, "No, Lord, you won't wash MY feet!" Now Peter was always saying the wrong thing. He was always putting his foot in his mouth. Sometimes the only reason Peter opened his mouth was to change feet. My friend Ron Dunn used to say Jesus was probably thinking, "Peter, you'd better let me wash your feet because you're about to put them in your mouth again."

Jesus said, "Peter, if I don't wash your feet, you can't be my partner." So Peter now goes overboard and says, "Well, if that's the case, then wash me from head to foot: Give me a bath!" "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." (John 13:10 CSB)

What did He mean? He was making a spiritual analogy. What dirt is to your body; sin is to your soul. And because we are all stained with sin, we need to get a spiritual bath. And I'm not talking about baptism. We are cleansed by the Word of God. In Ephesians 5:26 the Bible says that Jesus has cleansed the church with the washing of water by the Word.

Salvation is like a bath for your soul. "He saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5 CSB)

Focus on those words, "washing of regeneration." What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

That night Jesus was talking about the cleansing of salvation. He said, "Peter you don't need to take a bath because you're already clean." Then He turned to the other disciples and said, "You are all clean, except one of you." Because Jesus knew that Judas still had a sinful, dirty heart.

That leads me to make two important points about personal salvation.

A. We all need this bath because we aren't naturally clean.

First, we ALL need this bath because we aren't naturally clean. Each of us must come to Jesus in faith to receive the washing of regeneration. There's a false teaching that has been around for a long time that basically says that everybody is good and in the end, God will accept everyone into Heaven. It's called universalism. But in that upper room, Jesus made a distinction. Eleven of the disciples were saved—clean. But there was one who was lost—Judas. Within six hours, this false friend would betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

Among the thousands of people listening to me today, I know that many of you have experienced the washing of regeneration. You have come to Jesus in faith, admitted that you are a sinner and He has cleansed you of your sin. But there are some of you who haven't been saved yet. You may be saying, "I'm no betrayer! I pay my taxes. I don't cheat or steal."

But the Bible says we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And if you've told one lie, you need the bath. And the Bible says the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Every one of us needs a bath.

The second truth about salvation is this:

B. One bath is all you need.

Years ago I was in Tennessee at a youth camp getting ready to preach at an outdoor evening rally. As they were on stage getting everything ready, I sat on the front row of seats as students were gathering. I sat next to a junior high school boy who was on the front row. I introduced myself and we started to chat. He asked me what I was going to be speaking on that night. I said, "I'm going to be talking about how a person can be saved and go to Heaven when they die." And then I said, "Have you ever been saved?" I'll never forget his answer. It reflects a confusion about salvation that many people still have. This boy said, "Yessir. I've been saved six or seven times already. But I think I need to be saved again tonight." I tried to gently explain to him that he only needed to be saved once.

This washing of regeneration only happens once for you. Paul didn't stutter. He didn't call it the washing or re-re-re-re generation. It's the washing of regeneration. We are all born as sinners and when we come to Jesus in faith and ask Him to save us, He removes the penalty for our sin once for all. Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore there is NOW no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." The beginning point of salvation is instantaneous. There is one moment in time in which you are separated from God by your sin. And there is a moment when by faith you accept God's free gift of grace. At that moment, the Bible says you pass from death to life. You step from darkness into light. Your soul was dirty and now you are squeaky clean in the eyes of God.

Let me briefly change the analogy. Jesus told a religious Pharisee named Nicodemus that he had to be born again. Jesus didn't say you have to be born again and again and again. Jesus said, "Just as you have been born of the flesh, you need to be born of the spirit. Just as each of us has a physical birthday, when we come to Christ we have a spiritual re-birthday.

I mentioned a few weeks ago that I just celebrated my spiritual birthday. On March 11, 1962, I came to Jesus in faith and He washed me clean. All of you know your physical birthday. But has there ever been time when you have turned from your sin and placed your faith in Jesus? If you haven't done that, it's not complicated. In fact, a child can understand it. I was a child when Jesus cleansed me of my sin. At the end of this message we will give you the opportunity to place your faith in Jesus and experience His cleansing power.

But besides a lesson about salvation, Jesus gave us a lesson about sin.

II. TO WALK IN FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS WE MUST REGULARLY CONFESS OUR SINS.

Some Christians are confused. They think for every sin that comes into their lives, they must confess that sin to be saved again—or to stay saved. No. Remember. One bath is all you need.

But even after you come to Christ and get the bath, there are times when we stumble and fall into sin. So what do we do? We confess our sins to the Lord. The Bible says, "If we say, 'We have no sin' we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8-9 CSB)

The word "confess" is *homo-legeo*, which means "to say the same thing." So when you confess your sin, you aren't telling God something He didn't know.

"Lord, I'm sorry, but I told a lie yesterday." Do you think God says, "What? I can't believe you would do such a terrible thing!" No, of course, God already knows. He knows everything about us. So when you confess your sin what you're doing is agreeing with God that what you did was wrong. You don't try to excuse it or justify it. To confess sin means that I say, "Lord, when I told that lie, I was wrong, and I am truly sorry."

The reason we confess our sins is to stay in fellowship with the Lord. I want you to think about the difference between these two words: relationship and fellowship. Once you come to faith in Jesus and get your spiritual bath, you enter into a relationship and become a child of God. The Bible says I John 1:12 "But as many as RECEIVED him, he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name." Once you come to Christ, that relationship is secure forever. God is your Father and you are a child of God. Nothing can change the relationship. But as we walk in a dirty world, we sometimes still stumble into sin. So to stay in fellowship with the Lord we come to Him and regularly confess our sins to Him.

I can illustrate that easily. My dad was Orlo Dykes. He's in Heaven now. Once I was born as his son, I have always been his son. I'm still his son. That relationship can never be severed, even in his death. We had a lot of good times together, especially when we'd go fishing. But I'm sad to say there were many times when I was not in fellowship with my dad.

When I was a teenager, I had a used 1964 black Plymouth Valiant. I called it Prince Valiant. It had bucket seats and an 8-track tape player. I know the top speed of that car because I had the pedal to the metal one night when an Alabama State Trooper pulled me over. He had clocked me for driving 93 miles per hour in a 60 mph zone. Because of the excessive speed I got a ticket for reckless driving as well as speeding.

Well Orlo wasn't very happy with me. In fact, he was steaming mad. He took my car away, and made me pay the fine. The relationship was still there, but the fellowship wasn't ideal. Of course, I apologized and confessed that I had indeed been speeding. Eventually my dad gave me my keys back and we were soon back in fellowship and going fishing again together.

The reason we regularly confess our sins isn't be saved again or to go to Heaven, it is to maintain our walk with the Lord. My mentor Pastor Ray Stedman understood and taught this

vital truth. He wrote: "I try to start out every morning by acknowledging my need for cleansing from the mistakes I made the previous day. I confess, and acknowledge before the Lord, the unkind words and tones I might have used, the wrong attitudes I had, the rebellious disobedience I manifested. Then I am cleansed anew so that I can begin every day with what is of primary value the sense of his presence with me and his power at work through me. That is what Jesus is talking about. This is where the Christian life begins truly to be lived—when you have the presence of Jesus daily with you."

The worst thing about sin in the life of a Christian isn't that you'll lose your salvation. It is that you lose your place of fellowship and usefulness with the Lord. Jesus is still washing feet. So, I encourage you to do regularly get alone with God like I do. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any unconfessed sin in your life, and then confess it and claim his cleansing and walk in fellowship with the Lord.

There's a lesson about salvation and there's a lesson about sin. And finally there's a lesson about service.

III. WE MUST FOLLOW JESUS' EXAMPLE OF HUMBLE SERVICE.

Let's circle back to that night in the upper room again. In the time of Jesus there was a custom that guests would have their feet washed before entering a home. This was both a necessity and a sign of hospitality. There was no asphalt or concrete, and people wore sandals. So by the end of the day, their feet would be caked with dirt and dust. When a guest arrived, in the foyer, a servant would meet them and remove their sandals. The guest would be seated on a stool and the servant would take a basin of water. The servant would wash the feet of the guest, and then dry them off. But when Jesus gathered with the disciples for the Passover meal, we know that they had borrowed a room, so there was no host, and no servants. So Jesus becomes both the host and the servant. The disciples looked around and thought, "I'm NOT going to wash HIS feet." You see we read in Luke 22 that later that night the disciples would get into an argument about which one of the was the greatest. So Jesus got up, wrapped a towel around himself and gently washed their feet. Then he sat down and we read what He said in John 13:13-14: Jesus said, "You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." (John 13:13-14 CSB)

Now, was Jesus talking about *literally* washing the feet of others? Yes and no. Yes, in the sense that the followers of Jesus who still walked in a dirty dusty world continued to literally wash dirty feet. Paul wrote to Timothy that a widow who deserved help from the church was one who had washed the feet of the saints.

But in a day when most of us drive in cars and walk on sidewalks and wear shoes and socks, the meaning remains, but the methods change. We should follow Jesus' example of service.

The question on our minds during this unique time in history is how can we serve the Lord when the church isn't gathering together, and we have to practice physical distancing from

others? Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." We used to say, "Lord, I'm too busy. And my neighbor is never home." And the Lord says, "Well, what about if I slowed down your schedule and made sure your neighbor was home, then would you love your neighbor?" You can show God's love in a lot of ways to your neighbor and maintain a six-foot distance.

Over the next week we will be rolling out some practical ways for our congregation to show God's love to East Texas. Starting tomorrow we'll launch a link that says "Ways to Serve." You can just click on it, register and then go and serve. Ministry is finding a need and meeting it.

So, we're asking the question, what do people need now? For instance, we learned of a critical need for blood donations, so this Friday Carter Blood Center will park three buses here beside our facility – there won't be a crowd here. Everyone who gives will make a reservation online and drive up and leave. That's just one example of how we can serve—but there are too many other ways than I have time to talk about. But if you have a desire to serve, we will have a way for you to serve.

This afternoon at 4:00, I'm going to do a Facebook Live Chat at www.facebook.com/david.o.dykes. I encourage you to go to my personal Facebook page. I want you to give some feedback to the livestream, and share some creative ways we can wash feet and serve others while still observing the precautions we're all taking.

CONCLUSION

Jesus told the disciples, "You are all clean—but not all of you." He meant that eleven of them had received salvation, but one of them had not. This is a good time for you to ask yourself, "Have I allowed Jesus to come and give me a bath?"

A Hillbilly mother who lived up in the mountains of West Virginia had nine unruly kids. One of her boys got in a tangle with a skunk, then ran through a mud bog and got covered with mud. She put him in a washtub outside and began to scrub him down. She said, "I declare, I think it would be easier to have another on that to clean this one up!"

My friend, God *never* feels that way about us. He loves you and no matter how many bad things you've done in your past, He can cleanse you of your sin. And in just a moment, we are going to give you the opportunity to make the most important decision of your life, to trust Jesus for the cleansing of your sin.

So as I finish, I want to ask you: "Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean, oh be washed in the blood of the lamb." The good news is that "There is fountain filled with blood. Drawn from Emmanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose ALL their guilty stains!" And He can cleanse you today.

OUTLINE

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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