

John 13:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

Analysis

If I then, your Lord and Master—Jesus grounds His command in His established authority from v. 13. The conditional "if" (εἰ, ei) assumes the reality: since I (the Lord) have done this, you must also. **Have washed your feet** (ἐνίψα, enipsa)—aorist tense emphasizes the completed historical act. **Ye also ought** (ὀφείλετε, opheilete)—not optional suggestion but moral obligation derived from Christ's example.

To wash one another's feet—Jesus commands mutual service, not hierarchical patterns. The reciprocal pronoun allēlōn (one another) mandates horizontal servanthood within the Christian community. This is not merely literal foot-washing (though some traditions practice it) but Christ-like humility in all relationships. The logic is unassailable: if the Master serves, how much more should fellow-servants serve each other?

Historical Context

Jesus spoke this during the Last Supper before His crucifixion. The command established a new community ethic for His followers. Early church debates emerged over whether this mandated literal foot-washing (practiced by some groups) or symbolized general humble service. The Reformed tradition generally understands it as prescriptive principle, not binding ceremony.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. In what specific ways can you "wash the feet" of fellow believers in your context?
2. How does Christ's example of service undermine pride and status-seeking in the church?

Interlinear Text

εἰ οὖν ἐγὼ νίπτειν ὑμῶν τοὺς πόδας· ὁ κύριος
If then I have washed your ^{G3588} **feet** ^{G3588} **your Lord**
G1487 G3767 G1473 G3538 G5216 G4228 G2962

καὶ ὁ διδάσκαλος καὶ ὑμεῖς ὀφείλετε ἀλλήλων
also ^{G3588} **Master** **also** **ye** **ought** **one another's**
G2532 G1320 G2532 G5210 G3784 G240

νίπτειν τοὺς πόδας·
have washed ^{G3588} **feet**
G3538 G4228

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 5:5 (Parallel theme): Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Acts 20:35 (References Lord): I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Galatians 5:13 (Parallel theme): For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Romans 12:16 (Parallel theme): Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

1 Peter 4:1 (Parallel theme): Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

1 Corinthians 8:13 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

Hebrews 12:2 (Parallel theme): Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (References Lord): For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

2 Corinthians 10:1 (Parallel theme): Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: