

John 13:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

Analysis

Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Peter's emphatic refusal—**never** (οὐ μὴ...εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα/ou mē...eis ton aiōna)—uses the strongest Greek negation plus 'unto the age,' creating absolute, eternal refusal. Yet Jesus's response is more absolute still: **If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me** (Ἐὰν μὴ νίψω σε, οὐκ ἔχεις μέρος μετ' ἐμοῦ/Ean mē nipsō se, ouk echeis meros met' emou).

The verb **wash** (νίψω/nipsō) shifts from present to aorist subjunctive—not ongoing action but a definitive act with permanent consequences. The phrase **no part with me** (οὐκ ἔχεις μέρος μετ' ἐμοῦ) is covenant language. Meros means portion, share, inheritance—the same term used for Israel's inheritance in the Promised Land (Joshua 19:9). Without Jesus's cleansing, Peter has no share in Christ's kingdom, no inheritance, no fellowship.

This dialogue transcends literal foot-washing to address soteriological necessity. Peter must receive Christ's cleansing or remain eternally separated. Pride that refuses grace is damning pride. We contribute nothing to salvation except the sin requiring it. Christ's work is complete and non-negotiable—we receive it humbly or reject it proudly. Peter's journey from 'never' to 'not my feet only' (v.9) mirrors conversion: from self-sufficient refusal to desperate reception of grace.

Historical Context

Peter's character oscillates between bold confession and rash presumption. He walked on water then sank in doubt (Matthew 14:28-31). He confessed Jesus as Christ then rebuked Him for predicting death (Matthew 16:16-23). Here Peter's protest stems from misguided devotion—he loves Jesus but misunderstands grace. His 'never' echoes his later 'I will lay down my life for thy sake' (John 13:37), followed by three denials. Peter had to learn that discipleship begins not with brave self-offering but humble reception. The phrase 'no part with me' would resonate deeply with Jewish disciples familiar with inheritance language from Torah. Being cut off from one's portion meant exclusion from covenant blessings—exactly what Jesus warns Peter faces if he refuses cleansing. Later, Peter's epistles emphasize humility (1 Peter 5:5) and the cleansing blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19), lessons learned through this upper-room exchange.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Peter's 'never' reveal the pride that masquerades as humility or devotion, and where does this appear in your own spiritual life?
2. What does Jesus's absolute requirement ('If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me') teach about the non-negotiable necessity of His atoning work?
3. Why is receiving grace often harder than giving service, and what does this reveal about the human condition?

Interlinear Text

λέγει	αὐτῷ	Πέτρος	οὐκ	μὴ	νίψω	τοὺς	πόδας	μου	εἰς
saith	him	Peter	no	G3361	I wash	G3588	feet	my	never
G3004	G846	G4074	G3756		G3538		G4228	G3450	G1519
τὸν	αἰῶνα	ἀπεκρίθη	αὐτῷ	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	Ἐὰν	μὴ	νίψω	
G3588	G165	answered	him	G3588	Jesus	G1437	G3361	I wash	
		G611	G846		G2424			G3538	
σε	οὐκ	ἔχεις	μέρος	μετ'	ἐμοῦ				
thee	no	thou hast	part	with	me				
G4571	G3756	G2192	G3313	G3326	G1700				

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 10:22 (Parallel theme): Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Acts 22:16 (Parallel theme): And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 6:11 (References Jesus): And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Titus 3:5 (Parallel theme): Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Ephesians 5:26 (Parallel theme): That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

Ezekiel 36:25 (Parallel theme): Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Revelation 7:14 (Parallel theme): And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 1:5 (References Jesus): And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Isaiah 4:4 (Parallel theme): When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

Colossians 2:23 (Parallel theme): Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.