

Ordinances Pts. 2 & 3

Module 3.5

The Charis Fellowship believes that Jesus Christ has given ordinances to his church. These ordinances are ceremonial in nature, symbolizing a spiritual reality expressly taught within the Scriptures, and have been commanded by Christ for all believers to follow. Specifically, the two ordinances we believe Jesus has given to his church are Baptism and Communion.

Charis Fellowship churches celebrate Communion in three parts: 1) Foot Washing. 2) Love Feast. 3) Bread and Cup. We believe that each of these three parts has tremendous spiritual significance, and that this form of communion best pictures, and celebrates, the spiritual realities these physical acts represent. Nevertheless, while we distinguish ourselves from other non-brethren groups it is not our desire to divide ourselves against these groups. It is with humility that we define the ordinance of Communion as an ordinance that has three parts.¹

Foot Washing: A Picture of Progressive Sanctification

Exemplified by Jesus with his disciples in John 13, Foot Washing represents the need for cleansing from indwelling sin. As Jesus said in John 13:10, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.”²

In 1st century culture feet would become very dirty. The absence of paved roads, coupled with leather sandals being the primary footwear of the day, would lead to some dirty toes. Thus, while the disciples would have routinely taken baths, merely walking outside would cause their feet to become very dirty again.

The spiritual reality that Jesus is illustrating by washing his disciples’ feet is the continual need for confession and repentance of sin. Foot Washing represents the ongoing, progressive, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives whereby he convicts of sin and leads us to confession and repentance. While one has been “spiritually bathed”, “...by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...” (Titus 3:5) we still war and battle against sin.

The Apostle John states in 1 John 1:8-9, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to

¹ Within the Charis Fellowship there is great freedom regarding the order in which the Communion service is celebrated. Surely, arguments can be made for one order or another, but it is not a particular order of the Communion service that we find to be significant. Rather, significance is found within each element of the service and what each element represents.

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forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Foot Washing is a picture of the continual cleansing forgiveness that all believers need, and that God has graciously promised to give.

This physical act also serves to remind us of the spiritual role and responsibility we have towards each other as a fellowship of believers. In humility we are to “...stir up one another to love and good works...” (Hebrews 10:24) and hold one another accountable to guard from being “...hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13). While it is certainly possible to wash our own feet, the example and command of Jesus is to wash “one another’s feet” (John 13:14). Consequently, this part of the Communion service provides us with not only a reminder of cleansing and forgiveness, but also of fellowship.³

Love Feast: A Picture of Glorification

The Love Feast pictures and celebrates the future Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The Apostle John writes in Revelation 19:6-8,

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

The Love Feast represents God’s future work of glorification; the promised eternal reality of all believers whereby they will be united with Christ (Revelation. 19:7), and spend eternity with Him!

However, far more than just a meal that will be shared with Jesus, and all the redeemed, the Love Feast is a physical symbol that represents a tremendous spiritual promise. God will complete what he has begun (Philippians 1:6) and our hope, while not yet fully realized, is that we will one day be forever with our Lord (Romans 8:24-25, 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Bread and Cup (Eucharist): A Picture of Justification

The Bread and Cup pictures the body and shed blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross. It was on the Cross that, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).”

³ See Module 3.8

The Bread and Cup represent God's work of justification, whereby believers have not only been forgiven of their sins but also justified and declared righteous in the sight of God.⁴ The Apostle Paul declares in Romans 3:23-26,

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

As we partake of the Bread and Cup remember, celebrate, and proclaim the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross as Paul instructs in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26,

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We eat and drink to proclaim the Lord's death and to remember our salvation that has been made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Charis Fellowship churches believe Jesus has given his body the ordinance of Communion to continually remind us of his work in our lives. A work that is past, present, and future. It is with joy that we partake in the celebration of Three-Fold Communion as we reflect on our justification, his ongoing forgiveness of indwelling sin, and his promises that we will one day be forever with him.

⁴ The good news of the Gospel is not *just* that believers have been forgiven of their sins. The good news is that believers have been forgiven of their sins *and* have been given, imputed, the perfect righteousness of Christ.

Pt. 3: Additional Symbolic Actions

Charis Fellowship churches also believe that God has not only given his Church two specific ordinances to continually observe, but has revealed other symbolic actions which may be observed as the need arises. The symbolic actions of anointing with oil and laying on of hands are distinguished from ordinances because of the absence of a clear biblical command to continually observe these practices corporately.

Nevertheless, Charis Fellowship churches are encouraged to utilize these additional symbolic actions as the need arises. Anointing with oil and laying on of hands are both observed within the Scriptures, however, we are not specifically commanded to observe them.