



COUNSEL

WINTER 2016

*Apostles' Doctrine
God's School
and more...*

A Throne or a Towel?

Merrill C. Tenney in his book, *John the Gospel of Unbelief* (one of the best on the gospel of John I have read) comments on the Lord's act of washing His disciples' feet: *'...the disciples' minds were preoccupied with dreams of elevation to office in the coming kingdom. They were jealous lest one of their fellows should claim the best place. Consequently, no one of them was likely to abase himself by volunteering to wash the feet of the others. They were ready to fight for a throne, but not for a towel.'*

It was that last sentence that got my attention – 'They were ready to fight for a throne, but not for a towel.' This is a sad, but true assessment of what we often see among Christians. How many ministries and local churches have been marred over a refusal to take the towel, that is, the servant's place.

The disciples were evidently stunned in the upper room when our Lord *'took a towel and girded himself'*.¹ Their conversation according to Luke is described this way, *'And there was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.'*² This is now less than twenty four hours from the cross. The contrast between the perfect Man and mere men is staggering.

Mark puts it this way, *'For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'*³

Paul likewise urges the Philippians, *'Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of*

*mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*⁴

Christian life and testimony would be transformed if each of us lived out these words of Paul. If the consistent character of our conduct was to be 'others minded' and 'Christ minded' there would be a noticeable difference in homes and assemblies.

There is of course the natural man within that resents this behavior. Worldly thinking reasons that one must look out for oneself, be the aggressor and reach the goal at any price. The world is constantly trying to push us into its mold and this can spill over into our own thinking.

Now this way of thinking is not intended that we acquiesce to every situation. For example Paul warns elders to be ready to vigorously confront and silence false teaching. Error and ungodliness are not to be tolerated. Our Lord Himself set this example as He confronted the Jews and called their unbelief for what it was.

But even in these situations, the humility of Christ must govern our words and behavior. Philippians two further tells us that *'..as a man, he humbled himself'*⁵ It was no so much that He humbled Himself in becoming a man – although that is true also – but 'as a man' He humbled Himself. Likewise, we too as men and women are called to follow His example, to walk in His footsteps.

When our Lord finished washing His disciples' feet He said these words, *'Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.'*⁶

Peter, who saw the Lord clothe Himself with the servant's towel, instructs us *'be clothed with humility; for "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.'*⁷

What a challenge for all of us. In the business of Christian life and service there are going to be inevitable conflicts, differences of opinion and personality conflicts. These are to be expected. Our duty is to take the high road by taking the low road.

Remember, fight for the towel!

Endnotes

1. John 13:4
2. Luke 22:24
3. Mark 10:45
4. Philippians 2:3-5
5. Philippians 2:8
6. John 13:12-17
7. 1 Peter 5:5-7

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When is the time to trust?
Is it when all is calm, when waves the victor's palm,
And life is one glad psalm of joy and praise?
Nay, but the time to trust is when the waves beat high,
When storm clouds fill the sky, and prayer is one long cry,
O, help and save.

When is the time to trust? Is it when friends are true,
Is it when comforts woo, and in all we say and do,
We meet but praise?
Nay, but the time to trust is when we stand alone,
And summer birds have flown, and every prop is gone
All else but God!

The Time to Trust

When is the time to trust? Is it some future day
When you have tried your way, and learned to trust and pay,
By bitter woe?
Nay, but the time to trust is in this moment's need.
Poor, broken, bruised reed. Poor troubled soul, make speed
To trust thy God!

When is the time to trust? Is it when hopes beat high,
The sunshine guilds the sky, and joy and ecstasy
Fill all the heart?
Nay, but the time to trust is when thy joy is fled,
When sorrow bows the head, and all is cold and dead,
All else but God.

- Author Unknown

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1. Conversion to Christ

In unbelief as the popular anti-Christ leader on a road near Damascus. What is revealed: Sees the Lord and He is Jesus! Results – Confesses Jesus as Lord and is filled with the Holy Spirit and baptized. (Acts 9:2-6; 17-18)

2. General Sphere of Service

Praying in the temple in Jerusalem. What is revealed: Jewish rejection of the message of Christ – he was then to go far away to the Gentiles (nations). Results: Crowd cried “away with him”. (Acts 22:17-22)

3. Deeper Understanding of God and Gospel

Most likely in Arabia or Tarsus (unseen years) - either in the body or out of it, but caught up into the 3rd heaven. What is revealed: Some things he couldn't tell. Also he was given a revelation of the gospel of Christ whose terms of salvation is faith alone – and which matched the OT prophets. Results: Growth in the Lord's grace. He was committed to stand for the one true gospel against any deviation by whomever. (2 Cor. 12:1-4; Gal. 1:10-18; Acts 17:2, 3)

4. Specific Area of Service

On missions in Troas. What is revealed: The need in Philippi of those open to the gospel. Results: Saw that a need in the other places did not constitute a call and so obeyed and went to Philippi. He suffered but saw God's hand in saving people and a church established. (Acts 16: 6-12)

5. Encouragement to Be Fearless in Proclaiming Message

In Corinth where he was rejected in the synagogue and had to meet with believers in a house. It was at night in the middle of persecution and blessing. What is revealed:

To press on boldly for he would not be hurt as God would be with him. Results: He believed and stayed and saw more people saved and a church started. (Acts 18:4-11)

6. Encouragement that He Will Reach New Spheres of Service

At night in a castle in Jerusalem. He was a Roman prisoner because a mob was trying to pull him apart. What is revealed: To “be of good cheer” for he would indeed reach Rome as a witness for the Lord Jesus. Results: He reached Rome against all odds. As a prisoner in house custody he preached the gospel to all that came unto him and saw much fruit. Wrote instructive letters to the churches. (Acts 23:10-11; 28:30-3; Phil. 4:22)

7. Word of Hope When All Hope Was Gone

A prisoner in a ship going to Italy – on the sea in a violent storm with reeling winds in darkness - no hope of being saved. What is revealed: God's angel stood by him and assured him all would be saved and he would indeed reach Caesar. Results: He believed God and in the shipwreck all were saved and Paul reached Rome – just as God said! (Acts 27:18-25)

It was Paul the apostle who wrote: “...God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted

above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” He also wrote: “the gospel which was preached of me is not after man ... but by the revelation of Jesus Christ”. And he also

GOD'S SCHOOL

Paul's 7 Revelations from the Lord

wrote to the church: “...the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord”.

In Acts 2:42 those who responded to Peter's first gospel address on the day of Pentecost were baptized and continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

their lives in danger, exposing them to all kinds of persecution, hardships and even death itself.

The first thing recorded of them was they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (teaching). This means they were totally committed to being taught by the apostles' and did not through all the circumstances they would pass deviate away from it.

Apostles' Doctrine Revealed

We must remember what was given to them orally is now brought to us through the printed page. Every time the Epistles are read we have what they heard. Now how committed are you to it? What began in the first church in Jerusalem became a pattern for all to follow.

Paul, in a later day bringing the gospel to the Gentiles, established new churches following what was already set in place. It is said of the Thessalonians “they became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word with much affliction, and joy of the Holy Spirit (1:6). You became followers of the Churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus (2:14).”

Apostles' Doctrine Applied

There was a recent question asking why some are leaving our assemblies and seeking other places. While there are a few who do leave, there is a great group of young people staying and they have a thirst for the Word of God. This article is to encourage you to take heed to the words of Paul to “give attention to reading, exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:13).

He also exhorts to “meditate upon those things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine, continue in them, for in doing this you will both save yourself and them that hear you” (4:15-16 NKJV). This means the Word of God provides a good foundation for life individually and commits you to the assembly corporately.

Apostles' Doctrine Inspired

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped in every good work.” You will notice in order for us to be fitted for true godly living and service we need a right understanding of the Holy Scriptures.

Everything we are taught in Scripture comes not from the ideas or theories of men or women but what is given to us from God through His apostles.

Apostles' Doctrine Rejected

In writing to Timothy, Paul tells him to warn the Ephesian assembly to teach no other doctrine, (1 Timothy 1:3). There is a danger when we move away from the truth which was taught and pay attention to fables, genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edification, (1 Timothy 1:4).

This is an age where there is a constant questioning of what we believe and practice bringing in the condition of 2 Timothy 4:3 “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, heap for themselves teachers who will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned to fables.”

Our attitude to the Word of God determines whether we will obey it or not!

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As we read through the book of Acts we encounter a host of characters who helped form the early church. The two major individuals highlighted in the book are the apostles Peter and Paul. Their ministry is extremely well documented, but there are a number of other people who are mentioned in less detail. One such person is described in chapter 12 verse 12 as *‘John, whose surname was Mark.’* His full name was John Mark, though we are much more familiar with his surname, Mark, as that is the title of the second book of the New Testament which he wrote, namely *‘The Gospel according to Mark.’* He thus had the infinite privilege of being entrusted by God with the actual writing of part of Holy Scripture.

Mark’s life is a great encouragement to any of us who may feel that we have failed the Lord. Mark, too, failed the Saviour. He made an outstanding start to his Christian life and seemed to develop very well as a believer in Christ. Such

We too can rise above our defeats and reach out in faith for the Lord’s resources and go on in service for His glory. Thus ‘failure is not final’ for the Christian.

Mark’s life is documented in the book of Acts in chapters 12, 13 and 15. There are also references to him in Colossians, 2 Timothy, Philemon and 1 Peter. Using these verses we will consider Mark’s life and ministry in three ways: firstly His Mother’s Influence, secondly His Missionary Failure and thirdly His Ministry Restored.

His Mother’s Influence

Mothers are vital in home life and they have a very great influence upon their children, especially it would seem their sons. Emerson once said: ‘Men are what their mothers make them.’

Mark’s mother was named Mary as is made clear in Acts 12:12. She may have been a widow as there is no mention of her husband. Yet she gave her son a

was miraculously delivered and his first call was to visit the believers gathered for prayer in Mary’s house. He must have known that he would be welcomed, receive fellowship and refreshment at her home.

Christian homes should be homes of prayer. To meet a Christian is a great joy but to meet a Christian family and to experience a true Christian home is even more wonderful. That was Mary’s home and that was the atmosphere in which Mark lived.

The Christian home has an atmosphere of Christ. He is the central figure. Such a home is a place of welcome, love and hospitality. It is not a place of harshness, fear and repression, hypocrisy or bigotry. In such a home the family altar is erected, where the family members meet to read God’s Word and pray together and the ancient saying is still true, ‘the family that prays together, stays together.’ There fellow believers can come and relax, enjoying the atmosphere

Thus Mark had the great privilege of living in a Christian home. Christians seem to have been constantly in and out and he was exposed to their prayers, ministry and godly example. This enabled him to make a great start in his Christian life and when Paul and Barnabas set off on what is described as the ‘first missionary journey’ Mark was part of the missionary party as Acts 13:5 says: *‘John was with them as their helper.’* We can imagine that his mother was so pleased, just delighted that her boy was helping to spread the Gospel into unevangelised areas. Mark’s spiritual life and service had made a very bright start and then things went badly wrong and he became:

A Missionary Failure

In Acts 13:13 we read, *‘From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.’* This was a clear case of desertion and a failure to continue in

may be to missionary service abroad or to continued work at home within the local church, but wherever we are called that call must not be ignored, rejected or disobeyed. It will never be easy to serve the Lord and fulfil His call, but despite the pressures we must persevere and continue in obedience until He moves us on to another situation. Let us take warning from the experience of Mark.

I have often wondered why Mark decided to give up and go home. We are not told but at some stage he became self-centred instead of Christ-centred and decided to follow his own inclinations rather than obey the directive of the Lord. There may have been many reasons for his failure but let us just consider some possibilities.

His failure may have been due to FEAR. Fear is not necessarily a bad sensation, for example in the face of imminent danger we should experience fear. In such circumstances fear enables us to focus upon essentials namely escape

Paul faced dreadful persecution in Lystra and Paul was even stoned and left for dead. So fear of persecution may have driven him back to his home. However, there were certainly other causes for fear such as the unknown wilds of Asia Minor with its pagans, rough terrain, robbers and antagonistic crowd. There can be many causes for fear and the courageous person is not the one who has never known fear but is the one who has faced up to fear and conquered it. Mark may have failed to do that, instead he may have given into his fears and in deep anxiety returned home to his mother’s house.

God does give us resources to help in this whole area of fear. The great resources include his promise to the Christian *‘I will never leave you or forsake you’* and *‘I am with you always.’* We can be assured that no matter what the circumstances of our lives may be He is always with us. Also we have the wonderful facility of prayer. The Lord is only a prayer

Mark

a fine beginning is always a cause for praise. However, Mark became a tragic failure for God and that is detailed in the book of Acts. It serves as a warning for us that we too can fall into similar circumstances. Yet the great blessing is that he did not remain a failure but somehow rose above his failure and ultimately resumed his service for God. That service was of the most devoted kind and led to him writing part of the New Testament. So we see that the Bible does not gloss over or minimise the failures of the people of God and that gives it real authenticity. The Scriptures are both credible and creditable because they reveal both the positive and negative aspects of God’s servants. There is a ring of truthfulness and transparent honesty to the Biblical accounts.

If God could use John Mark, then he can use us despite our weaknesses and failures.

great spiritual start in life. He knew the blessing of a Christian home. The home was in the great city of Jerusalem. So Mark was right on hand to witness the great events of early Christianity. He may have heard Peter’s powerful Pentecostal sermon (Acts 2) and may even have been one of the 3,000 who were converted to Christ that day. Certainly Peter refers to *‘Mark my son’* in 1 Peter 5:13. This would seem to be strong evidence that Peter had been instrumental in leading young Mark to faith in Christ.

Mary’s home was a house of prayer. Acts 12 indicates that when Peter was imprisoned by Herod the Christians gathered in Mary’s home for a night-time prayer meeting. This was not just for one or two people, but it says, *‘many were gathered together praying.’* (Acts 12:12). No doubt they were praying for Peter’s safety and possible release. That prayer was answered and the apostle

of a true Christian home. Today we need more genuine Christian homes where God’s people can be assured of a warm welcome and where prayer is freely offered to the Lord.

Such a home was Mary’s home and Mark would have met many Christian people right there in his own house. We cannot imagine that Peter’s night-time visit after his release from prison was his only visit. No doubt he was a regular visitor and brought the ministry of the Word of God to bear upon that household and the various Christians who met there. Mary’s brother Barnabas would no doubt have been another frequent visitor. He is described as *‘a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith’* (Acts 11:24). It is inconceivable that he would not have regularly visited his relatives when he was in Jerusalem and we can imagine the wonderful example he set for Mark and the spiritual influence he produced.

the work of the Lord. Such a conclusion is clearly implied in Colossians 4:10 where Paul urges the Colossians to welcome Mark, as if to say *‘despite his failure do receive him.’* Acts 15 also makes it clear that Mark’s actions were failure, for Paul refused to allow him to accompany them on the second missionary journey. It was clearly a case that Mark had given up, he had had enough and returned home.

He had let people down. We can imagine how disappointed his mother might have been, the apostles felt increased pressures as they soldiered on without Mark’s help and certainly God would have been grieved, for the Lord Himself had called Mark to missionary service and also gifted him for that work, yet the young man had given up and gone home to Jerusalem.

The call of God is just as strong today and reaches every Christian. That call

from danger. It is thus a mechanism which the Lord has implanted in us for survival. However as with everything else this faculty has been corrupted by sin and we find ourselves afraid in situations which frankly are not a danger to us. This is when the fear mechanism goes wrong, it causes us to act irrationally and temperamentally we have problems. When fear takes over we do unusual things, we act out of character and say and do things which at other times we wouldn’t dream of saying or doing. Fears may cloud our judgement and can cause us to act against our principles and fear is recognised as a great problem in the Bible. That is why the phrase ‘Fear not’ is mentioned so many times.

Mark’s failure could have been due to fear. The persecution from forces hostile to Christianity was always a very real threat. Indeed after he left the missionary journey his two colleagues Barnabas and

away and He has promised peace to those who are willing to spend time in genuine, believing prayer. *‘Be anxious for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.’* (Philippians 4:6-7) So the antidote to fear and anxiety is prayer. Such prayer is not perfunctory, casual or formal. Such prayer is genuine, real and truly being in touch with the Lord. It is thus more than words and is essentially drawing close to God. When prayer is real fears can be overcome.

Let us know boldness and not fear as we seek to serve the Lord.

Mark’s failure may, on the other hand, have been due to HOMESICKNESS. Maybe there was a sort of pining for city life and home comforts. In the

wilds of new lands and the discomfort of missionary life, no doubt Jerusalem and his mother's home seemed idyllic. Perhaps he could not see beyond immediate difficulties to the fullness of vision in evangelism in which he was engaged. The point came when he could endure the hardness of the work and ministry no longer and he went home to rest, enjoy an easier life and to avoid the strenuousness of the work. Thus the pull of home was stronger than the pull of the call of God. Somehow or other the priorities of God were lost to him and he went home in failure.

Whatever work we engage in for the Lord will not be easy. There will be difficulties and battles to be fought. The temptation is to moan and complain, to feel bitter if others are not working as hard as we would like them to and to make up excuses to give up and have an easier life. The idea of commitment is not a top priority in our generation and sadly this can also be true for Christians as they serve the Lord.

Let us not seek ease and personal comforts at the expense of the rigors of serving the Lord.

However, it may be that Mark's cause for failure was PRIDE. Increasingly Paul was taking the leading role and Mark's relative Barnabas was out of the limelight. Indeed this is highlighted in Acts 13: 13 where it uses the words, *'Paul and his company.'* Paul was clearly seen as the leader of the missionary group, undoubtedly being the main spokesman and preacher. We can picture Mark feeling a sort of hurt family pride. He may have wanted his uncle to have a more prominent role. He may have wanted a more public ministry for himself. Did this cause him to become huffy and depart home with a bruised ego and a sense of injured pride?

One of the most deadly sins is that of arrogance and pride. Such a sin undermines the work of God, causes division and focuses upon the trivial. A Christian's attitude is always more important than his ability. Good ability will be undermined by a bad attitude, especially the attitude of arrogance. John the apostle wrote of one Christian leader who badly disrupted the church and even drove people away because *'he loved to have the pre-eminence.'* It is so important to learn the lesson that what I think or feel is not important, what God requires of me is of vital importance. We must always develop an attitude of service and love towards others, an attitude which says I care about your needs before my own and especially so with the work of God.

Let us be more concerned for the Lord and His glory than for ourselves and our pride and standing.

So Mark (for whatever reason) failed. He had started well, but had given up and it is always sad to witness spiritual failure in fellow-believers. We must weep and pray for those who have failed, just like Samuel did in the Old Testament when he grieved all night because of the failure of King Saul. Grieving not glorying is the only right and true response towards those who have failed. It is even sadder when that failure is a young Christian, and more so when he had such ability and had made such a bright start for the Lord.

We can see the Lord's gracious arms going around this defeated believer and like the prodigal in the story being drawn into the heart of the Father.

Yet Mark's failure (as with all failures) had consequences. It became the basis of dispute and division between the two veteran missionaries Barnabas and Paul, for when they decided to embark upon the second missionary journey and revisit the churches they had founded on the first such journey, the question of their companion arose. Barnabas was intent upon taking Mark with them as he was sure that the young man was now restored to the Lord and had overcome his failure. Paul was not so sure and felt that the same desertion might happen a second time and refused to countenance Mark's participation in the missionary journey. Sadly we read in Acts 15:37-41, *'And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought it not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: Barnabas took Mark, and sailed to Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.'*

Mark's sin affected others, as it became the cause of dispute between Paul and Barnabas who decided to go their separate ways. Sadly we never read of Paul and Barnabas working together again after that incident. Sin can never be done in isolation it will always have its repercussions.

Yet the wonderful thing is that Mark did not remain defeated and failed somehow or other he was able to rise above those events and he found:

His Ministry Restored

At some stage Mark must have been restored to fellowship with the Saviour, and then, and only then could his

ministry be restored. We don't know exactly how it all happened but he once again became involved in Christian service and proved profitable in the work of God.

The Psalmist wrote *'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.'* (Psalm 66:18). So as long as unconfessed sin resides in the Christian's heart, there can be no peace, joy or usefulness in the service of God. Thus the time must have come for Mark when he confessed his sin and unburdened his soul to the Lord. He followed the instructions which all Christian believers need to follow when they sin, namely the words of 1 John 1:9, *'If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'*

We can imagine this young Christian pouring out his soul to the Lord in confession, repentance and the renouncing of sin. We can see the Lord's gracious arms going around this defeated believer and like the prodigal in the story being drawn into the heart of the Father. God does not like to see His children defeated and failed and longs for our genuine repentance so fellowship can be re-established and a useful ministry be restored.

Gradually Mark found acceptance again amongst the people of God, even with those whom he had let down so badly. The first to recognise his restoration and repentance was Barnabas, as Acts 15 makes clear. Barnabas was even willing to take Mark on the second missionary journey and ultimately took him on a ministry tour of Cyprus.

Paul would not take Mark on his ministry journey, maybe he believed that Mark needed to wait and prove himself a little longer before being entrusted with missionary responsibilities.

Eventually, even Paul recognised the change in Mark and speaks highly of both his integrity and ministry. In Philemon v.24 he describes Mark as a *'fellow labourer.'* This highlights two qualities. Firstly Mark worked hard in God's service and so could be described as a 'labourer'. Secondly, he was an integral part of the team, able and willing to work in harmony with his fellow workers. No longer did pride, fear or desire for comfort divert his attention from the essential task of doing the will of God in harness with fellow missionaries.

In 2 Timothy 4:11 Paul has this to say: *'Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.'* This is a glowing endorsement of the young man who had been such a failure. Previously he had been unprofitable or useless in the work of the Gospel, but now he was profitable and useful in ministry for the Lord. No longer did failure and defeat characterise this young man but success and victory as he served God with full devotion.

In Colossians 4:11 Paul again wrote about Mark: *'My fellow-prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)'* Here we realise that Mark was with the apostle as he wrote the Colossian epistle and must have known the Colossian Christians and so sends them his greetings. Also Paul emphasises that the church at Colosse should receive or welcome Mark, if he ever visited them. Clearly Mark was being commended to this particular church in Asia Minor.

So in addition to being accepted by individual leaders of the churches like Paul and Barnabas, Mark, together with his ministry was accepted and appreciated by all the churches. Today we rejoice in Mark's rehabilitation and appreciate the great gift which he used

for God's glory. Every time we pick up *'the Gospel according to Mark'* we are giving witness to the fact that God's Spirit inspired him to contribute to the canon of Holy Scripture. Thus today we too accept Mark and accord him a place with the spiritually great people of God, for only a few people were entrusted by the Lord to write His precious Word and Mark was one of those special people.

Mark's Gospel is very fast moving. In many ways it is like an express train because Mark doesn't linger on any particular event. It always seems that he wants to hurry on to the next incident and everything moves at rapid speed. His favourite word, which occurs over forty times in the book is 'immediately', and there are few parables, discourses or sayings recorded in the Gospel. Mark concentrates upon the works of Jesus rather than His words. He is intent upon demonstrating the deity of Christ through what He does. As Mark rushes through the events of the life of Jesus there is a sense in which he seems to be making up for lost time. The time which he had lost when he failed and disobeyed God was being redeemed by doing the Master's will and being fully committed to His service.

Like Mark we too may have failed, somehow we have spiritually lost our way and are outside the Lord's will for our lives. We need not stay failed. Mark rose above his failure and was used in a mighty way for God's service. Mark walked in the footsteps of others who failed but somehow didn't stay failed.

In the Old Testament we read of Abraham in the book of Genesis he failed God by telling lies and being deceitful on some occasions and by being faithless to God in his relationship with Hagar. Yet God does not hold him up as an example of failure but of faith and called Abraham His friend. Thus he was called the Friend of God not because he never failed but because he didn't stay failed. He rose above failure through faith.

Again we read of King David in the Old Testament and we find that he committed adultery, murder and failed to trust God by counting the people. Yet God calls him *'a man after my own heart.'* This was not because he didn't fail by because he didn't stay failed. He rose above failure through faith and Psalm 51 is a powerful confession of sin and seeking God for forgiveness.

In the New Testament we read of Peter who denied any knowledge of having been with Jesus. He issued his denials

with swearing and cursing. That was Peter the coward, a dismal failure. Yet he became the great preacher of the Gospel on the day of Pentecost not because he never failed but because he didn't stay failed. He rose above failure through faith and it is interesting that it is commonly believed that Mark's Gospel found its source in Peter. Some consider that Mark simply wrote down the dictation of Peter. This may be so as they had a close spiritual relationship and each had at one time failed the Lord and moved outside His will.

So it is encouraging to know that God does not write off as useless Abraham, or David, or Peter, or John Mark and neither does He write off you and me who are Christians. In fact He says in Romans 8:1, *'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.'* He has forgiven our sins and has removed them far from us, but there are times when we fail and let the Lord down. At such times we feel miserable and we see ourselves as failures. What do we do?

Firstly, we need to come to the Lord in genuine confession of sin. Spend time in the Lord's presence relating our sins and repenting of them. This is not a two minute process but requires a real seeking of the Lord. It also involves asking the Lord to help us in the on-going battle against temptation. True prayer is the basic factor in moving from failure into service for the Lord. However, we might have to say 'I'm sorry' to people whom we might have sinned against, because so often our failures are in the area of human relationships. We cannot restore our fellowship with the Lord and fail to restore our fellowship with people.

In addition we need to maintain our daily quiet time of prayer and Bible reading. This is a time spent each day with the Lord. We speak to Him in prayer and He speaks to us through His precious Word. Such times are vital if we are to live lives which will not keep on creating failures, sins and disappointments. Such times are the essential building blocks for growth in the Christian life. Nothing should be allowed to divert us from meaningful times with the Lord each day. These times become the foundation for effectively serving the Saviour every day and fulfilling His will for our lives. When we live like this the glaring failures will become a distant memory and like John Mark we may be entrusted by the Lord with ever greater responsibilities for His Glory.

Prerequisites To WORSHIP

Worship is not some difficult, complex, sophisticated religious activity which is limited to a few elite saints. It is to be the portion of all believers. Worship is simply bowing before the Lord and expressing His worthiness to be worshipped. (Rev. 5:8). Now worship goes beyond the wonderful fact that Jesus died for us. While we should never forget this amazing fact, and the wonderful love of Christ, there is much more for which He can be worshipped.

Rather than being solely occupied with our blessings, we can think upon His beauties as seen through the eyes of the Father, to Whom He always brought delight. As the hymn writer has so nicely put it, "Loved with love which knows no measure, Save the Father's love to Thee. All His joy, His rest, His pleasure - All His deep delight in Thee - Lord, Thy heart alone can measure what Thy Father found in Thee." If we would see some of what the Father saw in Him, we will find ourselves at His feet, and we will be worshippers!

Worship has been called the Christian's "highest occupation." If this is true, and it is, then the Church is sadly failing to fulfill its highest calling. Much of what is called worship is not really worship at all. Listening to sermons and choirs falls far short of Biblical worship. Saints in many circles rarely, if ever, come together to simply be occupied with Christ and to exalt Him together.

Others come together specifically for this purpose, but often there is little worship. Many have given little thought to Christ during the week and the best they can muster is singing someone else's thoughts penned in a

hymn - this is not to say that singing hymns that honour and exalt the Lord are not worship, but they can become a substitute for real worship.

In the Bible there were two things that characterized those who were worshippers. It seems to be true of them, regardless of what dispensation they lived in. Perhaps we could view them as prerequisites to worship, and test our hearts accordingly as we come together to worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first thing that characterizes those saints in Scripture that worshipped was that they had a right view of the Lord. They understood to some degree, and were often overcome by, the majesty of His person, the greatness of His power, and the glory that is His. They never came into His presence in some casual way, but with great reverence - a reverence that is often missing in our casual day!

We see this in David's prayer regarding the materials for the temple and the offering of the people. "Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the Heavens and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as head above all." (1 Chron. 29: 10-11)

Isaiah records, "...I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple... And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." (Isa. 6:1-3)

Thomas uttered that short, but wonderful expression when he realized he was in the presence of the risen Christ, "My Lord and my God." (John 20:28) Scripture records many expressions which indicate that the worshippers had a right view of the Lord.

The second thing that characterized those who worshipped was that they had a right view of themselves. After expressing his worship, David asked, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?" (1 Chron. 29:14) Isaiah cries out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." (Isa. 6:5) Seeing the Lord, John writes, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." (Rev. 1:17)

Those who found themselves in the presence of the Lord were fully aware of the vast difference between the One they worshipped and the one worshipping. They were humbled to think that such creatures could be so privileged as to be in the presence of the Lord Himself. Are we aware of this great difference and the grace that has brought us to this place of acceptance and privilege? Do we with little thought of such things gather together to worship? If so, is it any wonder than we worship so little?

As accepted in Christ, we may come boldly into His presence (Eph. 1:6; Heb. 10:19), but this does not negate the need for a right view of the Lord, and a right view of ourselves as we come into His presence to worship.

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In Matthew's Gospel chapter 28, the Lord is about to leave this world for heaven, but before doing so He gives His disciples instructions as to their future service. He said 'Go ye therefore, and teach (or make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.' Matt. 28:19-20. This is commonly referred to as the 'Great Commission.' In Acts chapter two, we see how the apostles faithfully followed all the terms of the Commission without exception. Peter spoke about repentance; remission of sins and baptism, and thereafter these new converts were instructed in the practices to be observed in a local church - the Apostle's doctrine, the fellowship, the Breaking of Bread and the Prayers. In this article we wish to examine the wonderful happenings when the Gospel was preached for the very first time.

The Multi-National Audience

We are made aware that a multi-national group of Jewish people had travelled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. Acts 2:9-11. Despite the fact that these Jews had been exiled to the countries mentioned, and had adopted the languages of these nations, there remained a magnetism about Jerusalem that drew them there to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost that had been part of their God-give tradition for over a thousand years. Peter and those with him saw this as a unique opportunity to preach the Gospel to their fellow countrymen, and so to fulfill the terms of the great commission, and we will see that this was accompanied by the reversal of two previous actions of judgment that God placed on man in the past.

Reversal of the Babel's Judgement

When the disciples began to preach the Gospel those present were amazed. They knew that these men were Galileans, yet each of them heard the message in the language of their adopted country. This was a unique miracle that accompanied the first preaching of

the Gospel. To understand the true nature of the miracle we need to go back to Genesis chapter eleven where the men of that day said 'Go to, let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven.' Gen. 11:4. Man assumed that he could reach up to 'heaven' by his own efforts. However we read that God said 'Let us go down and confound their language, that they may not understand each other's speech.' Gen. 11:7 The result was that this ambitious, presumptuous project - to reach up to Heaven - was abandoned.

However, when we come to Acts chapter two, God reverses the confusion of Babel to show that while man cannot reach to heaven by his own efforts, through accepting the provision that He had made through His Son, man could reach heaven. The apostle Paul endorsed this message when he wrote 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.' Eph. 2:8-9.

PETER'S GOSPEL MESSAGE

The Divine Perspective On Calvary

When Peter stood up to deliver the first Gospel message to a Jewish audience at the dawn of the Day of Grace, he spoke to them about Calvary.

He said, 'Him, [Christ] being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.' Acts 2:23-24. From this statement we learn some important facts.

First, Calvary was no accident, but a predetermined plan conceived by the Godhead in a past eternity, to redeem sinful man. Calvary shows the loving heart of God toward His erring creatures.

Secondly, Calvary reveals the heart of man in all his enmity and hostility to God. Peter speaks about 'Wicked hands which crucified and slew the Son of God.' In saying this, Peter shows whilst they thought they had taken control and crucified the Lord, they had but been the



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instruments through which *'divine counsels'* were fulfilled. He does not exonerate them from the guilt of the crucifixion of Christ, but proceeds to show that the one they crucified is the only one who could save them from their sins

PETER'S EXHORTATION

When the people heard Peter's message they were convicted and asked *'Men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter answered "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,"'* Acts 2:38. Let's consider these vital steps leading to the salvation of a soul.

Repent

Repentance, of itself does not save, but it is a vital precondition to being saved. The Apostle Paul speaking to the Ephesians reminded them of the basic content of the gospel that had led to their salvation – *'...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.'* Acts 20:21. Both Peter and Paul preached the need for repentance before conversion. Repentance is of course acceptance of one's guilt, a change of heart, and turning away from one's sins.

Remission of Sins

Sin is a universal problem, and it has introduced a moral distance between man and a Holy God, and that gulf will extend for eternal ages unless one's sin has been forgiven. Lk. 16:19-31. The Lord Jesus said *'... the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sin..'* Lk. 5:24. It is therefore incumbent upon the sinner to have his sins forgiven when 'on earth' because there is no opportunity to receive God's salvation after death.

The Dramatic Response to the Message

The result of this first preaching of the Gospel was overwhelming – 3000 souls were saved. How we wish that we could return to those fruitful days.

Reversal of the Judgement Brought By The Law

We have already noted that when first Gospel message was preached,

the confusion of Babel was reversed. But here again we have the reversal of another previous act of judgment. When Moses came down from Sinai with the tables of the Law, he found the people worshipping a golden calf. On that day, 3000 souls died under the judgment of God, Ex. 32:28, but in this case that exact number

Calvary was no accident, but a predetermined plan conceived by the Godhead in a past eternity, to redeem sinful man. Calvary shows the loving heart of God toward His erring creatures.... Calvary reveals the heart of man in all his enmity and hostility to God.

was saved. Truly as John reminds us *'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.'* John 1:17. The poet put it so eloquently when he wrote :

*Let us love and sing and wonder,
Let us praise the Saviour's name,
He has hushed the law's loud thunder,
He has quenched Mount Sinai's flame,
He has washed us in His blood,
He has brought us nigh to God. John Newton.*

THE FURTHER TERMS OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

The terms of the Great Commission meant that the conversion of souls was not an end in itself, but only a beginning. Not a terminus, but rather a starting point in the Christian life, consequently, under apostolic guidance *'Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.'* Acts 2:41-42.

...One feels that we need to emulate the example of the apostles, and ensure that all the terms of the Commission are incorporated in our Gospel preaching. One outstanding evangelist in Scotland once said that *'If we only preach the Gospel, this is an Omission from the Commission.'*

Baptism

Baptism is not necessary to be saved, but it is the first step of obedience and public identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Rom. 6:4-5. Baptism is not to be considered as an option, but rather a commandment given by the risen Lord. Throughout the Acts of the Apostles, salvation and baptism were closely linked together, and without exception, all believers were baptized immediately after they were saved. This should be the pattern to be followed in our day.

Being Added

Here we have the second step taken by these early converts. God never intended that believers should be spiritual nomads, but that they should be identified with a local assembly. This step is different from being baptized, and must be treated separately. In one's own experience the brethren interviewed with regard to baptism, but made it clear that the question of *'being added'* would be part of a different conversation, where responsibilities and expectations would be discussed, after which the assembly would be advised as to

one's joining the assembly. This is a most important step in the life of any new believer.

Continuing Steadfastly

Following the 'adding' of these new converts to the local church we read *'And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.'* Acts 2:42

STEADFASTLY

This word means *'to continue all of the time in one place / to be devoted to/ to give unremitting care to.'* In other words association with the local church is not intended to be that of a casual nature. We see this reflected in the fact that in Acts the phrase *'with one accord'* is mentioned no less

The reason being that the apostle's doctrine is the bedrock upon which all else that follows must rest. Unless there is a commonality of doctrine, there is no basis for spiritual fellowship.

than eleven times. Scholars tell us that in the original text, this phrase is one word comprised of two Greek words – the one meaning *'to rush along'* the other meaning *'together'*. It has been suggested that the word has a musical association where all the members of an orchestra must be present, and playing their part in harmony with others, the guidance of the conductor, Truly a very apt illustration of the function of the local church – all members present, and functioning harmoniously together, under the control of the Holy Spirit.

THE APOSTLE'S DOCTRINE

It is no coincidence that the 'apostles' doctrine' is the first mentioned in

the description of the things that the local church continued in. The reason being that the 'apostles' doctrine' is the bedrock upon which all else that follows must rest. Unless there is a commonality of doctrine, there is no basis for spiritual fellowship. If we remove the 'apostles' doctrine', we might have a very happy social club, but it would not be a local church as the New Testament describes it.

THE FELLOWSHIP

The word fellowship means – an association or partnership, and is used to describe a marriage relationship. We understand therefore, that fellowship in the local church goes far deeper than a social relationship. It demands our loyalty, devotion and involvement in all of

the exercises of the church. Being in fellowship is not to be understood as partaking of the Lord's Supper on a Sunday morning, and then having no involvement thereafter. Fellowship means being always together, with a common purpose in mind.

THE BREAKING OF BREAD

One author has called the Lord's Supper as being *'The chief meeting of the assembly.'* Indeed this is one of the hallmarks of the brethren assemblies that distinguishes them from other evangelical denominations – the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper. When people wish to describe some wonderful experience, we often hear them say *'It was heaven on earth.'* Surely

this is what we experience when we come to remember our Lord. He has promised *'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'* Matt. 18:20 One realises that this promise embraces more than the Lord's Supper, nevertheless, it is one occasion where perhaps the Lord's presence in our midst is most consciously felt, and when as a Holy Priesthood we worship Him.

THE PRAYERS

Throughout the Acts we note that prayer was one of the most powerful exercises of the local church.

For example, prior to the descent of the Spirit, we read concerning the early disciples *'These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication...'* Acts 1:14. Surely there was a link between this prayer meeting, the miraculous salvation of 3,000 souls in Acts chapter two. Unfortunately, the prayer meeting has become one of the most neglected meetings in our assemblies. It is little wonder that we do not see the power of the Holy Spirit manifest in our midst, especially in the Gospel, but also in the spiritual health of our assemblies. The apostle writing to young Timothy put a great emphasis on prayer when he wrote *'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;'* 1 Tim. 2:1. Let's determine to make the 'prayer meeting' one of the most important meetings of our assembly and to encourage all to attend and look forward to great things that could happen.

So ends the story of the first Gospel meeting in the Day of Grace. It ended with a spectacular, miraculous display of the power of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of three thousand souls, and the apostles ensuring that the terms of the Great Commission were faithfully fulfilled. May the Lord grant that we in our day will follow the example of these early pioneers in the Gospel, and see God move amongst us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

A DEVOTIONAL STUDY OF Boaz & Ruth AT HARVEST TIME

The story of the Book of Ruth is well known. It tells the story of the experiences of Ruth the Moabitess and how she came to rest under the blessings of the God of Israel.

The story starts at a time of severe famine in Bethlehem-Judah, (1:1), and is about couple named Elimelech and his wife Naomi. They had decided to flee from their hometown to the country of Moab, and this they did, taking their two boys, Mahlon and Chilion, with them. However, their sojourn there was not a happy one. Although finding sustenance for their physical needs there, Elimelech died. The boys then each married Moabitish girls. This was not strictly forbidden, but probably not encouraged. About ten years later, the two young men died as well, (1:5). This further tragedy left Naomi and her daughters-in-law Ruth and Orpah bereft. Wisely, Naomi decided the best thing to do would be to return to Bethlehem-Judah. On the way she persuaded Orpah to return home to Moab but she was not able to dissuade Ruth from continuing with her on the journey. We well recall the emotional and stirring words of Ruth when she said, *'Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me,'* (1:16-17).

When they reached Bethlehem-Judah it was the beginning of the barley harvest and while a welcome awaited them they had, nevertheless, to live in poverty. Naomi explained to friends that she *'went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty.'* In order to survive Ruth had to go and glean in the fields so she and her mother-in law would not go hungry. The message I want to bring to you starts at that particular point.

Sometimes when things go wrong in our lives we ask, 'Why me?' Yet we do not see the need to ask the same question when things go right. When Boaz first encountered Ruth in the field and spoke with her she said, *'Why have I found grace in thine eyes?'* (2:10). The pecking order at harvest time was as follows: at the top was the landowner, in this case Boaz; second, was a supervisor, (2:6); next, were the skilled reapers; in turn, these were followed by sheaf binders; finally, gleaners were allowed to forage for themselves around the edges and in the corners of the fields, as well as picking up fallen ears anywhere in the field. Harvest was a seriously busy time and not much opportunity was available for conversation, yet here the landowner makes time to speak at some length with a lowly gleaner. Ruth was young, a widow, a stranger, living on the breadline, and therefore extremely vulnerable. Yet, he noticed her and spoke to her, and her reaction was as we have seen, 'Why me?'

We shall pursue the circumstances described in chapter 2 verse 14 and our application under the following headings: Invitation; Participation; Fellowship; Appreciation; Satisfaction; Reflection.

Invitation

Somewhat surprisingly Boaz invited Ruth with these words, *'At mealtime come thou hither.'* I imagine that normally the gleaners would have eaten what little they had in a sheltered corner of the field whereas here was an invitation, indeed a command, to come into the house to eat with the chief men of the harvest. Ruth must have been overwhelmed by such a thought. It was of course all of grace. We too have, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, been summoned by Him to attend a mealtime that He has instituted for our blessing and to facilitate worship. We are invited to the Lord's Supper and it is significant that the invite is personal. The Lord says, *'At the Supper, I want you there.'* It is by grace that such an invitation is given and we must be ready to respond positively on each first day of the week.

Participation

While it would have been a blessed thing just to attend and respond, Boaz is concerned that she should participate in the bread and the vinegar. This was apparently a sweet and refreshing drink concocted from wine vinegar mixed with oil and eaten accompanied by bread. On a hot harvest day this provision would

be most welcome to all the workers and strengthen their resolve to continue the work into the afternoon, and evening. At the Lord's Supper of course bread and wine are provided as emblems of remembrance and it is the Lord's will that all who attend should participate in this sacred ordinance. It is sad to accept the invitation but not participate, as that is a great loss. It is His desire that all should participate in the bread and wine so all should do whatever has to be done to facilitate this privilege. So, blessed and encouraged, we continue in the field until the work is done.

Fellowship

Scripture records that Ruth *'sat beside the reapers.'* She would be conscious that she was the least of all who were there, yet here she was in fellowship with them enjoying what had been provided. The bread, as well as speaking of the body given, also reminds us of the unity of the believers whatever their position in life or where they come from. At the table all are equal and are treated as such. The hymn writer, George Goodman, penned the words, *'The bread and wine are spread upon the board; the guests are here invited by the Lord.'*

Appreciation

Our verse tell us that during the meal Boaz *'reached her parched corn.'* This was possibly *'hard grains of wheat not yet fully dry, roasted in a pan or on a plate,'* Robinson. This was apparently most palatable. For Ruth it was something special from the hand of the landowner. While it is true that the Lord's Supper is a place where we give something to Him, it would be a poor feast if we did not receive some special thought or blessing from Him. Please note too that He reached it to her. He was close beside her, within easy touching distance of him when he chose to come and sit a while with her. So too at the Lord's Supper today, He sits close by and we may feel His gracious touch of love as the feast progresses. We appreciate the closeness and the love... And so, too, does He.

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Satisfaction

It is recorded that Ruth *'did eat, and was sufficed, and left.'* She thoroughly enjoyed the special parched corn and so, satisfied, she left the house and returned to the field and, subsequently, well provisioned to her mother-in-law. She had experienced strange and moving things that day. As we attend the Supper and sit close to Him and receive special blessings from Him we too are deeply moved. We experience feelings of joy and satisfaction that warm our hearts and encourage us to continue in His service. Some words from Henry Bennett's hymn are, *'Taken up with Thee Lord Jesus I would be; finding joy and satisfaction all in Thee';* Thou the nearest, and the dearest, unto me'.

Reflection

When Ruth returned to Naomi she faced two separate questions, v. 19, *'Where hast thou gleaned today?'* and, *'Where wroughtest thou?'* Understandably, Naomi, worried for her welfare and wondered where she had been. To this double question Ruth provides a strange and single answer, *'The man's name . . . is Boaz.'* Ruth was not interested in the place but only in the person. Her heart and mind was full of him. It seems she hardly heard the question and could speak only of him. She was falling in love with him and he already loved her. And so is our relationship with our Lord. The place diminishes in importance and the Person fills our hearts and minds so that we speak only of Him. We recall the Lord's word that *'where two or three are gathered together... there am I in the midst.'*

Conclusion

Therefore, let us attend the feast as requested and expected, participate and enjoy closeness to the Lord and the fellowship of the saints, and be prepared to speak more of the Person rather than the place; of the Who rather than the where.



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But God....

I know not, but God knows;
Oh, blessed rest from fear!
All my unfolding days
To Him are plain and clear.
Each anxious, puzzled "Why?"
From doubt or dread that grows,
Finds answer in this thought:
I know not, but God knows!

I cannot, but God can;
Oh, balm for all my care!
The burden that I drop
His hands will lift and bear,
Though eagle pinions tire,-
I walk where once I ran,
This is my strength, to know
I cannot, but God can.

I see not, but God sees;
Oh, all-sufficient light;
My dark and hidden way
To Him is always bright.
My strained and peering eyes
May close in restful ease,
And I in peace may sleep;
I see not, but He sees.

-Annie Johnson Flint