

WORSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP

(Bro. Bakht Singh, Balance of Truth, 1965, Jan)

"Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon the rocks, the stern, and wished for the day." (Act 27:29).

You all know that this storm at sea took place when Paul the apostle was a prisoner and was being taken to appear before Caesar at Rome. They were in great danger because of the storm. So for their protection, they finally cast forth four anchors from the boat.

The Christian life is like a journey in a sea – full of storms: There are storms in the house, storms in the family, storms in the neighbourhood, and there are storms in the country round about. All of these try to shake and weaken our faith, with doubts and fears. But God knowing our needs, has made provision for us, and given us four anchors. By these we can be perfectly safe. We see from Acts 2:41, 42 what these four anchors are which God has provided for every believer.

"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."

That is how the work began on the day of Pentecost. God's Word was preached in power and authority by these men of God. That Word began to prick those who heard it. They believed straightaway and were found obedient to the Word given to them. Then there were 3000 souls added unto them. At the very same time, they were given these four anchors, we have mentioned as found in verse 42. They began and continued first of all, ... in the apostles' doctrine, secondly, in fellowship, thirdly, in the breaking of bread and fourthly in prayer. And these four anchors were a protection against the onslaughts of the evil one for those early believers. We see from the whole book of Acts how the enemy came in like a flood in an attempt to discourage, weaken and rob them their faith and joy in the Lord. But we find that despite all that how triumphantly the Word of the Lord grew.

Acts 6:7 – "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

Acts 12:24 -"But the word of God grew and multiplied. ²⁵And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark."

- Acts: 19:20-"So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."
- Acts: 16:5 -" And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily."
- Acts 13:52 - "And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost."

How could all this be possible? I believe it was because of these 4 anchors which God had given them from the very beginning. At that time there were no Bible Schools, or Bible Colleges. They were established in the faith by the Holy Ghost.

So the believers were fed and nourished in the apostles' doctrine - the pure Word of God. The apostles did not depend upon their own wisdom or qualifications. They were men taught of God - anointed and filled with the Holy Spirit. They taught the pure unadulterated Word of God as the Spirit led them.

They grew in "fellowship". It was not a 'tea' or 'coffee' fellowship, or a 'handshake' fellowship. We seem to be very happy to meet on Sunday - give each other a good handshake, and that is the extent of our fellowship! But the early believers knew the power of fellowship! They met together as often as possible to exchange and to share what they had received from the Lord.

They grew in the "breaking of bread". Upon the resurrection of the Lord a story is given about 2 disciples on the Emmaus Road in Luke 24:15-30. They were communing together, and blindly trying to reason things out concerning what had happened in Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus Christ is seen drawing near ... walking with them .. talking with them.. and explaining so clearly all about Himself, - about His suffering and glory - how it was necessary for Him to die and rise again and enter into His glory. But even though the Lord Himself taught them, they still did not know Him, until He came into their house, at their invitation. When He sat with them in the breaking of bread, their eyes were suddenly opened. It was then that they recognized their Lord.

You see that is how they were taught. Our Lord is so great- so mighty, and so wonderful, we cannot see Him with our ordinary eyes. He is beyond human comprehension - far above the understanding of our human faculties. And yet we can know Him! He can be more real to us than our kith and kin. He can be more precious to us than anybody else in all the world when we know Him in His true glory.

We may study God's Word under able teachers, read many good books written by excellent authors: and we might have wonderful experiences ourselves as we walk with the Lord; and yet we do not know Him as He ought to be known! We think we know Him; but we may be mistaken.

I remember many years ago, when some of us were in Darjeeling we went to Tiger Hill to see Mount Everest. We went early in the morning about half past two. When we arrived there were already 200 people there who had been waiting a long time to catch a glimpse of the sun-rise on Mount Everest. It is a wonderful sight, no doubt! At the appropriate moment, I asked my friend, "Tell me, where is Mount Everest?" He pointed and said, "I think it is behind that cloud, over there." I said, "It can't be!" The crowd all went away thinking that they had seen Mount Everest, when all that they had seen was – a cloud! Had they waited a little longer, they would have seen the real sight!

The table of the Lord, and the breaking of bread to remember the Lord's death till He come, provide us an opportunity, for an inward sight of Him which is not possible otherwise. It is a place of worship. It is the place where we grow spiritually, and come to know His worth. That is what worship means – "worth-ship". It is to be able to say in broken language; 'what is my Lord to me? What will I give back to Him in return?'

In Amristar, Punjab there was a merchant selling beautiful Persian carpets. A wealthy man came into the shop and asked the price of a small carpet. The shop-keeper said, "This is not for sale." "I will pay you Rs. 5,000.00 for it if you sell it to me". "I told you, it is not for sale." "Alright, I will pay you Rs. 10,000.00."

"No, sir, I won't sell at any price."

"I will pay Rs. 25,000.00."

"No, sir, it is not for sale – to me it is very precious. I won't sell it at any price. When my father died, he gave it to me. His father had given it to him. That is why he told me, 'Don't sell it to anybody – it is very precious.' So I won't part with it for any amount of money."

The Lord Jesus Christ is also very precious to me – He loved me and died for me. I am prepared to pay any price to show my love for Him. I can say that I love Him more than my father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children or anybody! But it must be from the heart. We might say so in a meeting. "O Lord, I love Thee", but when we have to pay the price – we DO NOT pay it! How often we deny Him! How

often we grieve Him! How often we fail to obey Him because of fear, thinking, what will my neighbour say? What will my friends think of me? What will the world say? We simply do not pay the price the Lord demands!

Let us turn to Mathew 2:2 where we see men at worship. "... Where is He that is born of King of the Jews; for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship". The wise men had seen this unusual star in the east; and had begun their long journey – perhaps it took them two years. They were prepared to pay the price, even though they had no previous experience of the Lord Jesus Christ themselves.

When they had come to the house, they saw the young child, and Mary, His mother. They fell down and worshipped Him. Then they presented their costly gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

In coming such a distance they acknowledged His worthiness. When they found Him, "they worshipped Him." When they brought such precious gifts, they acknowledged in a symbolic way that

- The One Whom we have come to worship is God – Gold
- The One Whom we have come to worship has come to suffer for us – Myrrh
- The One Whom we have come to worship is going to save us and be our High Priest – Frankincense

Even though they had done all that, so far, they had no personal experience of Him! This is true of so many. They worship the Lord, but they had no personal experience of Him.

Let us look further at another one who worshipped in Luke 7:38, 47. "...A woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and anointed them with the ointment."

We are not told how this woman found out – perhaps by intuition, that there was a man in that house who could forgive sin. But as she drew near Him, she began to weep. They were tears of repentance. His presence made her conscious of her sinful condition. His very presence is sufficient to break our hearts! She wept in brokenness over her sin, and washed His feet with her tears. What she could not say with words, she said by a single act of kissing His feet. She was altogether untaught in the School of Theology, but her love was spontaneous, and her worship real!

How unlike the man who invited Him to the feast! Doubtless he spent much money for the feast, but he never knew who He was! Rather, he raised the question, "If this man were prophet, he would have known what manner of woman this is..." But this woman had an inward revelation, and she worshiped Him.

In John 12:1-3 we find another woman worshipping the Lord. This woman is Mary. She had known the Lord in the power of His resurrection. She had witnessed her brother Lazarus dead in the grave, but she also witnessed him come forth alive, at the Lord's command. Now she has a new and a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ which she had not known before – and she pours out her worship to Him in anointing His feet with ointment – a very special ointment with fragrance which filled the whole house.

As we see Him working in us- we worship Him in a new way.

The apostle Paul was a man who had experienced many miracles, and had seen visions and signs and had even gone to third heaven. But his desire and longing was, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection" and not, 'Lord let me see more miracles, or even another chance to visit the third heaven.' He is a man of God who wanted above everything else, to know Christ.

In Mathew 26:2, 6, 7 we see a similar scene of worship, and yet different in its significance. "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat."

When Mary had previously worshipped, she anointed His feet. It was 6 days before the Passover. But here it is only 2 days before Passover, and we see her anointing His head, because she realizes that He is about to die for the sins of the whole world. And then you find the women with prepared spices, going very early in the morning to anoint the body of the Lord Jesus Christ at the sepulcher. This act of honour was symbolic of their faith in His triumph over death and the new creation which He would bring into existence, that God's fuller glory may be fully seen in days to come.

Now finally let us look at a more glorious sight which is described for us in Revelation 5:11-14. It is the glorified Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the angelic hosts – all in oneness worshipping Him.

"...and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

This is a picture of the work of service completed in heaven. This is what it is going to be when we see Him face to face!

At the Lord's Table we have this very same message – My God is coming back! He must come back, that the work which may be perfected – it won't be complete till He comes back. That is exactly what we do at His Table- we declare by faith that we are waiting for that Day. We believe it will be wonderful Day when we shall be like Him, and reigning with Him!

In His broken body and shed blood, I see every provision made to make me like Himself. In myself I am nothing but infirmity, failure and shortcoming, nothing but iniquity; but in Him I see perfection.

In Ephesians 3:18, I would like you to notice the importance of being together. His love and purpose can never be comprehended by ourselves – we required the help of all saints, "That we may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God."

There is a great mystery here. You will find love comes in greater measure – fuller measure, when we are brought together as one family. In this family, there is no Jew and Gentile barrier; all are free, all are ONE from so many families, countries, nationalities, all partaking of the same Lord. Let us then go to worship Him. Amen.