

I must by all means keep the feast

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[0 : 0 0] Will you turn with me for a short time this evening to words which you will find in the second portion of scripture read. The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 18.

And we might read again from verse 19. And he, that is Paul, came to Ephesus and left them there.

But he himself entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not, but bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem.

But I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus. And the words in particular around with which God, with God's help, our thoughts will gather, are words in verse 21.

I must by all means keep this feast. I must by all means keep this feast.

[1 : 3 6] In this chapter, we find the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey.

In the course of which, he comes to Ephesus, which was the capital of Proconsular Asia. It was a city which carried on a flourishing trade, and which had become the metropolis of Asia Minor.

On his arrival there, he went into the synagogue, and he proclaimed the gospel. And it appeared that the proclamation of this gospel had made an impression upon those who heard it.

And consequently, when Paul intimated that he had to leave them, they prevailed upon him to stay. They tried to use all the influence in their possession to prevent him from going on his way.

Because they realized that they had benefited from his sojourn in their midst. But Paul was adamant. Which particular feast it was that Paul had in mind, we cannot be sure.

[3 : 2 0] Some commentators maintain that it was the feast of Pentecost. There are others suggest that it might have been the feast of Tabernacles.

Or even the feast of the Passover. But what concerns us this evening is not which particular feast it was that the Apostle had in mind.

And which he felt it so important to celebrate. What is important to us tonight is the determination which we find.

As he sets his face towards Jerusalem. In order to keep this feast. Because he believed that it was his duty so to do.

Now we are met together this evening. On the eve of a feast. If God wills it. On a coming Sabbath day.

[4 : 2 3] And we know which feast it is. Which we have in mind. It is the New Testament Passover. It is that feast which was instituted by our Lord himself.

In the upper room. On the eve of his crucifixion. When he gathered his disciples around him. And when they shared a meal together.

And when he broke the bread and poured out the wine. And when he said to them. Take, eat. This is my body which is broken for you.

This do. In remembrance of me. And so as we seek to prepare ourselves for the feast.

There are those in our midst who have been at the feast before. And those who are looking forward expectantly. To renewing their vows.

[5 : 28] Vows which some of you perhaps took many years ago. Vows of loyalty. Vows of loyalty. To your Lord. And to your Savior. And there may be some.

In whose hearts. There is a desire to be present. At the feast. But there is. That note of uncertainty. That wondering whether they really should come.

Whether they really are the Lord's people. Whether he really has been speaking to them. And asking them.

What they intend to do. And there may be others still. Who have no intention of keeping the feast. Because they know.

That they have never had a real experience of his grace. And they know that the feast is for those. Who have first of all.

[6 : 31] Made their response. To the gospel feast. But you are here tonight. And we believe that the Lord has brought you here tonight.

And we believe that perhaps the Lord has a message for you. As you gather together. With his people. Now as we look together.

At these words. At these words. This evening. I want to speak. Simply. I want to speak directly. And I want to speak.

Personally. I want to speak simply. Because we live. In an age. Which is different.

From a former generation. It was a generation. It was a generation. Which had been brought up. With a doctrinal background. And a lot. But alas.

[7 : 33] That cannot be said. Of this age. In which we live. But yet. We rejoice. To remember. That the gospel. Is something. Which is simple.

Never let us forget that. No matter how we may cherish. And enjoy doctrine. And sound doctrine. The gospel is simple. It is a good news.

Good news. Which God has brought. To sinful men and women. And when our Lord himself. Declared the gospel. He declared it.

Not in a complex fashion. Not in a complicated way. But he declared it. In a simple manner. And I want to speak directly.

Because that is what every ambassador of Christ. Is called upon to do. Now then. We are ambassadors for Christ.

[8 : 32] We beseech you. In Christ's name. Be ye reconciled. To God. That is a direct message.

Which comes to us. From the word of God. And I want to speak personally. Because as I indicated last night.

The gospel is something. Which is intensely personal. It is something which concerns you. And something which concerns me. As individuals.

It is something which concerns. Our relationship to God. God. The most important relationship. Which any man. Or any woman. Can ever have.

You may have important relationships. In life. They may be all to the good. But here is the most important relationship. Of all. The relationship.

[9 : 32] Of a person's soul. With his maker. And so I make no apologies. For speaking personally.

To each and all of you. No matter in what particular situation. You may find yourselves tonight. And as we look forward to this feast.

Expectantly. On the part of his people. With a certain fear. And trepidation. On the part of others. And perhaps without much thought.

Still. On the part of others still. Let us try first of all. To suggest. Some things. Which prevent us.

From keeping the feast. Why should we?

[10 : 47] Why should we? What is the reason? What is the ultimate reason? Why I? Should keep this feast. And I would suggest.

First of all. That one reason. Which sometimes. Prevents us. From keeping the feast. Is the company. Among which we dwell.

Now the apostle Paul. Was in congenial company. He was in the company. Of believers in Ephesus. Because the word.

Had been blessed to them. And this was demonstrated. By the fact. That they didn't want him to leave. If the word. Hadn't been blessed.

To them. They would have been glad. To get rid of him. At the first possible opportunity. But no. They wanted him. They wanted him to stay. And it must have been.

[11 : 47] A tremendous temptation. For him to stay. Because. How refreshing it is. To find God's word. Being blessed.

To find oneself. In the company. Of believing people. There's blessing. To be received there. Do you remember.

That Philip. Had a similar experience. In Samaria. Why. There was a revival. Going on in Samaria.

Philip. Had gone to the city. Of Samaria. And we read there. In the eighth chapter. Of this book. That when Philip. Preached the gospel. In Samaria. There was great joy.

In that city. Because the gospel. Had transformed. The lives of men. And women. And then a strange message. Came. Through the spirit.

[12 : 42] To Philip. Philip. The spirit said. I want you to leave Samaria. And I want you to go down. Into the desert there. Leave Samaria.

Where there is the. Possibility. Of a revival. Didn't that sound ridiculous. To say the least of it. If I was asked. To go to another big city.

Where perhaps. There might be an equal opportunity. Of revival. It might make some sense. Humanly speaking. But no. It was down.

Into the desert. And yet. You remember. How Philip. In obedience. To the leading. Of the spirit. Went down. Into the desert. And you remember.

The sequel. There was the conversion. Of the Ethiopian eunuch. Who in turn. Took back the gospel. To his own country.

[13 : 40] And here. There was the same. Same temptation. For the apostle. But he said. No. I must. He said. By all means.

Keep this feast. Which cometh. At Jerusalem. And I wonder. If it has ever. Occurred to you. My friends. That sometimes.

Even. Christian people. Can be a hindrance. To the furtherance. Of the gospel. That seems. An extraordinary thing.

You see. You say. I hear somebody. Say. That is it. You see. Sometimes. We can become. So happy.

- And no wonder. In good. Christian fellowship. We meet together. Regularly. We have our. We have our worship. We have our bible studies. We have our times of prayer. Together.
- [14 : 37] Together. And we become. So wrapped up in this. That we forget. That the church. Is ever called. To outreach. We ever called upon.
- To go into all the world. To preach the gospel. To every creature. And sometimes. We become so. Satisfied. With our own gatherings.
- With our own congregations. That we are forgetful. Of the wider issue. And in these days. In which we live. It's not necessary.
- To send. Missionaries. Only to the far off. Countries of the world. We have a mission field. At our very doorstep. And we must see.
- That we don't neglect it. That we go forth. With the glad tidings. Of redeeming love. But then.
- [15 : 34] We notice further. That sometimes. The company of the world. As distinct from the company. Of God's people. Can deter us.
- From our path of duty. You see. There is a certain allurements. About the world. And it's so easy. To become engrossed.
- In its affairs. Even in the legitimate affairs. Of the world. And we become so immersed in it. That we have little or no time left.
- To carry out our Christian duties. And obligations. And sometimes too. It may be. That even.
- Those who are united to us. By the ties of nature. Who themselves. Have never tasted. That the Lord is gracious. May seek to deter us.
- [16 : 33] From the path of duty. To be. I remember hearing a story. About a certain Jewish girl. Who was converted. And naturally.
- As a result of her conversion. Her parents. Were terribly shocked. That a daughter of theirs.
- Should have left. The faith of Judah. Judaism. And embraced. The Christian gospel. And they tried their best.
- To make her change her mind. And one day. Her father. Met her. In a room in the house. And he said to her. My daughter.
- He said. I beseech of you. To give up this new faith. Which you have embraced. For the sake. Of your parents.
- [17 : 31] And for the sake. Of Judaism. And if you don't. He said. You will cease. To be my daughter. And you will have to leave.
- My home. The daughter said. Father. Give me a minute. To think over this. The father said. Certainly my daughter.
- She went over. To the corner of her room. Where there was a piano. She sat down. At the piano. And she let her hands. Fall onto the keyboard. And she began to play.
- And as she played. She sang. And the words. Which came from her lips. Were these. Jesus.
- I my cross have taken. All to leave. And follow thee. Destitute. Despised. Forsaken.
- [18 : 27] Thou from hence. Mine all. Shall be. And she rose. And she faced her father. She said. Father. With all a daughter's love.
- I love you. And there are few things. That I would not do. To make you happy. But there is one. Whom I love still more.

And because I love him. If it is necessary. I must cease. To become your daughter. And she went out.

From that home. Not to return. It cost her something. But she showed. The same determination.

As the. As the apostle. Showed of old. That she was going to follow. In the path of duty. But then I need not remind you.

[19 : 24] That Satan. Sometimes seeks. To prevent us. From keeping the feast. And he attacks. Sometimes in a very subtle way.

Because the enemy of souls. Is a good. Is a good student. Of psychology. He deals. With certain. Group. Different groups. Of people. According to their.

According to their. Temperament. And so he comes along. To some people. And he says. Look. He said. You are not thinking.

Of keeping this feast. Are you? You are not worthy. To come to the table. Of the Lord. And you see. He is right. What he says.

Is perfectly true. Because there are none worthy. No not one. All have sinned. And come short. Of the glory of God. All our righteousnesses.

[20 : 21] Are before him. But as filthy rags. And if we seek. To come in our own worthiness. We might as well. Forget about it all together.

And so Satan seeks. To make us believe. That we should wait. Until we are worthy. And this can be exceedingly dangerous.

Because sometimes it may mean. That we may never come. You see. Christ. Has provided.

The wedding garment. Christ. Has given. The invitation. And the wedding garment. Is not our righteousness. But it is the righteousness.

Of Jesus Christ. Christ. And if by his grace. That wedding garment. Has been given to us. If we are found.

[21 : 21] Resting upon him. And him alone. For our salvation. Then surely. Surely our place.

Should be at the table. Of the Lord. And sometimes. Sometimes we may find. That there is.

What might. What one might term. A false modesty. Or a false humility. On the part of some. You know.

You sometimes. Hear some people say. Oh so and so. Has gone to the Lord's table. But I wouldn't.

I wouldn't deign. To take such a step. As that. In other words. That. They are doubting. Perhaps. The sincerity. Of those.

[22 : 17] Who have taken this step. But what they are doing. Is. They are trying. To give themselves. A false pride. Or. Clothed under.

A false humility. Which makes them say. In effect. Oh no. I wouldn't come. And yet. I am better. Than many of those. Who do come. Let us not allow.

The devil. To use us. In that way. What the scripture. Tells us. Is this. Let a man. Examine himself. Let a man.

Let a man. Examine himself. And we've got. To give ourselves. Over. To set. To self-examination. To a searching.

Of heart. To ask God. To search our hearts. And to search. Our spirits. In order. That we may find out. By his grace. Whether we should be.

- [23 : 15] At the table. Of our Lord. But yet again. Sometimes. Say.
But oh. You can't come. To the table. Of the Lord. Because you're not invited. This is a feast. It's only important. People.
Who are invited. To a feast. And you have not. Received an invitation. But surely. There is no one. Who has heard. The gospel. Faithfully proclaimed.
Who can say that. You remember. How the rich man. Sent his servants. Into the highways. And into the byways. In order to compel. Them to come in.
In order. That his house. Might be full. It is recorded. Of Charles. Haddon Spurgeon. That great preacher. That on one occasion.
- [24 : 10] Somebody said to him. Who will be in heaven. Mr. Spurgeon. And his reply was. All who hear the gospel. Except.
Those who refuse to believe. All who hear the gospel. Except those who refuse to believe. The gospel invitation goes out.
Come. And I. Will give you rest. And I. Will give you rest. Come. All ye that labor. And are heavy laden. And I. Will give you rest.
But then there are others. Who may say. Well you know. I would like to come. I believe it is my duty. To come. But I am afraid.
That I will fail him. And one cannot but admire. The sincerity. Which. One finds so often. Behind thoughts like that.
- [25 : 16] But let us remember. For our encouragement. That we are not called upon. To come in our own strength. If anybody here.
Should be contemplating. Coming to the table. Of the Lord. In their own strength. Then I say. Don't come. But if you are going to come. In the strength of the Lord God.
It is different. Because he gives his people strength. He gives his people courage. To witness. And the apostle Paul.
Was not boasting. In a vain glorious way. When he said. I can do all things. Through Christ. And those are the two words.
Which make the difference. I can do all things. Through Christ. Who strengthens me. And so let us go again.
- [26 : 17] Let us search our hearts. Let us ask God. To turn the searchlight. Of his word. Into our hearts. And into our lives. In order that we might ask ourselves.
Whether like the apostle. We are called upon. To keep. This feast. Which comes. In a day or two. But let us now turn.
To the positive aspect. We have been thinking. Of those things. Which may. Seek to prevent us. From the path of duty. But let us now ask ourselves.
What are the reasons? Are there any reasons? And if so. What are the reasons? Why we should. Obey this injunction. To begin with.
This feast. Reminds us. Of the love of God. We are not sure. As I indicated earlier.
- [27 : 24] Which feast the apostle. Had in mind here. But the feast. To which we are called. Is the New Testament feast. The New Testament feast.
Which was instituted. By Christ. Christ. And here. We have the proof. Of God's love. Here we see.
As it were. God in action. In the redemption of men. In bringing men. And women. A lost humanity.

Back to himself. For God so loved the world. That he gave his only begotten son. That whosoever believeth in him. Should not perish.

But have everlasting life. And when we think of the feast. Our thoughts inevitably go. To the upper room.

[28 : 22] Where our Lord was found. With his disciples. Just before his crucifixion. And where he instituted this. As a reminder.

A reminder. Throughout all the ages of time. As to what he was. About to do. And about what God had planned. From all eternity.

For as often. For as often. As ye eat this bread. And drink this cup. Ye do show forth the Lord's death. Till.

He come. A temporary institution. Until. Until the return of our Lord. And a reminder. Of the wonder of his love.

And of the greatness of his sacrifice. And then too. Surely this feast. Can well prove.

[29 : 22] In the graciousness of God. To be a deterrent to sin. And an incentive to holiness. You see.

We are so prone to become. Lukewarm. In our love. And in our affection for him. And surely there is nothing.

Nothing like a glimpse of the cross. Nothing like a reminder. Of the agony of our Savior. To keep us from sin.

And to set our feet. On the path of righteousness. To be a witness. At the beginning of this century. In a certain place in Wales. There were three young lads.

Who were found guilty of stealing. They came before the magistrate. And the magistrate gave them. The option. Of either a fine.

[30 : 21] Or a period. In jail. Two of them. Came from. Wealthy homes. And the fine was paid.

And they went on their way. But the third. Lad. Was the only son. Of a widow. And there was no money.

To pay. His fine. And he was committed. To prison. And that. Dear woman. Because of her love.

For her son. Went out. To get some work. In order. That she might. At the earliest. Possible moment. Get enough money. To pay the fine. So that her boy.

Might go free. And the only work. She could get. Was at the foot. Of a quarry face. Where there were. Quarrying. Quarrying stones. And she had to.

[31 : 17] Remove them. From the foot. From the foot. Of the quarry. And put them over. To another place. And as a result. Of all the falling stones. Her beautiful hands.

Became all bruised. And all battered. But she. She. It mattered. Not a whit to her. The love of her. For her boy. Was predominant. In her mind.

And at last. The moment. Arrived. When she had received. Enough money. And immediately. She went. And she paid the fine. And her boy. Was set free. And she was standing.

At the door. Of the jail. In order to. Welcome him. As he came out. And they went home. Together. And the boy.

Was very touched. As was only natural. By what his mother. Had done. But a day or two later. He met his former companions. In crime. And they said to him.

[32 : 11] Come and we'll do the same thing again. And we'll not be caught this time. And we'll make some money out of it. And he said to them. Oh it's all very well for you. You can go and engage in crime again.

If you want to. Because it costs you nothing. But I can never do wrong again. Without seeing my mother's bruised and broken hands before me.

Reminding me of her love for me. And my dear friends. Is that not exactly. What the believer sees.

As he remembers. His or her saviour's dying love. The broken body. And the shed blood. And it was for me.

It was for you. That he died upon the cross. And so here we have an incentive. To keep away from sin.

[33 : 16] And an incentive to live. A life of holiness. In closer dependence upon God. And then too surely.

In our Lord's Supper. We have something. Which provides nourishment. For our souls.

You see it. We associate a feast. Or a table. With food. It's a place where we are fed. And where we are nourished. And where we are strengthened.

And we are called upon to be partakers. Of the bread of life. That bread which was broken for us. When the prodigal returned from the far country.

He no longer desired. The crusts on which he was living. When he had been forsaken by his companions in revelry. Oh no.

[34 : 17] He was back in the. He was back in the father's home. And he was prepared to accept of. More nourishing food. And so it is with the believer.

There is food provided for them. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. For they shall be filled. Oh that there was a hunger in our souls tonight.

Oh that there was a thirst in our souls tonight. After righteousness. And if that hunger and that thirst is created. Through the gracious operation of God's Holy Spirit.

How wonderful it will be. How wonderful it will be. To partake of it. And to have our souls refreshed. And nourished. As together we gather.

Around the table of our Lord. And then to the table. The table is a place of fellowship. It's a feast.

[35 : 19] You know at certain and certain anniversaries. We may have special little feasts. Or minor feasts at least. Perhaps to celebrate a birthday.

Perhaps to celebrate a special anniversary. Or something similar to that. Or a marriage. And we enjoy fellowship together. We enjoy the company of those who are met together.

Because they are our friends. And you see there is a real bond of fellowship. Between the true Israel of God. A bond of fellowship.

Because they love their master. And they are united by faith to Jesus Christ. And they find in him. The one who is their hope.

And their salvation. And so in this fellowship. They find joy. And happiness. And peace. But surely the most important element of all.

[36 : 21] In our keeping the feast is this. That God himself has commanded it. Of his people.

This do he says. In remembrance of me. And if God gives us our marching order. Surely it is our duty to obey.

For it is the desire of God. That all those who know him. Should confess him. For with the heart we are told in the epistle to the Romans.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. There you have what may be an unseen transaction. Between the Holy Spirit and your soul.

Where there is this wonderful regeneration. Whereby we are born again. By the gracious operation of God's spirit. But then we are called upon.

[37 : 22] To show forth what has taken place in our life. We are called upon to show forth that to the world. And one way in which we can do that.

Is by align ourselves with the people of God. By showing the badge of our loyalty to him. And by displaying the banner.

And saying. I am the Lord's. In his grace. By his grace he has saved me. And by the same grace I am now seeking.

To make my witness for him. And so the real question. For each one of us tonight. Is surely this. Do I know God?

Has he dealt graciously with my soul? Have I reason to believe. That he has spoken to me. That he has redeemed me.

[38 : 27] That I am found sheltering. Under that blood which was shed. That I believe the all sufficient sacrifice. Has been offered up once and for all.

And that I am resting upon the sufficiency of that sacrifice. And if he has had dealings with your soul. And if you believe that by his grace you are really his.

Then surely your place. Is at his table. All that fear God says the psalmist. Come here.

Come here. I will tell. I will tell. What he has done for my soul. And if the Lord has done something for your soul.

My dear friend. Perhaps even tonight he has been speaking to you. If the Lord has done something for your soul. Then he will give you strength.

[39 : 33] To show his praise. In the congregation of his people. And this final word. I must by all means.

Says the apostle. Keep this feast. That cometh. At Jerusalem. Jerusalem. There was a certain attraction. In Jerusalem for the Jew.

It was the center. The seat of their worship. The place where the temple was. Where they were accustomed to the worship of God. And surely these words remind us.

That there is a heavenly Jerusalem. Where his people shall one day feast with him. In the glory above.

Will you be there my friend. When there will be that time of glad reunion. With the saints of God who have gone on ahead.

[40 : 35] When there will be no more tears. And no more doubts. And no more pain. And no more sorrow. Because the former things. Will have passed away.

What a wonderful prospect. What a joyous prospect. To look forward. Our salvation is all of grace.

We have nothing to do with it ourselves. And yet we are called upon to accept it. Take him as your Lord. And as your Savior tonight. And go forth to witness.

To the fact. That he is at dealings. With your soul. And may the Lord enable you. So to do.

Let us pray. O Lord our God. We thank thee for that wondrous love.

[41 : 36] Which thou hast manifested. Toward us. In Jesus Christ. Thy son. Our Lord and Savior. We are poor.

We are poor. Needy. Sinful creatures. And yet the Lord. Careth for us. Lord. Speak to us tonight. Speak to us in thy wondrous love.

And in thy tender mercy. May we feel and know. That thou art here in our midst. Working out thine own gracious purposes. In our hearts. And in our lives.

And may we be made willing. In a day of thy power. So that we may acknowledge thee. As our Lord. As our Redeemer.

As our King. Abide with us throughout what remains of this day. And when we go to rest. Do thou go with us into the night watches.

[42 : 33] Thou art the one who slumbers not nor sleeps. To thee the darkness and the light are both alike. And so we pray oh Lord. That in the darkness of the night.

If we are awake. That our thoughts may be of thee. And if it be thy good will. That we see the morning light. We pray that we may be enabled to go forth.

To serve thee. And all this we ask. With the pardon of our every sin. For the Redeemer's sake. Amen. Amen.