

BARTHOLOMEW REMEMBERS

Acts 1:4, 5, 13-14.

I never longed for fame or fortune's glow;
I like to take the back seat if I can;
while others proudly boast of what they know,
I'd rather not declare what's in my hand.
I don't blurt out like Peter who was prone
to speak when silence might have been discreet
Or Thomas who (he sometimes made me groan)
demanded every detail be complete.
Or Philip who was like an open book
and, unembarrassed, readily confessed
his need to have an unencumbered look
at godly truth—that was his usual quest.

Am I ashamed to speak? Or is it pride
or false humility that seals my lips?
Or do I just enjoy a place to hide?
Or is it fear that holds me in its grip?
It can't be ignorance, there's much I know—
I can observe and memorise and dream.
The recall of his deeds can never go
away; subconscious like a deep coal seam
my silent recollections lie below
the fleeting shadows of each passing day.

I can't forget three years of miracles
and signs and wonders marvellous to behold,
of teaching through creative parables
and truths as no one else has ever told.
and promises and stunning prophecies—
the 'promise of the Father' above all,
fulfilled at Pentecost.

With some unease
we met at first to try to lift the pall
that lingered from the tragic suicide
of Judas who betrayed the One we loved;
Matthias filled his place with godly pride.
And as we prayed, our beating hearts still moved
with breathless hope and shy expectancy—

the Father's promise yet to be revealed—
we wondered would that day turn out to be
the one when by God's Spirit we'd be sealed.

He swept down like a furious desert storm,
(Like Moses' burning bush each brow aflame);
our praise and prayer were radically transformed,
with diverse tongues we glorified his name.
We stood, we sang, we lifted hands, we cried.
The Temple throngs, perplexed by what it meant,
in thousands crowded in from every side
and Peter boldly preached they should repent.

We left our comfort zone to reach the world:
we'd seen the risen Christ and had no doubt
that by his resurrection power he'd hurled
the tyrannies of sin and darkness out.

Now Pentecostal fire would be our spur
and we would fondly celebrate with joy
his presence: as it were a kitten's purr
or like a birthday child's long hoped-for toy.

But following Christ is not a garden tour;
we laboured over desert, rock and lake;
his Spirit fortified us to endure
abuse and scorn and torture for his sake.

So here I am a prisoner for Christ.
They're coming soon to usher me away
to offer up my life a sacrifice:
I know this is a price that I must pay.

It's only by the Holy Spirit's power,
That I can meet the challenge of this hour.

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