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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden, at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Sunday morning, 4th April, 1965.

"And Jesus answered and said unto her. Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41-42.

This was not written for Martha and Mary's sake alone, but for every Mary and every Martha until the end of time. It was written for the instruction of His people in the midst of all the turmoil and responsibilities and calamities of this life. O what a mercy to believe in divine inspiration; that the Word of God is eternal in its efficacy. Everything He did needed to be done but once! It needed but one sacrifice for sin for ever, because of the eternity of God's incarnate Son, and therefore, His word is as new this morning as when it was written by divine inspiration. Hold fast that blessed doctrine.

"Now it came to pass, as they went, He entered into a certain village and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house." This was the Creator of heaven and earth - He, who in His Person is infinite, eternal, the mystery of godliness. He took into union with His divine and eternal Person, human nature. It is a wonderful word in the Hebrews "Wherefore, in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, for in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." What a blessed mystery - in order to receive the benefit of this divine succour we must be united unto Him. But He comes to sinners still. He said to Zacchaeus, "Zacchaeus make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house;" and virtually He says that to every sinner called by grace, and He abides in the hearts of His people as the hope of glory.

But it is a certain village and a certain woman. There are certain people. It is a mercy to be a certain character, by the grace of God. Some of you may feel to need the Lord in a special way. I think I have mentioned before, and I have felt it in my own experience, there may be some who feel to need Him as a divine specialist to come and look into your particular case, both relative to your soul's salvation and to the united trials and difficulties that you may be involved in. But He comes. He has ascended on high, but He still retains that human nature. His compassions fail not, they are new every morning. "I am the Lord, I change not." Nothing can change Him, blessed be His name. O what a rock, what a foundation, what a consolation that is!

She had a sister called Mary who sat at Jesus feet and heard His word, but Martha was cumbered about much serving." Martha loved the Lord as much as Mary did, but she was over-anxious. Such a divine guest, she sought to pay Him that honour that she thought was His due. But the Lord gave Martha to realise that He approved more of Mary's love, sitting at His feet, than her carefulness and trouble about external provision.

'Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha; thou art careful and troubled about many things.' Well everybody that has a conscience and the fear of God are troubled about many things

and careful .It is one of the curses of this modern day, and that terrible expression, 'I couldn't care less.'¹ The Lord here does not encourage Martha to carelessness, He does not say you ought not to be careful and troubled about many things, but in these two verses we have as it were a pair of scales. In one scale we have everything in the pathway of tribulation of a child of God, everything that concerns this life and all the conflicts of the soul, all that makes up the whole of your life on one side of the scales. On the other side of the scales you have the one thing needful. The blessed, eternal, full, infinite Jehovah, and this is what this word teaches. Blessed Teacher, blessed teaching!

'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.' Paul really brings us to the same point, writing to the Philippians: "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God." That is just what the Lord is teaching Martha here. You can fill up for yourself what you are careful and troubled about, but there is not a person but who has these cares and these troubles; cannot live without them. We are in a wilderness; we have a body of sin and death. This word is spoken to the Lord's people. Nothing is spoken to a worldling. They may be careful and troubled about many things in a carnal way, but the trouble of His people is very different. It is a conflict and in the midst of these troubles there is the sight of faith.

Well, we may look at some things that we are careful and troubled about. I say you know your own griefs and your own sore. We who are passing through deep waters might very well say unto me 'If you was to come into my home and see what trouble is there.' And another might say 'If you suffered the weakness and pain that I have from day to day, from morning 'till night.' Another might say, as did the poor woman with an afflicted daughter, grievously vexed with a devil, O the trouble that that poor woman had. But the Lord here makes this to be unconditional. The things of God, the truth of God the salvation of God are unconditional, and that because Christ is a divine sovereign, and His sovereignty orders all things, life's minutest circumstance, it permeates all things, it controls all things - and in the cases of His dear people, it is all controlled by the sovereignty of God in the covenant of grace.

'Thou art careful and troubled about many things.' We may be so unduly and that through unbelief. What we shall eat, what we shall drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? O what blessed and precious teaching the Lord gave in the next chapter of this Gospel. "Take no thought for your life, saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed, consider the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." 'Martha, Martha.' It is when we take our eyes off the Lord and see secondary causes. When we look at impossibilities, when we look at a poor enfeebled body, it may be full of pain and even in anticipation of death; you may say what about such a case as that? 'Martha, Martha, one thing is needful.' This one thing will meet every contingency. O to have a sight by faith of the Lord Jesus in whom is the fullness of the Godhead bodily, in whom is the fullness of creation! And this same divine voice was heard in Isaiah. How condescending is the Word of God. There were those who had felt that the Lord had forgotten them. They said, "Our way is hid from the Lord, our judgement is passed over from our God." We are in a place now, a set-fast trial, and the Lord does not seem to see it; our judgement is passed over from Him, He does not take up our case. But the Lord said, Why do you say that? "Hast thou not known, halt thou not heard, that the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary, there is no searching of His

understanding, He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." One thing is needful for extreme cases. We are mortal and the grave is before us. But with respect to His dear people, wherever they come, whatever condition they may be found in, 'One thing is needful.'

I know there are the responsibilities of life, and very heavy they are - and should be; this gives room for prayer. Some of you may be in a particular path where things are bewildering. Responsibilities are overwhelming, and you are often non-plussed and wonder how long you will be able to carry on. Well, I can understand it, but this answers every question, 'One thing is needful.' What a mercy it is to be possessed of a God-given faith, the eye of faith that looks through all secondary causes and beyond to Him who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, who sits upon the floods as King. 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.' Things innumerable, and as you look back you can see how careful and troubled you have been about things that the Lord has mercifully brought you through. Unbelief is a great enemy. It is when we take our eyes off the Lord and look at our circumstances, look at our weakness and, the power of our enemies. When Peter took His eyes off from the Lord and looked at the waves, he began to sink. 'One thing is needful.' Well I know that there are many who are greatly troubled. Troubled in their providences, don't know which way to take. Troubled it may be with respect to their souls. There is no trouble like soul trouble; and I do believe that it is safe to say that if one under divine teaching, whatever perplexities and difficulties and responsibilities and calamities and afflictions and diseases you may come into, it will involve an exercise of soul; the soul will come uppermost. So here we really have an incentive to prayer, "Pray without ceasing."

'Thou art careful, careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful,' and we would try and speak about this blessed ONE thing. Have we learned this lesson? It is a lifetime lesson, it is a very blessed lesson to learn. Some people learn it when they are laid upon a bed of helplessness and affliction. There is a scripture very nearly related to it, "Without me ye can do nothing." and therefore, 'one thing is needful' for everything. The Psalmist was taught this lesson. "One thing have I desired of the Lord" - and he tells us why he learned it, "The Lord is my light" and therefore in that true light, he saw light in God's light. It is a great thing that my friends. To see your afflictions, your losses your crosses, your pains, your difficulties, your impossibilities, to see them in God's light - why! all the impossibilities disappear. So the Psalmist, having this light said, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." There is more in this one thing than all your trouble and care. There is really. I don't say it lightly; O to get at Him, poor troubled soul, that is the thing. Some of you believe that He is the one thing needful, but you want Him. He is of no use to you unless He comes, as He did to the poor traveller. Everybody else passed by him, but the Good Samaritan knew what he needed and he came where he was, and the Lord knows where His people are. That is no small thing to find. It is no small comfort when you are out of sight, when you may be taken away from the public congregation, taken away in distress to where you would not be; it may be in hospital or elsewhere; but to realise the omniscience of God and His omnipresence, that He knows where His people are, and He has an infinite fullness to supply their needs, divine ability to deliver them, infinite wisdom to guide them. One thing is needful, only one, but what a one it is.

How solemn it was for that young man - and he was a good young man, he was indeed, He kept all the commandments from his youth up, and the Lord said unto him, "There is one thing thou lackest;

go and sell all that thou hast and come and follow me, I am the one thing needful." He went away sorrowful for he had great possessions, great riches. A mercy to be made poor enough for Christ; solemn to be too rich for Him!

But one thing is needful, and that is Emmanuel, God with us. O how all-sufficient He is, in every sense, both with respect to body and soul, time and eternity. Do you view Him by faith? Does this truth that He is greater than all your sins, that the weakness of God is stronger than men, does it help you to cast your burden upon Him, and all your care ?

'One thing is needful.' O let us if the Lord will help us, look at this blessed One. He was needful in the councils of Jehovah. There was none other could be found for a ransom, for lost sinners, and God so loved His people that He did not spare this one thing needful. If He had spared Him, my friends, then we should be eternally lost; hell would be full, heaven would be empty; but how needful He was in salvation! What a gift, unspeakable gift - and His divine Father did not give Him empty; "How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things, all things!" Therefore, by the teaching of the Spirit we shall realise that He is needful, and that in creation He is needful to maintain our body. In His holy providence He is needful to guide you safely through the wilderness to the City of habitation; and with respect to our souls salvation, He is needful as our substitute, our Redeemer, our Saviour, our everlasting All. He meets every case. O this One thing needful. It will grow, and grow as the Holy Ghost gives you the spirit of meditation, and your trials and yourself and all the pathway of life will recede and enable you to say, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." One thing is needful. If the Holy Ghost should give you this, it would be an answer to every question without exception, from the cradle to the grave; and some of you have had some hard questions, some of you have been brought to pass through dispensations that you wonder you have ever survived, and may yet come into perplexities and persecutions; but this will answer every question, this one thing needful, because of who He is. We shall be brought back to the blessedness, the importance of His divine Person, united to human nature, in all the exercise of our souls.

One thing is needful then with respect to salvation. His life is needful. When the Holy Ghost quickens a poor sinner into life, it is Christ's life that is communicated. "I am come that they might have life" and that is the vital thing. If we have life, we have everything. If we have, we shall have a living faith, a living hope, a living love. We shall have a living religion, we shall pray living prayers, and all is in Christ Jesus. O how needful He is to make us live at the commencement, and to maintain that life by virtue of union with Him!

'One thing is needful.' I believe if the Holy Ghost was to bring this truth into the heart of His troubled people, they would rest, be enabled then to rest in the Lord. "To lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us." and the only way to do that is looking to this one thing needful and seeing in Him every possible thing that you can need. Since the fall we are poor decaying, dying creatures, and we must expect a pathway of tribulation, and we must expect something to bring us to our end. O the calamities of this life! The predicaments, but this blessed Person, this One thing needful, swallows everything up. And the greatest blessing is that life swallows up death. There is grace abounding over all the aboundings of sin. The unsearchable riches of His grace enrich us and swallow up all our bankruptcy and poverty.

'One thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part.' Well, have we? It is no use to say yes, if we have not. Do you see how the Apostle Paul chose it? "I count all things but dung and loss that I might win Christ and be found in Him." That is how he chose it. That young man, he did not lose his riches, he would rather lose Christ; but the Apostle would rather lose his riches and be found in Christ. The thing is, what do our lives bear testimony unto? O you say, not only is He the one thing needful, "but compared with Christ, in all beside, no comeliness I see." When the Holy Ghost reveals this blessed Person in His divine virtue and makes a blessed connexion between him and you, between His grace and your sin, between His righteousness and your nakedness. When the Holy Ghost brings a meeting together between the Lord Jesus and sinners, for "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them;" He possesses everything that can do them good, everything that pertains to life, and godliness, One thing needful. Why I believe that the Lord could so bless this to troubled souls that you could wonder where your trouble was, and yet nothing be altered; and bring you so to lie passive in His hands, amidst all your tribulation as to be able to say with Anne Steele;

*Father, whate'er of earthly bliss
Thy sovereign will denies,
Accepted at thy throne of grace,
Let this petition rise;*

*Give me a calm and thankful heart,
From every murmur free;
The blessings of thy grace impart
And make me live to Thee*

*Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine,
My life and death attend;
Thy presence through my journey shine,
And crown my journey's end.*

(Gadsby's 1010)

One thing needful will do it. O how eternal He is, how everlasting is His love, how sovereign is His grace, how universal is His lordship! 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful.' Mary hath chosen it, Have you chosen it? How do you respond to it? Do you say 'I would if I could.' Well, then you have, but you might say, 'I do need Him to come with all His fullness into my heart.' "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." All His dealings with His people in a way of grace are according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. Now if you can say this before God, not before men or anybody else, but before God, that "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul" - a great thing to say. It may be put to the test. If you look round and are willing for the Lord to do His will with all that you have and all your substance and choose your inheritance for you here, however humble that lot may be because, "The Lord is my portion saith my soul." If you thus choose Him it is because He first chose you.

'Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.' But to possess the Lord is to possess Him who is eternal, immutable. It is very blessed, the mutuality of the possession. In Deuteronomy we read, "The Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance", and where that is so, sooner or later by the teaching of the Spirit, that soul will say - "And the Lord is my

Portion." "In whom also we have an inheritance, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."- and if you get a glimpse of that inheritance you won't be so careful and troubled about the things of this life. No -

*Soon we shall pass the gloomy vale,
Soon all our mortal powers must fail. (Gadsby's 9)*

But here is an unfailing portion, everything in it eternal; and it is an amazing thing that these imperishable and eternal portions in Christ can be possessed by dying creatures. O to live in Him. It does connect even our death with His life. "He that liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die, believest thou this?"

This is an eternal portion. True riches, you will not leave them behind. Not only will it not be taken away from you here, but you will bear these treasures into heaven, through the grave.

O may the Lord make this word a comfort to His troubled people. "Let your moderation be known unto all men, for the Lord is at hand."

Amen.