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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Sunday morning 15 January 1933

LUKE 10 v 42

"But one thing is needful: and Mary hath  
chosen that good part, which shall not be taken  
away from her"

The devil has made the whole world just blinded, made atheists, this congregation not outside that terrible charge. What is it to be an atheist? Without God. That is what the word written by the Apostle Paul and translated by our Reformers, means. A person without God. I suppose, I think I may say, there is not an atheist in this chapel by open profession, but how many in it possess God and so are believers and are going to heaven, that is a solemn matter of difference. An atheist does not pray; he does not want God; he has no dependence on God in him. He is good; he has got his own little garden, planted with pleasant plants and strange slips, and he waters them and makes them grow, little thinking of the harvest he will reap if mercy come not to him. An atheist is very apt to judge God to be like himself. The atheists of old, the Jews, were said by God Himself - and therefore it was true - "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself". The atheist sits down to his table and eats his food without prayer or gratitude. He enjoys his health without thankfulness; he sleeps and wakes without thankfulness. He is just a person without God. But he is not without God in a sense; he lives and moves and has his being in God, and he is under the law to God, and though he has been without God all his days, should he die as he has lived, he will find that a Judge, righteous Judge, will judge him for all his ungodliness. He will judge him for his atheism, for he was not created without God. O you who are, without professing it, atheists, listen - You must be born again if you are to live a life of holiness and happiness hereafter. You must be born again; you must have a religion that is narrow, looked on as bigotry. You must have a new life, a new nature. Heaven would not be heaven to you in your present state. You have no need of God. You did not feel when you awoke this morning, God has given me sleep. You did

not feel to need Him for the day, did you? You did not kneel and ask Him to bless you with the gospel. There was no real need in your soul felt by you, was there? Then you did not choose the good part, and solemn beyond all words, beyond all conception in this life solemn, is your position. May the Lord look on you and bless you. Mary had a need and she found One who could supply that need, and, finding Him, she took advantage and sat down at His feet. And there are some in the world today, some in this little congregation, who have the same need and would, if Jesus came near to them, take the same advantage that Mary took of His presence, and sit down, as their highest privilege and mercy, at His feet, and would answer to the word in Deuteronomy, concerning the saints. They sat down at His feet; every one shall receive of Thy words. What is the need? We are sinners and the need is for a Substitute to stand before God and deal with God in our stead. A substitute is a person who stands in the place of the person for whom he is a substitute. The God-Man personally represented both God and the persons of the election of grace from among mankind. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" Jesus is that sanctified One, of whose nature all His people partake. "For their sakes" He said "I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth". Has He the qualification I have named? Yes - "For the children being partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise took part of the same". "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus". "His Name shall be called Emanuel, God with us". The Man Christ Jesus. "There is One God" - O glorious truth, but terrible truth to sinners - "There is One God and One Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus". O dear friends in the Lord, you can never be thankful enough for the incarnation of the eternal Son of God. Were we given grace to meditate on this mercy, this miracle of infinite wisdom and goodness, the manhood of Jesus Christ united by a bond never to be dissolved with His divine Person, the Son of God, that He might be, that He was made, that He willingly became, the Substitute of His people. And when their faith is strengthened and directed by the Holy Ghost to Him, even Jesus, then she sings

'Tis He instead of me is seen  
When I approach to God

If ever you approach God without the Substitute - if ever God

approaches you without the Substitute - there is nothing before you but eternal misery, punishment for your sins. The Substitute is one who takes the place, the precise condition of the person for whom He is a Substitute; there is nothing left out. In all the particulars in which a Substitute is needed, Christ answers. The body of the prophet covered the body of the dead child; Jesus covers the needy sinner; He stands in His place. If faith were now directed by the Holy Ghost and guided from the cradle to the cross, from the cross to the grave, it would see in the birth of Jesus, in the life of Jesus, in the death of Jesus, in the resurrection of Jesus, the sufficient efficacy and glory of His substitution and would see ground sufficient, reason sufficient, for a sinner of the deepest dye and guiltiness to approach Jehovah. This admits of no doing in the sinner; it admits of nothing to add to the work, as even to the Person, of the Substitute. This is needful - A Substitute, a Saviour for a sinner, a Redeemer of a captive, life for the dead, a fulfiller of the law which the sinner had broken. One infinitely pleasing to God in the place of one infinitely repugnant and displeasing to God in himself. The glory of the substitution of the Lord Jesus is infinite. No human tongue is capable of setting forth its glory in its fullness. It pleases God, it satisfies justice, it is a way for mercy to come, love to be made known; justification for a sinner, sanctification for a polluted person. Strength for the weak, guidance for the ignorant, and everything needed for life and godliness for time and eternity, you will find, if the Lord leads and teaches you, in the Person and work of your Substitute. And I would press this on you a minute because of the infinite importance of it. You cannot live with God except in and by the substitution in your place of Jesus Christ, and you can only know that mercy by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, if you pray at all, pray that the Holy Ghost may lead you into a saving knowledge, the comfortable experience, of the substitution of Jesus Christ.

In the second place the need is this - life. "I am the life" said Jesus Christ. This is communicated in the regeneration. By Paul to Titus, the Holy Ghost speaks of the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. This washing of regeneration is never repeated. Christ teaches that in words that may seem, at the first glance, to have no connection with it. When He took a basin and a

towel and girded Himself with the towel to wash His disciples' feet, Peter objected. It would seem that it was true humility, and doubtless he had a view of himself as being unworthy that Christ should do that, but also there was a good deal of ignorance in the objection; he did not know what was intended. But when the Lord said to him - "Except I wash thy feet thou hast no part with Me" - that overcame Peter and then Peter wanted to be washed all over, head, hands, feet. O, says Christ, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet". He that has had the washing of regeneration needs his feet to be washed very often. A dusty road and some affliction, walking in mud and mire will require the washing of the feet, but the life stands. This is needed, the life of Christ and the renewing of it from time to time. Hart speaks beautifully of this renewing when he writes, and we sing sometimes

He, to the feeble and the faint,  
His mighty aid makes known,  
And when their languid life is spent  
Supplies it with His Own

Forgiveness is needed. Daily contraction of guilt needs the application of the atonement. Wisdom is needed, even the wisdom of God, that we may know the way we should walk; that we may not be left simply to choose our own way, our own things. Strength is needed to bear the burden the Lord lays on; carry the cross He has given to be carried. Perseverance in the race is needed, and the end of the race to be shown. The end of the race is heaven. The Apostle Paul in that beautiful, that experimental chapter which I read, said one thing he did; he forgot the things which were behind; he reached forth unto the things which were before and pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. The word of God is needed; we need Him to speak to us. "I will hear" said the Psalmist "what God the Lord will speak. He will speak peace to His people and to His saints, but let them not turn again to folly". The witness of the Spirit to our sonship, the sealing of the Spirit, the earnest of the Spirit, are wonderful mercies; they are needed. You will never make good headway without the Spirit, nor be quite certain of your sonship without the witness of the Spirit, without the witness of that Spirit, nor have much wealth in your pocket unless you have the

earnest of the inheritance given to you by the Holy Spirit. And all these things are needed in this time state, and every newborn sinner says, with understanding more or less clear, I need these things. You know I am speaking your own experience in that one sentence - You need these things; I need them. And the Lord knows that some of us can honestly, as far as we understand our own hearts, can honestly say ~~from this morning~~ ~~from this morning~~ - As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks so pant our souls after Thee O God. I said it to Him this morning and some of you may have said it in substance, Lord I cannot get on without Thee. Lord, I cannot hear well without Thee; I cannot receive the word preached without Thee. I can have no profit unless faith is mixed with it, and Thou art the giver and increaser of faith. In all things God is needed, and that God is Jesus Christ, the Man Christ Jesus, the God Man. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, our hope, our foundation, our life, our comfort. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the one thing needful.

Now in the second place we have Mary's choice of it, a free will choice. There is a will in the child of God that chooses God. You know it is true. You who have that in your hearts can say - perhaps many times you have said - to the Lord, Lord my whole heart and understanding and will and affections go out to Thee, and I would fain embrace Thee and want no other. O how pleased He is with this. I do like Dr Goodwin's word - I have thought lately about it several times as in my own case I trust - Jesus Christ is most glorified in secret. With the sweet movings of the Spirit of God upon your soul and the touches of the Spirit on your will, putting straight everything with the will of God, you have made this choice, you have made a sacrifice with God, a covenant with God rather by sacrifice. What sacrifice? Just what Paul made in his greater measure; just what he made. Pedigree, birth, education, blameless morality, zeal, blind zeal for God leading him to persecution; he gathered all up that he had as a man, as a scholar, as a Hebrew. Now he said, here is a heap; you may gather all you have got and say, here is a heap and on the other hand there is Jesus Christ and Him crucified and your soul has said, Give me Christ, give me Christ, give me Christ. "Mary hath chosen" She has chosen to be a sinner at the feet of Jesus. She was a sinner always, but now, sensible of her condition and sensible of the suitableness of Jesus to that condition, she makes choice of Him. O Martha, she

was busy; Mary, she was busy in another way. Now come home; when did you make - did you ever make - this sweet, this heavenly choice? Was it ever with you that you got such a sight of Christ as killed your atheism, killed your pride, laid your haughtiness low, brought you into the dust of self-abasement, and constrained you to say, if I may but have the privilege of sitting at the feet of Jesus, I want nothing else. Let conscience answer. She has chosen it. Pride said, that is a poor condition. Pride said, that is a position not becoming you at this time. Business claims, home claims, self claims. These come in as oppositions. Self-will, self-righteousness and pride, how often they steal right things from us. O dear friends, who are believers in Jesus, you know what the opposition is. Something that comes even near to the feet of the Lord Jesus to hinder you from getting at His feet, and yet faith says, hinder me not, and she reaches, with the full choice of her heart and her understanding, that blessed position. There is an understanding in the people of God, joined with their love and their will. The Psalmist valued understanding - "Give me understanding and I shall live". Ah and there is an understanding of the worth of Christ, of the want of Christ, of the glory of Christ in His exceeding suitableness and blessed liberality to sinners. If we are charged of being freewillers in this, let us glory in the charge. She hath chosen this. But we have to say this, grace gave the choice; grace worked it. Every step from the gates of hell to heaven is by grace. Every movement of the soul Godward is by grace. Grace reigns to conquer and does conquer. "Mary hath chosen that good part". And some of you chose an evil part, but some of us, by grace, have made choice of the good part. It is a good part my friends. Even today we are saying with Hart, the cup seems filled with gall, yet you will say before you have finished the day, there's something secret sweetens all. This good part, it is God's part. Choosing Christ crucified; choosing to rely on Him for all goodness for time and eternity; choosing to glory in the cross of Christ. Paul did that. O, said he, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ". There were many bidders for Paul's affections, and Paul's patronage, many; he was no ordinary man. But O, said he, there is only one in whom I glory; God forbid that another should share in this my glorying.

A good part is justification by the righteousness of Christ.

Pride says, No; faith says, Yes. That good part is sanctification, living in holiness in your spirit, and desiring to be blameless in your conduct. That good part is choosing to depend on the power of Christ for victory. Yes, there is an enemy we have to meet, and some of us are frequently looking at it. It will be wonderful to say to that enemy - "O death where is thy sting?" If my doctor had said to me last Lord's Day, you cannot recover, I should have been so glad. I said over and over again that day, Lord do take me, for He was very near. We have got to look at it friends; we must die. O I would have been glad to have closed my eyes on time and sin, but I am spared perhaps a little longer. And I said this to Him, again and again on that day, if my life is spared may it be for a little more usefulness in the church, and then I ran to you in my affections and desires. A good part. O it is a good part to rely on Christ for time. What hope is there so sweet as the hope of a Christian? All other hopes are built on sand. This is built on two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie; His promise and the confirmation of His promise by His oath. And if I might by the way say, for the moment about that, it is this - Just think of the immutable God stooping so low, looking on a fearing sinner who fears to be deceived, fears to be carried away by wrong things, says to him I have made a promise to you; now I will give you strong consolation by taking an oath and, as there is no greater than Myself, I swear by Myself that I will bring you to glory. O the condescension of God; I looked at it one day last week with amazement. The eternal God stooping to a fearing soul and saying, My promise is enough in itself, but I will give you a confirmation by swearing that I will never leave you, never forsake you. No atheism can live in that light, in that power; no fears, no doubt. She hath chosen that good part. Happy sinner who is, by grace, led to make that choice; led to creep as a worm to the footstool of Jesus Christ. Led to cast his care and his troubles and his sins and all his weaknesses and failures, led to cast all on that blessed Substitute, Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Well beloved friends, what follows? "Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." O devil, thou canst not come here; O sins you have no place here. O time you cannot affect this. The good she has chosen I confirm to her. Not taken away. There is plenty to take it away if it could be removed. Indwelling sin, the law of sin which is in our

members; unbelief, that fearful enemy of God and man. A tempting devil, perplexing providences, trying circumstances. Things calculated to distract you and take and occupy your mind and throw out every other matter. Not taken away. "The rooted stock shall still remain". Though bleak winds have carried all the leaves away, the rooted stock shall still remain. A person having no understanding of a tree might look at it today and say that is a poor dead thing, not considering or knowing at all that the life is in the root; that the season will soon come when that life will be seen in every branch; in bud, then the bud bursting, leaf, flower, fruit following. Not taken away. Nipping frost has not killed; tempting devils have not killed; indwelling sin has not killed. If Christ gives you a blessing, the blessing of sitting at His feet, He has given you that which He will never take back, and if He will not take it back, who shall rob you of it? Here we must hang, God helping us. The immutability of God, His natural immutability, enters into the gospel, enters into the conscience, the heart of every believing child of God. Rest on immutability my friends. You will do from time to time as the Lord appears for you and to you. O you may say but I am afraid of the end. What child of God has not been afraid of the end? How shall I stand when I come to my dying day, when ordinances will no longer be useful? When I may be deaf and unable to hear the conversation of the saints, and when I may be unable to bear, if I could hear them, the voices of believers, of friends. What then?

ff "The LORD liveth and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted." (Psalm 18 v 46). In God is my salvation and my glory: the Rock of my defence. "In God is my salvation" (Psalm 62 v 7). "Shall not be taken away from her". Dear Mary, she is in heaven, and some of us are going there. Some of us may be there, soon there. Then we shall enter fully into this possession of grace, of life, of righteousness, of peace everlasting, and all wrapped up now in the Lord, and all will be everlastingly flowing from Him according to that Scripture which I have often quoted and named to you. "And the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of water and they shall thirst no more, and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes." Child of God, think of it, those wonderful effulgencies of glory that shall be ever flowing from the Lord Jesus to keep His dear saints from feeling thirst unsatisfied. Creatures? Yes, angels are creatures; the justified church is a

creature; the blessed company there, all creatures; therefore dependent. Dependent! O I shall never forget the first time that dawned on my soul. Dependent! Happy dependence because of the living fountains of waters. Jesus Christ is there. Now may the Lord hear us. I have delivered this word according to my desire, though I have failed of course. May the Lord give you who have had grace to make this choice, to make it again and again. You will often need to be making it. And may the Lord look upon you who have not made it and do not want to make it, have no desire for it. If you die in that state there is no place but hell for you. He will turn the wicked into hell and all nations that forget Him. May He add His blessing.

AMEN.