

Sermon preached by Mr. R. Kinderman at "Rehoboth" Chapel, Swindon, on Monday evening, 17th January, 1955.

Text: Luke X. 41,42.

"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."

One mercy that God gives to His people, or shall I say, one of the effects of His grace in the soul, is, I believe, a willingness to receive instruction. There are times when it is good and profitable, not only to receive comfort, but to receive instruction in righteousness. The apostle tells us that it is to this end, that the man of God may be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works," and that there might be some manifestation of the life and power of truth. It is good when the Lord gives that desire for the searching of the heart, to know what spirit we are really of, to know how our mind is working, for the Lord to show us where we are with respect to the matters that concern us, and whether we have that spirit which is to the honour and glory of God. What is not to the honour of God, the Lord will show in His own way His disapproval of it. How, then, we need personally for the Lord to grant us grace to examine ourselves in the light of truth!

If the love of God is toward us, then, my friends, we shall not be without correction. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." He corrects His children. The psalmist, knowing that, begged that the Lord would not be silent to him, "lest," he says, "if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit," those that have no hope in Christ. Whether they be in the profane world, or the professing, matters not; but this can be said, that they never come under teaching, they never come under discipline. They are left to go on; if it is profession, then they are left to go on in a vain profession, and though perhaps agreeable to a form that may be seen, yet with no inward exercise, no inward teaching, no correction, and no comfort or mercy. Does not the consideration of those truths at times exercise your mind, and you desire that the Lord would not leave you without His teaching, that you might not go day by day without some exercise of mind as to what spirit you are of, and what are the concerns of your mind?

Martha was concerned. She was rightly concerned. There were many things; there was a matter particularly on this occasion that appeared to be a very important one, - it was to her, - and it appeared to be profitable; and that was, she was careful about serving, about entertaining - (if I may reverently and rightly say that) the Lord Jesus Who had come into the house. He was received into her house. There was a desire in her heart for the Lord Jesus; there was a love to Him in her heart, and she received Him into her house. But she betrayed that there was something at that particular time that overwhelmed a real exercise and right desire. We may be continuing in a way that is profitable, and we may seek to entertain the best of guests, the Lord Jesus; but, my friends, how we need even in that to be exercised as to what our real mind and condition is!

Martha was cumbered about much serving, and she came to Jesus; and she betrayed her mind. How often speech betrays! And if speech does not betray us, often our actions betray the real, inner feelings of our mind, that fretfulness and peevishness of mind; and those things that are uppermost, how they betray themselves! She was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him and said, "Dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me."

Mary was in a different position. Her attitude was different, and outwardly it appeared as though Martha's was the more considerate respecting the Lord Jesus. O, there might be much movement, there might be many actions, there might be many things that appear outwardly to be so good and so correct and so much of exercise, and yet the Lord may come and show to us that there is a lack of that which is real. How we need the Lord to come and reveal to us what spirit we are of in our actions! I am not speaking now particularly of our actions in the world. We would come more particularly to those things that belong to the house of God, the service of God, or the worship of God, and to those things that speak forth outwardly His Name and His service. We need the Lord the Spirit to come and reveal to us exactly what spirit we are of. We may be wrong. There may be a spirit that needs correction. We may be found, like Martha, more concerned about the form and about the outward matters than the very kernel of truth itself. What a need then for this exhortation!

The Lord spoke to Martha. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." I say that reverently of the Lord Jesus. Faithful wounds, my friends! Sometimes you may have proved, - and it may be even now, if this word is according to the Spirit, if the Lord's mercy is upon us and it is according to His divine wisdom that we have been brought here this evening, it may be for one personally a word in season. What a mercy if the Lord give us grace to bow under it, if the Lord grant us grace to receive it and to hear His voice in it, lest we be proved to be fighting against God. It is a solemn thing to come against His thick bosses, to be in that case and condition that we receive not instruction.

"Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha." O, when the Lord speaks! There is not an idle word that ever came from the Lord Jesus; and when He speaks twice, my friends, we must take this into consideration, there is a needs-be, as though by this the word should come home into her heart, and that it should prove the power of God in her spirit. It may be a word to you and me, friends. Maybe we have come this evening and our minds are disturbed, there are many matters that concern us, and we could rightly say that they are necessary, that they are concerns that need looking into, that they are matters that need attention. I thought just now as you were singing the hymn, (Gadsby's 1113,) of what the poet's exercises were and what his mind was brought to, and how he sought in that hymn for grace that, as the Lord cares for His people and the very hairs of their head are numbered, there might be a right consideration. We cannot do it of ourselves. But this may be a word to us, "Martha, Martha." What a mercy if the Lord speak that to us, if He correct our folly, if in His mercy the Lord silence our minds and bring us to a real consideration of what is necessary! It is not an overlooking of those things that are needful; but what a solemn condition it would

be to be left to be careful, to be cumbered about much serving," to be careful about many things, and to lack that which is real!

"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." The Lord will open that to your hearts, the many things that may be a real trouble, a real burden, an exercise of mind, - I say, rightly in its place, and yet we must see this truth that the Lord rebuked because it overcame that which was most needful. O, sometimes what a mercy when the Lord does come! You may have known it in circumstances when you have been careful and troubled about many things, and maybe the Lord has come and revealed the same truth, given a witness that He is a sovereign. I have thought sometimes how the Lord does in His mercy make manifest His teachers to His people, which to the natural man causes no concern. Perhaps sometimes news may be brought, and those that bring the tidings may have no consideration of how that will affect you, but you hear tidings of those that have been taken suddenly from time into eternity, not necessarily those near and dear, and maybe the Lord in His mercy has brought you to a consideration. You have been careful, you have been troubled about many things; there is that in your spirit that says, "Well, they are so necessary, they are right to be considered;" but there has been an overwhelming of the most important matters. What a mercy then when the Lord does come!

This was not spoken to one that had no grace; this was not spoken to one that the Lord did not love. He loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus, and we read that the Lord Jesus entered into that house at Bethany, He resorted there at times, and He loved them. But, my friends, there is a necessity for this. Have you grown careless? Have the things of this life overwhelmed that exercise, that real consideration? O, how we need the Lord to come continually and make this truth known to our hearts, lest we are over-surfeited, carried away, "careful and troubled about many things," and yet "one thing is needful." It does not overlook the necessity of those things, but puts them in their right place. If the Lord brings the one thing needful with revealing power and exercise to our minds, then all other matters fall into their place. Have you felt that sometimes? When you look back to when the Lord in His mercy made Christ the real exercise to your soul, when there was a seeking desire to know Him, to feel His love, His mercy, His grace, when your heart was really touched by the divine Spirit of God, and in that time of first love when your heart really entered into the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, were you negligent about those matters that really concerned your daily life or family, the exercises that come continually? When you look back you have to say, "I feel they were in their right place; they took their right place." But it appears here that the Lord would show this, that the spirit that has come in robs and spoils, and distracts from that which is real, and causes an undue consideration of matters and not a living in the case that you have sung:

"So like a pilgrim let me wait,
Contented well in every state,
Till all my warfare ends."

But O, what a mercy to have the spirit of Mary!
What a sad condition if we never prove the spirit of Mary!
The Lord Jesus said, "One thing is needful." There is one

thing needful. What will all other considerations be one day, sinner? What does it prove to some of you now? That if that which is really needful is not made known, and that "one thing needful," which is, to be found in Christ, to have Him, as the poet says,

"The one thing needful, dearest Lord,
Is to be one with Thee," -

if we are not one with Christ, if we know nothing of a real, saving knowledge of a living union to the Lord Jesus Christ, what is all else? You may have to say, "I cannot feel as I would desire, and dare not speak what I do not know, and that is, really to feel a living union to Christ." But is it needful to you, sinner? Are there times when, in exercise of mind, there is one thing rises above everything else? It is a mercy to commune with our own hearts; it is a mercy to be exercised about our own spirits, to analyse whether we have any real exercise for truth. Can we truly say that there is within one thing made manifest as needful?

The Lord speaks of Mary in commendation; - not because she had something of her own. The Lord did not commend her as a creature, but He commended His grace, He commended His Own work in her soul; He showed that there was in Mary something that was of God's mercy and power, and that it was in lively exercise. She was at the feet of Jesus. Martha had a sister, we read, called Mary, "which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words." Do you know what it is to sit there? Do you know what it is really to come in humility at the feet of Jesus? It speaks forth a posture that God commends. "Mary hath chosen that good part." O, what a good part that is, to be found at the feet of Jesus! That is not literally. She was literally found there; but, my friends, though she was literally found at the feet of Jesus, faith in her heart knew Him, embraced Him, entered into His grace. That was not just a natural posture and nothing more. Mary had the grace of God in her heart; she had the faith of God; she knew the mercy and the power of His truth. She had revealed to her His Person, that He was indeed the Christ. He was the only hope of her salvation; He was her comfort and her joy and her peace; and that posture speaks forth that there was just one desire in her heart, and that was to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and as though, sitting at His feet, she could say, "To be in this place, to know the love of Christ, to know His mercy and His power, then everything else must be well." It must, my friends! If we really belong to the Lord Jesus, if the Lord by His Spirit has given to us that real exercise and we are by faith found in that posture, humbly at the feet of Jesus, I say, then all must be well. One of our poets knew it; he knew the one thing needful, and he said,

"He that has made my heaven secure
Will here all good provide;
While Christ is rich I can't be poor;
What can I want beside?"

It is not a negligence, but a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Mary hath chosen that good part." O, the choice of Christ! To have within a spirit God-implanted! That is not nature, that is not free will, that is not something that comes out of our flesh; but it is the actings of a living principle of grace; and, my friends, if there is no acting of

a living principle we are void. James declares the truth when He says, "Show me thy faith without thy works, but I will show thee my faith by my works." The Lord commended that grace in Mary in that the working of faith was manifest, and she was found sitting at the feet of Jesus.

"And heard His word." O, how sweet His word was to her taste! How she could speak with one who said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Can we come with Mary? Can we truly say there is but one thing that is needful? Has that come uppermost, sinner? Do you know what it is sometimes, in the midst of everything, to feel that there is one thing needful, and that, your soul's salvation, to be found in Christ, really to seek after a knowledge of His Name and His truth, to be enabled to say, "Lord, in the matters that I attend to, in the service of Thy house of whatever nature, there are times when I can truthfully say it is because there is one thing needful.

"Mary hath chosen that good part. Martha, Mary is to be commended. The grace of God is manifest in her soul; the truth of God is uppermost in her mind, and she seeks after it. There is but one thing needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." O, what a wonderful grace God gives when He gives that mercy and that exercise for Christ! It shall never be taken away.

But she "hath chosen that good part." There is a point in experience when, I believe, the Lord makes manifest in His children His Own divine grace. I feel we can say in respect to Mary it was just the same as it was with Ruth. There is a place where the Lord makes manifest the real desire of the heart. There was a place in Ruth's experience when there was only one thing needful, when there was one exercise uppermost above all things, and that was that she might know the blessing of the children of God, that she might prove to be one of them; and all other things that were necessary God added.

Can we come with Mary? It is needful in our hearts that the Lord correct our folly, then, and speak to us and say, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things"? O, what a mercy if the Lord would come to us in this and grant us then to fall before Him, grant us to see our own way and to prove where we are, and that that may be the means in the Lord's hands of exercising our minds to fall before Him and in effect to say, "Lord, I do own my folly, I do own my backsliding of heart; I can see the place that I am in." What a mercy if the Lord show us that, and leave us not without correction, and show to us what He speaks in love and tenderness and in that way which is commendable to those that fear His Name.

But "One thing is needful." Ah, sinner, there is one thing needful. I say, that is to be found in Christ. Is that in our heart? Is that in our movements? Is that first above all other considerations? If the Lord, by His Spirit, has made real the matters of eternity, the matters of the soul, then I believe we shall prove that there is one thing needful. All other matters will come to an end. But O, when the Lord brings His truth, when the Lord in His mercy brings the reality of eternity before your mind, sinner, has not that been a means at times of bringing you to this exercise, to say, "Lord, I know there is one thing needful, and I desire that that may

be made manifest." And is there a seeking after? If the grace of God is in our heart there will be a seeking after, and there will be a coming to the feet of Jesus, there will be a humble falling before Him, seeking for His word, that He would speak pardon to our soul. What a mercy! "Mary hath chosen that good part;" - the feet of Jesus.

"And heard His word. O, you will say sometimes, "Lord, that is just what I desire! I would desire in humility to be found at Thy feet in hope that a word may be spoken, a word of pardon, a word of peace." Who can speak peace? Who can speak pardon? Who can speak eternal life? None but Christ. O, my friends, what a mercy then, proving the one thing needful, to be found in that place that God approves as Mary was! Nothing but His grace can do it. But, my friends, do we know the grace of God? It is not sufficient, is it, to speak of the grace of God? It is not sufficient to hear of the grace of God. We know that the grace of God is given to His people; and we know, each of us here, I believe, that nothing but the grace of God can save us. We have been taught it, and we hope that we believe it. But, my friends, I feel there is a point here, that we must be brought by the Spirit to a real exercise: Have I got that grace? Is that grace made known in me? Has the Lord in His mercy brought me to that place really to prove His grace in my soul?

Now it will be found in this, that there will be a sitting at the feet of Jesus, there will be a gracious humility, by faith seeking for His word, panting after it; desire made manifest in the ways that God has appointed. And how different that is! O, sometimes a quiet waiting, waiting patiently for the salvation of God. One who knew this grace, to whom the one thing needful was made known, said, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." Can you say that, sinner? Is there something in your heart and mine that can respond to that truth, that really waits for the salvation of the Lord?

Where are you waiting? Grace waits at the feet of Christ. It comes before Him in humility, pleading His promise, pleading His word, taking to Him that word; and the hope that God gives in that mercy waits, and it waits again, and continues to wait at His footstool. "Blessed are they that wait at the posts of My doors," says the Lord. Mary was in that posture by the grace of God. She was waiting, she was exercised, she knew there was one thing needful. "Mary hath chosen that good part." Is there something in your heart that has chosen? It must be divine mercy; it must be the grace of God; and it says, "Lord, I cannot be without it, I cannot do without it."

Simeon chose that good part. He was companion with Mary, and by the mercy of God the Spirit spake to him that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ; and in effect he was found at the feet of Jesus. He came into the temple waiting for the consolation of Israel. Do you know what it is to wait for the consolation of Israel? The Spirit of God reveals a consolation to Israel; There is a blessing to them. Simeon waited for that; and he waited at the feet of Jesus. By faith he came into the place that God had appointed to reveal Christ, and he was not disappointed, sinner! No, the Lord gave him that one thing needful, and

there came a time in his experience, as you know, when he took Christ in his arms. If the one thing needful is made known to your soul, and you are seeking for it in the way that Mary was at this particular time, brought to the feet of Jesus, we can say this, you will not be disappointed. God is faithful to His promise.

"It shall not be taken away from her. That promise and that blessing will never be removed. That mercy which is made known in measure here, is only to be known in all its fulness hereafter. That is the wonderful mercy of it, that it is only to increase. That is so distinct from everything else. There is no other blessing that increases. Everything else decreases. Our very lives decrease. Year by year is a proof that we decrease, that we are going down, that grey hairs are upon us, that we are decreasing. But the grace of God, the mercy of God, the truth of God, is only to increase. It is the only thing that does, and when the Lord comes by His mercy and quickening grace, there is a desire then to know that which will only increase. John the Baptist knew it. I know that he spoke in respect to the ministry of the Lord Jesus and the power of truth, but it can be spoken of all matters that concern the Lord Jesus Christ: "He must increase." And He does! O, my friends, what mercy!

"But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part." O, my friends, if God has given us the grace to choose that, to seek after a knowledge of and interest in the Lord Jesus, that will not be taken away. It may sometimes be clouded. It may not always be in the sweet experience, you may not always be enabled to feel and hear His word; but that will never be taken away. "Whom once He loves, He never leaves, but loves them to the end." Can we prove in our hearts that we have this grace? Can we prove that there is one thing needful in our hearts, and that is Christ?

The apostle Paul knew it. He said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but.... I press toward the mark for the prize of the High calling of God in Christ Jesus." O, how that one thing needful proved to be known in his soul, and he pressed toward that mark, he followed after, if that he might apprehend that great truth. And when he came to his end, he proved the mercy. It was never taken away, but increased. He says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness;... and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." Do you love His appearing? Has the Lord Jesus Christ been made the one thing needful, so that you love His appearing, you cannot be satisfied without His appearing, and you seek to know it as the Lord is pleased to appear? Why, sometimes when the one thing needful is made known, that will be your prayer in coming to the house of God, "Lord, I long for Thy appearing, I long for a word;" and in that sense there is a humble sitting at His feet. You will sometimes know what it is when you come to His word and seek for it. You will sometimes know it when you come to the throne of grace, and you beg for the Lord to make manifest His power to your soul, and you say, "Lord, that is just what I want, and everything

beside that is nothing." Mr. Toplady knew it in another way when he said,

"Happiness, thou lovely name,
Where's thy seat, O tell me where?"

He knew there was only one thing needful, and that real happiness flowed from that source, and without it there was nothing.

"Jesus crucified for me,
All to happiness aspire,
Only to be found in Thee."

May God grant this truth; and if it is needful for a correction in our spirits, the Lord grant us grace to receive it. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." They may be right, they may be important, but the Lord can take care of those things; and, above all, if we are His, then as I have already hinted, the Lord will do it.

"But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." No, when the time of the end came to Mary the Lord honoured His Own grace; and He will honour His Own grace in all His people. May God grant we shall prove to be amongst them, and in our measure, as we go through life, know the mercy of this blessing, and be found humbly at the feet of Jesus and often hear His word. O, what a favour that will be! And then to hear it in all its fulness in eternity!

May God grant His blessing on His word!
