

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 125 One Thing is Needful

Text: “*But one thing is needful*” (Luke 10. 42).

This is a very important word. In fact, it is a vital word. Thinking of our souls’ concerns, death, heaven, hell and eternity, the one thing needful: a vital, personal knowledge of Christ and Him crucified. This is a vital word to each one of us. Also, beloved friends, it is a reproof. It is a reproof that we all need, especially at times. How often we can be taken up with other things, even lawful things, and our hearts can be drawn away from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the one thing needful.

Now this word very simply speaks of one thing. But beloved friends, there are *many things* in our lives, many good things, right things in our lives, and they are things we are right to be concerned about – things in our families, things concerning our health and well-being, things concerning our trials, things in the church of God. So we might go on, and so many of these are lawful things. We should pray about them; we must pray about them. But Satan is very subtle, and he can use even right things to draw our hearts away from Christ as the one thing needful. It is a point we need to be concerned about. It is a point on which we need to be kept.

“One thing is needful.” One thing we can say for sure. In the beginning of our souls’ burdens and concerns, when we were really concerned about our lost condition and a never-ending eternity, the need to be right, the need to be prepared, then it was just *one thing*. “One thing is needful.” Perhaps all kinds of things were going on in the world, but they were very secondary to us. It was that vital point, and it *was* engraven on our heart, “that Thou the one thing needful art.” So this is a very important subject.

Just a few words then concerning the context here. The house of Lazarus and Martha and Mary, never let that word be forgotten: “Now Jesus loved

Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” It was a very favoured house. It was a house where the Lord delighted to visit, and how often here was a place where He could truly find rest, and He could know real communion with three of the Lord’s dear children.

Now we are told that this was the reputation, the scriptural reputation that Mary had. She sat at Jesus’ feet. I think I am right in saying that Mary of Bethany is only mentioned in three different places, three different times in the Word of God. Each time it was at Jesus’ feet.

Now we find Martha here cumbered about much serving. There is a very close point here, a very solemn point, and really it is this: Martha was so concerned for the well-being of our Lord Jesus that she would do anything for Him. You cannot think of anything better, and yet it kept her from Jesus’ presence. It kept her from sitting at Jesus’ feet. Now it takes in the whole subject of *religious activity*, right religious activity, good religious activity. But never forget, “*One thing is needful.*” That religious activity, though so good, and though even so blessed by God, it is not the one thing needful. The one thing needful is Christ Himself.

How we need to watch our spirit here, and how we need to be kept. But not only that; it seems that Martha here got into a bad spirit. She was finding fault. Really, she was not only finding fault with her sister; she was finding fault with the Lord Jesus. She said, “Lord, dost Thou not care?” Don’t we need to be careful how we speak! It is a similar word to the disciples in that dreadful storm on the sea of Galilee. “Master, carest Thou not?” How we need to hold fast that beautiful truth: “He careth for you” – in all places, at all times. Faith’s loving response: “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.”

“Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?” And she went even further. She gave directions to the Lord Jesus what He should do: “Bid her therefore that she help me.” Now never forget what a godly woman Martha was as she appeared in John chapter 11. She made some very blessed statements to our Lord Jesus at the time of the death and then the rising again of Lazarus. The Lord Jesus gave her a very tender, loving rebuke, and it must have been a shock to her and a surprise. We need these loving, tender rebukes, and beloved friends, sometimes they give us a shock and they take us by surprise.

“Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.” There we have it in the two words: “*Many things*: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” So you might say, the one thing needful is Christ. But it goes a little bit further, a little bit closer. It is not just saying Christ is the one thing needful. It is sitting at the feet of Christ. Now that just goes a step nearer. “One thing is needful.” What was it? “Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet.”

Just very briefly then, what is it to sit at Jesus’ feet? It is to know something of nearness to Him. It is a place of humility, of lowliness, seeking to be low at the Saviour’s feet. It is where we would seek to listen to His voice. It is where we would seek to be taught by Him, to depend upon Him. “At Jesus’ feet.” Of course, there is an ancient word on this in the Book of Deuteronomy: “Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand.” This is it: “They sat down at Thy feet.” And that was hundreds of years before this occurrence here. But Mary walked it out. “They sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words.” May our final thoughts be this blessed place. How much do we know of it? How little do we know of it? How often are we carried away? How often it is by lawful things. May there be that prayer:

“O that I may for ever sit,
Like Mary, at the Master’s feet!
Be this my happy choice.”

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Thursday, 29th April, 2021

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Jesus, engrave it on my heart,
That Thou the one thing needful art;
I could from all things parted be,
But never, never, Lord, from Thee.

Needful art Thou to make me live;
Needful art Thou all grace to give;
Needful to guide me, lest I stray;
Needful to help me every day.

Needful is Thy most precious blood;
Needful is Thy correcting rod;
Needful is Thy indulgent care;
Needful Thy all-prevailing prayer.

Needful Thy presence, dearest Lord,
True peace and comfort to afford;
Needful Thy promise to impart
Fresh life and vigour to my heart.

Needful art Thou, my soul can say,
Through all life's dark and thorny way;
In death Thou wilt most needful be,
When I yield up my soul to Thee.

Needful art Thou, to raise my dust
In shining glory with the just;
Needful when I in heaven appear,
To crown and to present me there.

S. Medley