

A DISCIPLE,
A DEPENDENT,
A DEVOTEE

Notes of an Address by

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“*Mary . . . SAT AT THE LORD’S FEET, and heard His word.*”—Luke x. 39 (R.V.)

“*When Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, SHE FELL DOWN AT HIS FEET.*”—John xi. 32.

“*Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and ANOINTED THE FEET OF JESUS, AND WIPED HIS FEET WITH HER HAIR.*”—John xii. 3.

IN these three passages, there are given to us three progressive pictures of a pardoned worshipper whom we shall do well to imitate.

I. THE DISCIPLE WORSHIPPER.

Our first sight of Mary reveals her sitting as a hearer and learner at the feet of her Lord. This is the place which we should all take, and which we should do

well to retain. Our Lord has said : “ *He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life* ” (John v. 24). Isaiah also by the Holy Spirit declares, “ *Incline your ear, and come unto Me : hear, and your soul shall live* ” (Isa. lv. 3). The work that the Lord committed to the eleven ere He ascended to the right hand of the Father was to “ *make disciples of all nations* ” (Matt. xxviii. 19). Paul also reminds us that “ *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* ” (Rom. x. 17).

To sit at the feet of our Lord and hear His word is then the place of receiving eternal life, and it is the perpetual place of discipleship and of adoring worship. To listen attentively to the word of God is to show our appreciation of the wisdom and worthiness of the One to whose words we listen, and to confess our ignorance and need of instruction. There are some who seem to think that in worship, God should only listen to us, but though speaking to Him has its place, surely for us to listen to Him is true worship. We teach our children that they show respect to their

seniors by listening rather than by talking. Sitting at the feet of the Lord comes before service and sanctification, for how can we know how and when to serve, if we do not get our instructions, and how can we do the will of God if we have not sat at the feet of our Lord to learn what that will is?

We shall find also, that to hear what the Lord has to say comes, in order, before prayer; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, and God's Word suggests matter for prayer.

II. THE DEPENDENT WORSHIPPER.

The second scene in Mary's history reveals her in deep distress. Her greatly loved and only brother is seriously ill, and she and her sister Martha send at once for the Lord. They depend on His love and power, and know no other helper. But to their surprise and disappointment, He appears to disregard their prayer for help. This was a mystery and a sore and terrible trial of their faith, which has its counterpart probably in the case of all those who have had much experience of the ways of God. But the trial grows deeper, and the

mystery of the Lord's apparent indifference becomes more profound. Lazarus dies, and it seems that even if the Lord does come now, it will be of no use.

Still He delays, and Lazarus is buried. At last the Lord arrives when Lazarus has been dead four days, and when corruption has set in. Mary had depended on her Lord. Had she depended in vain? It looked as though she had. She was confident that if He had come before Lazarus had died, He could have prevented his decease. But the Lord wanted to increase her faith in Him, and ours also, and to reveal Himself as one to be depended on as able to give life to the dead—to the physically dead, and to the spiritually and morally dead. Mary falls at His feet in the attitude of profoundest dependence.

She has no hope of deliverance except Himself. This was worship in another form. By sitting at His feet and hearing His word she had learned to know Him. Now she worships Him as the one whom she cannot do without, as the one who *alone* doeth great wonders. We honour our Lord when we treat Him as the one who

is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, and when we depend *alone* on Him.

Mary's faith may not have fully risen to the occasion. Still there was real faith, and it was honoured, and the Lord went beyond her faith and raised Lazarus to life. It was no vain thing to depend on Him, and it is no vain thing now. It honours God and blesses men. If we study the history of God's people in all ages, we shall see that His dealings with them have ever in view the bringing of them to depend simply and solely on Him.

Independence of God is what Satan has aimed at obtaining. Dependence on God is what our Lord delighted in, and it is the blessed experience into which He desires to bring us now, and it is that which we shall fully enjoy in the life to come.

III. THE DEVOTEE WORSHIPPER.

There seems to be a Divine order in this progress. We must be disciples to be dependents, we must be satisfied and delighted dependents to be devotees. The order cannot be rightly reversed. If we

would be devotees we must begin by being disciples.

Mary's heart was overflowing. She had had such a revelation of the grace, love and power of her Lord, that her heart was captivated by Him. It was no difficulty to her to love Him. Her difficulty was to give adequate expression to her bursting heart. She had some very costly ointment, estimated by Judas as worth 300 pence, equal to a labourer's earnings for about a year or to a woman's earnings for two years. She determines to break this box of ointment on His head and feet. Nothing is too good for Him. Nothing is good enough for Him. Then she will take her hair, a woman's glory, and use it as a towel for His blessed feet. She will do it publicly, before all. What does it matter what people may think or say? His worthiness is unutterably great. Her best is not good enough for Him. She forgets herself, forgets those around her, He alone fills her heart and mind. She, in measure, anticipates the time when the redeemed shall cast their crowns at His feet, and declare that He alone is worthy,

for He has redeemed them by His blood.

This is worship in its highest form—worship of heart and soul. There is no formality. How different from the heartless forms of mere ritual and custom! Yet if we would rise to this highest devotion we must begin by discipleship, and go on to utter dependence before we arrive at being devotees. If we had a few devotees like Mary, how little trouble there would be about either labourers or funds! Money would pour in, until as of old we should have too much, and be compelled to ask people to stay their hands. What missionaries, evangelists, pastors, and teachers we should have! There would be no hirelings! There would be no dry, uninteresting speakers! What progress there would be at home and abroad! Yes, it is devotees who are wanted—men and women who have been captivated by the Lord Jesus Christ, and who love Him so intensely that they yield themselves absolutely to Him for life or death.

Education has its place, but devotedness to the Lord is what He values, and what tells.