

Mary and Martha

By David Phillips

Introduction

1. Something that every faithful Christian ought to be keenly aware of is their need to devote their life to God.
2. This is a challenging aspect of our lives because it is very easy to get lost in the shuffle of every day life.
 - a. Plans are begin made which either succeed or fail.
 - b. We have goals that we are striving to achieve.
 - c. In order to fulfill our obligations we need to make sacrifices here and there and change our schedules from time to time.
3. With so much going on it is easy to shift our focus from one thing to another quite often.
4. For Christians this can be very dangerous because we are often tempted to change our focus from God and His kingdom (the spiritual things) to the things of this life (the physical things).
5. But God gives us gentle encouragement to overcome these types of challenges in the brief glimpses we have of the lives of Mary and Martha.

Discussion

I. Who Were Mary and Martha?

- A. John 11:1-44: Mary and Martha were the sisters of Lazarus.
 1. They knew Jesus and were familiar with Him.
 2. They knew that Lazarus had a close relationship with Jesus; that Jesus loved him (John 11:3).
 3. John confirms that Jesus loved their whole family in verse 5 where it is written, “*Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.*”
- B. This is the same family that ate with Jesus and His disciples in Bethany seven days before His crucifixion (John 12:1-8; Mark 14:3)
 1. We find Martha serving the table (John 12:2).
 2. But Mary was concerned with honoring Jesus by anointed His feet with spikenard, which was very costly (John 12:3).
- C. Other than these short clips into their lives, we know very little of Mary and Martha.
 1. But what we do learn is very valuable information.
 2. There are several lessons that are essential for us to apply in our lives as we strive to live faithful to God.

II. We Must Learn from Their Faith

- A. These were the women who believed in Jesus’ ability to heal their brother, Lazarus.
 1. When their brother was sick they sent the message for Jesus to come to heal him (John 11:3).
 2. Jesus responded to their message, but He took long enough that Lazarus actually died in the mean time.
 3. But God had His reason for this, which Jesus states in John 11:4, 14.
- B. They believed in the resurrection.
 1. When Jesus arrived at Bethany Martha went to meet Him in verse 20-22.

2. But Jesus comforts her in verses 23-27 saying, *“Your brother will rise again.”*
3. As we know the story we understand that Jesus was saying that Lazarus would rise again in just a few moments.
4. But Martha took this to mean that he would rise again in the resurrection with the rest of mankind (see verse 24).
5. Even though she was saddened by the death of her brother, she still put her faith in the power of the resurrection, just as we all should.
6. Paul comforted the Thessalonians in 1 Thess. 4:16-18 by reminding them of the resurrection to come.
7. We too should take comfort in this truth.
8. But this was not the resurrection that Jesus was speaking of.

C. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38-44).

1. When Jesus drew near the tomb He commanded that the stone be taken away.
2. Martha knew what the condition of the body would have been by this time, but that did not stop Jesus.
3. Rather, He reminded her of the things which He had spoken just a moment ago, *“Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”* (John 11:40).
4. In spite of the doubts she may have had, Martha shows true faith by heeding the words of Jesus.
 - a. You see, faith is not accepting the things that we already know and can see.
 - b. Faith is accepting the things that we do not know and cannot see, as it is written, *“For we walk by faith not by sight”* (2 Cor. 5:7).
 - c. Even though Martha knew that the body would have a stench by that time, she trusted in Jesus allowed Him to do what He needed to do.
 - d. Some times we are required to trust in God, even though we may not always understand what He is doing or why His is doing it.
 - e. But if we trust in His power and His wisdom we can rest assured that He is doing all things for the best.
5. So it was that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

III. Mary Teaches Us to Humble Ourselves (John 12:1-3).

A. Often today people have a hard time with humbling themselves and serving others.

1. Even some in the church do not fully know how to humble themselves to their Lord Jesus Christ.
2. But this woman gives us an example of what it means to show great appreciation and love for the Son of God.

B. Mary was willing to humble herself in service to the Lord.

1. She was willing to anoint Jesus with a very expensive substance—to give Him the best of what she had (John 12:3).
2. She was willing to humble herself by wiping His feet with her hair).
3. This should cause us to stop and ask, what are we willing to do to humble ourselves before the Lord?
4. He is not here for us to wipe His feet with our hair, but it is the attitude we are considering here, not necessarily the method.
5. Are we willing to give up the best of what we have? Many people insist on being reimbursed for any and every expense they incur in their service to God.
6. But Mary was willing to give us something of great value without expecting anything in return (Heb. 13:13-16).

7. Are we willing to serve God in this manner? Are we willing to make sacrifices of our time, possessions, money, and energy in order to glorify and honor God with our lives?

IV. Emphasis on the Physical Vs. the Spiritual.

- A. In Luke 10:38-42 Jesus was invited into their home.
 1. As these women were close friends of Jesus, Martha welcomed Him into their home.
 2. As most of us would do, Martha became very preoccupied with the physical things that were involved in hosting a guest in one's home.
 3. *"But Martha was distracted with much serving..."* (Luke 10:40).
 - a. Notice that she was distracted.
 - b. What was she distracted from?
 - c. In order for one to be "distracted" there must be something else going on that they are not paying attention to.
 - d. It means to be over occupied or drawn away.
 - e. So what was Martha being drawn away from?
- B. We find that her sister sitting and learning and Jesus' feet.
 1. Luke 10:39: *"And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word."*
 2. So we find that it was the teaching of Jesus from which Martha was being distracted.
 3. Yet she did not see it as such. For she actually became frustrated at her sister for not helping her with the serving. *"...she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me'"* (Luke 10:40).
 4. In His response to her request, Jesus teaches us of the sort of things we should be focusing on in our own lives.
- C. *"Mary has chosen that good part."*
 1. Martha was troubled about many things. Are not we all troubled about many things needlessly?
 2. But of all the things that distract us in this life, only one thing is needed.
 3. What is that one thing? Jesus said Mary had chosen it. What was it? The Spiritual food which she was gaining by listening to the word of the Lord.
 4. Jesus said that that good part cannot be taken away from Mary, as the physical things can be taken away from us.

Conclusion

1. What takes the preeminence in your life?
2. Are you distracted from the spiritual things that God has to offer?
3. If so, learn from Mary and Martha to not be worried and distracted about this physical life and to turn you attention to that which is good.

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