

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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ACCORDING
TO HIS DESIRE
AND PREFERENCE

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Living Stream Ministry
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Immediately after the parable of the good Samaritan, Luke puts the record of the Man-Savior being received by Martha at Bethany (10:38-42). What is the connection between these two cases? The connection is that after we have been saved through realizing the Savior's compassion and love, we should serve Him. In other words, saved ones should be serving ones. In order to be saved we need to realize the Savior's compassion and love. In order to serve Him, we need to know His desire and preference. We should not serve the Lord according to our opinion, concept, or understanding. Instead, we should serve Him according to His desire and preference.

[Luke 10:38 and 39](#) say, "Now as they were going, He entered into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha received Him as a guest into her home. And she had a sister called Mary, who also was seated at the Lord's feet and was listening to His word." The village here is

Bethany ([John 12:1](#); [Mark 11:1](#); [Matt. 21:17](#)). The name Bethany means the house of affliction.

According to the record of the Gospels, in the Lord's last visit to Jerusalem, He remained in the city only during the day for His ministry. Every evening He departed to lodge in Bethany, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives ([Mark 11:19](#); [Luke 21:37](#)), where the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and the house of Simon were ([John 11:1](#); [Matt. 26:6](#)). In Jerusalem He was rejected by the leaders of Judaism, but in Bethany He was welcomed by those who loved Him.

[Luke 10:38 and 39](#) mention Martha and Mary. The name Martha probably comes from Chaldean and means "she was rebellious." The Greek word Mary is Maria, for the Hebrew Miriam, and means "their rebellion" ([Num. 12:1, 10-15](#)).

The meaning of the names of Martha and Mary conveys the thought of rebellion. This may indicate their natural life. The Lord's salvation can transform the rebellious into the submissive, as portrayed in this story. One like the rebellious Miriam in the Old Testament becomes one like the submissive Mary in the New Testament.

Mary was listening to the Lord's word, but "Martha was distracted with much serving"

(v. 40). The Greek word translated “distracted” means to be drawn about in different directions.

Standing over the Lord, Martha said, “Lord, does it not matter to You that my sister has left me to serve alone?” (v. 40). The Lord answered, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; but one thing is necessary; for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (vv. 41-42). Here we see that the Lord prefers His saved ones who love Him to listen to Him (v. 39) that they may know His desire, rather than do things for Him without knowing His will (see [1 Sam. 15:22](#); [Eccl. 5:1](#)).

It is quite significant that this story of Martha and Mary follows immediately after the parable of the good Samaritan. The first shows the compassion and love of the Savior, who is a Man as the sinners’ neighbor. The second unveils the desire and preference of the Lord, who is God as the believers’ Master. The Savior’s compassion and love are for our salvation by Him; the Lord’s desire and preference are for our service to Him. After receiving salvation from the Savior, we should render service to the Lord. For our salvation we need to realize the Savior’s compassion and love; for our service we need to know the Lord’s desire and preference.

LISTENING TO THE LORD'S WORD AND KNOWING HIS DESIRE

When the Lord came to Bethany, Martha received Him and served Him. However, Martha served the Savior according to her own concept and understanding. She thought that after making a long journey the Lord wanted to be served with material things. Therefore, she was busy in doing many things for the Man-Savior.

Do you think that when the Lord came into Martha's home in Bethany His desire was to be served with material things? To be sure, it was not His desire to be served with food. On the contrary, His desire was that His saved ones would listen to Him in order to know what was on His heart. The Lord did not care about eating; He wanted those who loved Him to be silent, to sit with Him, to listen to Him, and to concentrate on His speaking. In this way they would know His desire and preference.

In [Luke 10:39](#) Mary sat at the Lord's feet listening to His word. Later, she prepared ointment to anoint Him before His death. How did Mary know to do this? I believe she came to know this through listening to the Savior's speaking. By sitting at the Savior's feet and listening to His word, she came to know His desire and preference.

Today many are busy trying to get saved. They think that salvation depends on what they do. But there is no need for us to do anything to be saved. In order for a person to be saved, he needs to realize that he is incapable of saving himself, for he, like the man in the parable of the good Samaritan, is one who has been stripped, beaten, and left half dead. This indicates that we all need a Savior, One who is full of compassion and love. When we realize the Savior's compassion and love, we shall enjoy His saving grace, which is full of human virtues and divine attributes. This is what it means to be saved.

Although there is no need for us to do anything to be saved, fallen man thinks that he must do many things for his salvation. Therefore, we would emphasize the fact that there is no need for us to do anything to be saved.

Once we have been convinced by the Savior's compassion and love and are saved, we may try to do many things for the Lord. We may think that now that we love Him we should be busy doing things for Him. I have never met a saved person who does not have the thought of doing things for the Lord. Every saved person I know has the concept of working for the Lord.

In [10:38-42](#) Martha was very busy in many

directions, and she was trying to make the Lord busy. She saw the situation involving the Lord and her sister, Mary. Mary was not doing anything. She was simply sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to His word, and the Lord seemed to appreciate Mary's silence. This bothered Martha, and she even gave the Lord a command: "Tell her that she should do her part with me." Here Martha seemed to be saying, "Lord, don't You realize that I'm very busy? Why, then, don't You tell my sister to do something to help me?"

Today most of the Lord's saved ones are busy trying to serve Him. They may also be trying to make the Savior busy. But those who know the Lord and who know His desire and preference would say, "Don't be so busy. The Lord wants to rest. The most precious thing to Him is not that you work for Him or try to do things for Him. What is most precious to Him is that you sit with Him and silently listen to His word. If you sit with the Lord and listen to His word, you will know His desire and preference."

THE LORD'S HEART SET ON HIS DEATH

Do you know what was on the Lord's heart while He sat in Martha's home in Bethany? The Lord's heart was set on His death. He knew that

He was going to Jerusalem to die. He wanted His followers to set aside their works, their doings, and go with Him to be crucified.

While the disciples were on the way to Jerusalem with the Lord, they were busy in such matters as arguing who was greater and in forbidding others to do things for the Lord. In particular, the brothers were busy with their ambition. The sisters, on the contrary, were busy in serving, in ministering. But among the sisters there was one—Mary—who was not busy. She was calm and sat in silence listening to the Man-Savior's word. As a result, she came to know what was on the Lord's heart.

Mary realized that He was going to Jerusalem to die. Twice the Lord unveiled His death to His disciples, but they did not have an ear to hear the Lord's word. Mary, however, heard the Lord's word concerning His death, and she took this word. Having heard and received the Lord's word concerning His death, she looked for the opportunity to anoint Him before He died ([Matt. 26:12](#)).

In [Luke 10:38-42](#) the Lord may have been speaking to Mary about His death. At that juncture, what was on the heart of the Savior was His approaching death.

[Luke 9:51](#), the beginning of the section in this Gospel on the Lord's ministry from Galilee to Jerusalem, says, "And it came about, when the days were being fulfilled for His being taken up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." The phrase "being taken up" refers to the Lord's death. Here we see that the days were being fulfilled for the Lord to go to Jerusalem that He might die there. Hence, from this time onward, the Lord's one consideration was His going to Jerusalem to die. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. Therefore, the unique matter on His heart as He was on the way to Jerusalem was His death.

When He was close to Jerusalem, in Bethany, He was received into the house of Martha. While there, He was speaking the word, and Mary was listening. As we have pointed out, He may have been talking concerning His death. The brothers did not have a heart for this, and neither did Martha, who was busy serving. The only one who had a heart for the Lord's word concerning His death and who sat quietly listening to His word was Mary. She sat at His feet and listened to the Savior's word, a word that expressed His desire and preference.

RECEIVING THE LORD'S SALVATION AND SERVING HIM

The two cases in [Luke 10:25-42](#), the Lord's portraying Himself as the good Samaritan and His being received by Martha, are related. The first shows the Savior's compassion and love for our salvation, and the second reveals His desire and preference for our service to Him. We need to know the Lord in these two aspects. We need to know His compassion and love in salvation and His desire and preference for our service.

Before doing anything for the Lord, we must first know His compassion and love related to our salvation and His desire and preference related to our service. This implies that we leave our natural man on the cross. There is no need for us to do anything for our salvation, and we should not do anything in ourselves in the Lord's service. With respect to both salvation and service we should remain on the cross. Then we shall know the Man-Savior's compassion and love for our salvation and His desire and preference for our service.

We have seen that the name Martha probably comes from Chaldean and means "she was rebellious," and that Mary comes from Maria, Greek

for Hebrew Miriam, meaning “their rebellion.” These words come from the same root, a root that means rebellious or rebellion. However, it is possible for a rebellious one to become a submissive one. In nature Mary was rebellious, but she became submissive not only to the Lord’s compassion and love but also to His desire and preference. Therefore, in the New Testament Mary was the unique one who touched the Lord’s desire to the uttermost. For this reason she is set forth as an example for the followers of the Lord. We all should be like Mary in following the Lord and in serving Him.

In taking Mary as an example, we need to remember that originally she was rebellious. By the Man-Savior’s compassion and mercy she was made a submissive one, one who loved the Lord and served Him not according to her opinion or by her effort, but according to His desire and preference. Here we see the way for us to be saved and the proper way for us to serve Him.

The Gospel of Luke is a book full of the Man-Savior’s human virtues and divine attributes. His ministry from Galilee to Jerusalem was carried out in His human virtues with His divine attributes. In composing his Gospel, Luke put the Lord’s portraying Himself as the good

Samaritan together with His being received by Martha at Bethany. Luke's purpose in doing this was to show how to receive the Lord's salvation and how to serve Him after we have been saved.

This booklet is compiled from

Life-study of Luke

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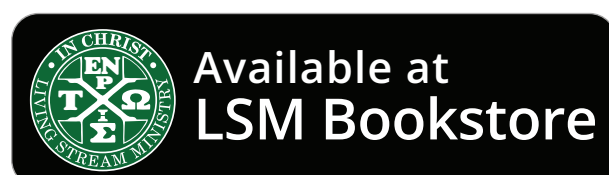
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