

Personal Attachment.

John 1: 35-42, John 12: 1-8, John 20: 10-18.

"Handfuls of Purpose" Part 3 (Miscellaneous, chapters 15 - 30).

Let fall for eager Gleaners.

Thirty Addresses on Various Scripture Truths and Incidents

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CHAPTER 23 — PERSONAL ATTACHMENT.

We have heard times without number, beloved brethren, that it is the loving heart that learns; and it is the loving heart that the Lord leads on. I just turn to these scriptures as illustrative of this precious principle. It is a question all through, you see, of a Person. It is an immense thing to know that Christianity is not a question of doctrines, but of a Person, and the heart being attached to a Person. It is not the head assenting to a scheme of truth, but truth wrapped up in the Person of a living Man, and the heart attached to that Person. There is a peculiar charm in looking at the Gospels, particularly John's Gospel, in this way.

No doubt God has recorded these simple narratives for our help, and to win our hearts to His dear Son, after a similar sort. You see in the early part of John's Gospel a beautiful display of Christ in this scene, and the various ways in which the Lord revealed Himself to many souls, and the way in which He attracted them to, and eventually attached them to Himself. You have the Lord attracting souls in the early part of the Gospel — like a magnet — drawing them out from one recess and another. He attracted hearts to Himself by the revelation of Himself, in a way that met the peculiar state of the soul He was attracting, and that is just what He is doing today. The work is peculiarly individual, and is done very quietly, whether it be in the case of Andrew and his fellow; Peter, Philip, or Nathanael (John 1); Nicodemus (John 3); the woman at the well, and the nobleman (John 4); the paralytic of Bethesda (John 5); the woman in the temple (John 8); the man born blind (John 9); or Mary of Bethany (John 11); and they are but samples of many others of whom you read in the Gospels. They show the winsome way in which Jesus attracts souls to Himself, and ministers to them according to the skilfulness of His hands, and the integrity of His heart.

At the end of the Gospel you will see what a wonderful place some of these attracted ones have. You will find some of those hearts were able to minister to Jesus; were able, as it were, to present to Him a cup of cold water, as none else could, in the moment of His deep sorrow in this scene. It is a wonderful thing to be able to minister to the heart of Christ in this scene. It is like Genesis 24; the bride was chosen really by the Father; and the appointed servant took her to Isaac. Isaac *loved* her, and then in the hour of his sorrow — for his mother had died — it was by

Rebecca that he was *comforted*. In Genesis 22 you have the story of the love of the Father to the Son. It is interesting to note that this is the first time in Scripture where you get love mentioned; the next time we find it spoken of it is the love of the Bridegroom to the Bride (chap. 24). He loves her, and she comforts him. That is exactly what you would expect to find in Scripture, the love of the Father for the Son first, and then the love of the Bridegroom for the Bride, he comforted by her. Yes, love is always personal, and reciprocal.

If you look at this scene where John opens his Gospel, it is beautiful. The Baptist sees the Lord, and says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29). Now, observe that no one follows Him, as the fruit of that testimony. It was a good remark made here today, that, It is not merely a work, we have to present, but a Person. When the work was presented, no one followed Him. The next day John's eye rested on the Lord again, in a sort of contemplative way, and, as he gazed on Him, he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (ver. 36). Immediately it detaches two of his disciples from himself, and they follow the Lord. The Lord turns and sees them following, and says, "*What seek ye?*" To them it was a suited query, for it raised the question as to whether affection really wrought in their hearts; but when the Lord speaks to Mary (John 20) He does not say, "*What seekest thou?*" No, angels may inquire, "Woman, why weepest thou?" but He says, "*Whom seekest thou?*" He has awakened in her soul affections that only Himself can satisfy, and He says, "*Whom seekest thou?*" Peter and John, after seeing the sepulchre, might go away home, but without Jesus Mary was homeless. Nothing could satisfy her but Himself.

No doubt the Lord begins with us often with "*What seek ye?*" but when love has its own way it is, "*Whom seek ye?*" "Woman, why weepest thou? *Whom seekest thou?*" speaks volumes. Here He says to the two disciples, "*What seek ye?*" and the answer is very beautiful, "Master, where dwellest thou?" that is, Where is the place that we can always be sure of finding you? They really wanted His company. He says, "Come and see." They abode with Him that day. There were two hours left of the day. But what was the effect of those two hours? Well, I know that if you spent two hours with Jesus, in the enjoyment of His love and His company, you would be obliged to go and get some one to share it too. Saints sometimes say they cannot preach the gospel! You could not help it if you were to spend two hours with that blessed One. If you sat under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to your taste, you would be obliged to go, you could not rest till you had got some one else to share the banquet with you.

We only notice Andrew's voice thrice in the Gospels. First, he tells Simon of Jesus; next, he informs the Lord about the "five barley loaves, and two small fishes" (John 6: 9); and lastly, he tells Jesus of the wish of the Gentiles to see Him (John 12: 21, 22). The first day he went off to get Peter. We hear very little after this of Andrew, but a great deal of Peter. Nevertheless, by-and-by, I think it will be very interesting to see the Lord's estimate of, and reward to the man who was the means of Peter's conversion. Probably he was not a great preacher, nor may you be; but he was a lover of Jesus, so brought his brother to Him. "Go, and do thou likewise." If you were the means of introducing some one to the Lord, who turned out like Peter, it would be a very wonderful day's work, though you did no more. Have you ever had two hours with Jesus? It would leave its stamp on you. I know if you had two hours with Him you would want three, and if you had three you would want four! and some one to share your joy and delight in Him.

I do not go into all the cases where the Lord attracts people to Himself. The man of the third chapter (Nicodemus) was drawn by a needy conscience; the woman of the fourth, by the aching of an empty heart; but in these and every other case it was the influence of His own Person. How blessed to see the Lord drawing hearts to Himself! That was the early part of His ministry. Towards the close of that wondrous life, God shows the other side of our subject, and He has been very careful to show it; but not till the last week of the Lord's life does it all come out.

In John 12 we have the touching scene of the supper at Bethany, "six days before the passover" (that is, the Lord's Day really, I suppose) and you get the moment when the Lord is "comforted," if I may use the expression. In the hour of His rapidly approaching sorrow, the Lord's heart — deeply feeling all that was coming — was met and ministered to by a heart long before attracted to Him. Mary is only mentioned three times. You have her first in Luke 10: Martha was busy about service, but Mary sat at His feet and heard His word. You always find her in the same posture, "at his feet." The Holy Ghost is careful to record it. In John 11 she is there again. The Lord loved her, and I conclude she knew it right well, for it says, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus." It is very sweet to know the love of Jesus — not merely His love of pity, which meets us in our needs — but the love of complacency and delight. The Old Testament is very full of it in figure. How sweet to know yourself loved by Him!

In John 11 we find Mary at the feet of the Lord in the moment of *her* sorrow. She then tasted the sweetness of *His* sympathy, and her heart got more firmly knit to Him than ever. Then when the moment of His sorrow hovered in the distance — when she saw how His death was desired by the Jews, with the intuitive perception of love (nothing is so keen-sighted as love), when the appointed supper-hour came, she brought her alabaster box of ointment and poured it on His feet. It has been well said that Mary's action was the only thing that was right and suitable at that moment. The heart that had learned the sweetness of His love, and the knowledge of His ways, alone had the mind of God for the moment. If you knew some one you loved was going to be cruelly murdered within six days, you would not make a feast. That is not the way you would express your love; so this heart that loved Him, that had heard His word, knew His fulness, and had learned His sympathy, intuitively felt the feast was out of place, but seized the opportunity of lavishing her love — her all — on the One to whom she owed everything. It was a comely act, never to be forgotten. He was alongside of her in her sorrow, she heard Him groan, and saw Him weep; now she is fitted, through affection, to be a comfort to Him in the moment of His sorrow, and to minister to His blessed heart as love alone can do, and, I am bold to say, she did the only thing that was suitable at the moment.

There was not one at that moment in the mind of God but this woman. She brings her box, and anoints the Lord with the ointment. She had kept it for His burial, but she had the sense — "If I wait till He is dead, I shall never break it over Him; the grave, out of which He took my brother, cannot hold Him." It was affection that acted so sweetly here. I do not suppose she could have told you in words why she did it. The brethren all looked down upon her. Do you think she wanted to draw the eyes of the brethren upon her, or to display her devotedness? I think, had you asked her, "Mary, why did you do that?" she would only have said, "I do not know *why*, but I just know I did it." It was the one right thing, and the Lord, as it were, throws His wing over her, and says, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached. . . this also that she hath done shall be spoken

of for a memorial of her." There will be thousands of Marys in heaven, but, of them all, one will be known as the Mary who did the right thing, in the right way, and at the right time, and it was her simple love to Jesus that prompted and wrought such a "good work." If there is one thing above another that God appreciates in this scene, it is attachment of heart to His Son. Was not her act dear to the Lord? I could not trust myself to speak of what it was to Him, but you can infer His estimate of it by the eternal and world-wide publicity He declares her act shall have.

I now pass on to another Mary (John 20). She had not the intelligence of the first Mary, but she loved the Lord. The other disciples could go to their homes; Mary Magdalene had no home in this scene but the grave of her blessed Lord. He was gone, the light of her life was gone out with His death, and the world was a vast blank. Her heart was buried in the grave of her Lord. He had died. The angels greet her with "Woman, why weepest thou?" She replies, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." She could say in the early part of the chapter to the disciples, "They have taken away *the* Lord;" now in this deep sorrow it is "*my* Lord." Was not that sweet to the ear of the Father? Nor is this all — angels in no sense detain her. Methinks many of us would have taken a good look at these angelic messengers; she turns her back on them. Nothing but Jesus can meet and fill her desolate heart. Turning her back on angels, she sees a Man, and then she hears a voice which says: "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" He alone knew how to do it, and wondrously does He touch a spring in her soul. "Tell me where thou hast laid *him*, and I will take *him* away," was her reply. Do you not think that her answer was most grateful to the heart of the Saviour? A little affection for Himself goes a long way. He loves to have the simple, unfeigned affection of our hearts.

He knew He had her heart's love, even though she loved Him dead; but it was Himself she loved. He says but one word, "Mary." It is enough. She hears the voice she has heard before; she is at His feet, and He brings out to her that wonderful unfolding of truth, the like of which was never presented to any before, as He says to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." He says to her, as it were, "You have had Me here, Mary, and lost Me; but I have a place up yonder that was always Mine; it was Mine from all eternity, but I was in it alone. Now I have come down, and died, and risen again, and I am about to return to that place of joy and rest with the Father; but I am not going back alone, I am going to share that place with others now." He stands on a new platform before God, and says, "I am going to share it with My brethren; go and tell them."

You cannot tell what a wonderful privilege it was for that woman to get that message from the Lord on that resurrection morning, and what a cheer to Him to get a heart really occupied with Himself! True, I repeat, she loved Him dead; but she loved *Him*. Was it not grateful to His heart? I believe it was deeply grateful to Him to find a heart that had not a single thing in the world but Himself. That was the first heart He met when He rose from the cold and silent tomb, and if He blessedly comforted Mary, be assured of it that her love was deeply prized by Him. Oh! to be more like her!

If the box of ointment in Bethany was like water to His thirsty spirit, and the dying thief's blessed testimony — who owned Him when all the world was against Him — was a similar cheer to His heart, was it not refreshing to Him to see, as He came alive in this cold scene once

more, a heart that could turn its back on everything in this world for love of Himself? I verily believe it was.

But things are changed now. He has gone to the Father, and He says, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father." What a wonderful thing that He should care about the love of such hearts as yours and mine! We have heard much of His love today, the Father's love, and the love of Christ. May the result be that we each more simply and truly love Him, while waiting for Him. Then we shall see His face, and rejoice for ever in His presence!