

**Sabbath School Lessons.**

November 29, 1863.

**JESUS IN THE HOUSE OF MARTHA AND MARY.**

1st. *True Christians are different in temperament and character.* Christianity does not change the temperament, it only modifies and elevates it. Like the wild plant transplanted into a garden; or as a wild olive engrafted into a good tree remain still the same species, though much improved and rendered more fruitful. The character of Martha and Mary illustrate this. Martha was, naturally active, stirring and impulsive; feeling strongly, and speaking out all she felt. Mary was always of a contemplative turn of mind, feeling deeply and saying less than she felt. Inasmuch as grace reigned in their hearts, they showed the effect of grace at different times, and in different ways. Grace intensified their different dispositions, and made them more like themselves.

Stier conjectures that one object is to supply a serviceable caution against the idea that active working charity, like that of the good Samaritan, was the only way to serve Christ, and to show that sitting still and hearing is just as useful in its season as relieving distressed people. He says, "Is not the inmost fundamental thought of the words directed to busy Martha, a warning against the tendency to an unquiet, bustling character? 'Do,' was the word of the Lord in the parable of the good Samaritan; but now He says, 'rest.'—'Do not forget the hearing in thy much doing.'"

2nd. *What a snare to our souls the cares of this world may be, if allowed to take up too much attention,* ver. 40. Martha's desire to evince her hospitality to Christ was commendable enough in certain limits; but her excessive zeal for temporal provision made her, for the time, forget the things of her soul. She was *cumbered about much serving.* Was *cumbered*—the Greek word, so translated, mean, literally,—was drawn about—distracted.

Martha was angry at her sister, and desired that the Lord should agree with her. She

broke out into open complaint—"Lord," said she, "dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone, bid her therefore that she help me? In so saying, this holy woman sadly forgot what she was, and to whom she was speaking. She brought down on herself a solemn rebuke, and was led to learn a lesson which probably made a lasting impression.

3rd. *Christ's rebuke to Martha,* ver. 41. Like a skilful physician he detects the disease, and faithfully applies the appropriate remedy. Christ reproves her for the intenseness of her care, "Thou art careful, and troubled," and for the extensiveness of it, "about many things."

4th. *What high commendation our Lord Jesus Christ pronounced on Mary's choice:*

[*That good part.*] This is a general expression, and meant to be interpreted with a reference to the conduct of Mary at the time when her sister interposed. She was choosing soul-benefit. She was seeking more grace.—She was striving after nearer and closer communion with God and His Christ. This was the portion which she preferred to everything else, and to which she was willing for a time to postpone all earthly care. Those who seek such a portion shall never be disappointed.—Their treasure shall never be taken from them.

In leaving this passage, we should be careful not to fall into the error of thinking slightly of Martha's grace, or speaking, as some do occasionally, as if the good woman had no grace at all. This is a grave error. In the day of affliction Martha's grace shone clearly and brightly. There is hardly any confession in all the four Gospels, of our Lord's office, which will compare with that which she made in the eleventh chapter of John.

**LESSONS TO LEARN.—**

1. Think of the poverty of Jesus. He had no house of his own. Matt. vii. 20. He was bearing the curse due to sin—destitution is part of that curse. 2 Cor. viii. 9; Gal. iii. 12.

2. Both Martha and Mary loved Jesus.—Each expressed her love in her own way. 'Martha received him into her own house—ministered unto him of her substance.' Mary listened to 'the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.' Wherever there is love