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Description

The simple inquiry, recorded as the first utterance of Paul to our Lord ("Lord, what wilt thou have me do?") is the duty and expression of everyone distinctly awakened to the claim Christ has on him. This inquiry cannot be too earnestly instituted, and the reply to it rigidly attended to. The inquiry is the offspring of a soul sensible that the Lord has entire and full claim on me, without the knowledge which authorises it. The soul feels "I am taken out of the world, and I am given to Christ, and hence I look to Him for my place and future occupation in it." If we are given to Christ "out of the world," it is evident that it is He alone who has the right to determine our way and course in the world.

I could not say, if I believe that I am given to Him "out of the world," that I have any right to re-occupy any place or engagement which I had previously held in the world. True, He does not require or permit me to infringe on any legal lord under whom I was held before I was given to Him. But, excepting where the rights of others would be compromised, I am Christ's bondman. Vested legal rights are not to be compromised, because of my being given to Christ. But I am Christ's bondman; and necessarily if I am, both from duty and inclination, my inquiry ought to be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

The more I own and realise the relationship between us which now exists through grace, the more simply and continuously will this be my wholehearted cry to Him. Now if it is, I will of course accede and attend to whatever He may intimate to me, and this only. That is, the heart true and devoted to Him, making this request, will wait on Him for guidance and counsel. It would find no real satisfaction in being anywhere or doing anything which was not according to His mind. Our place and our occupation here would be only determined by the pleasure of Him whose we are and whom we serve. Any departure from the tie or rule of this relationship would sensibly interfere with the mutual satisfaction therein known. There would be a break in upon, and a disturbance of, the true order of life, and the blessings connected with it.

Nothing so simple and nothing so important in our walk down here!

I belong to Christ, and I find it His pleasure and my happiness to do nothing but as He desires and instructs me. I live where He likes, and I do what He likes. If we did this, there would be no mistakes one side or the other. But we do make mistakes on both sides: on one side at one time, and on another side at another time. At one we plan out work for ourselves; and at another we do none at all.

Now the first is the most difficult to deal with, simply because the counterfeit deceives one; and hence, while it is comparatively easy to convict the Martha that she is unwisely occupied, the work seems so right and necessary, that it appears almost impossible that there could be any plan in it. Nothing so deceives and leads astray as the conscience working at a distance from Christ. For instance, if I feel in my conscience that I ought to be Christ's servant (true enough, I am His bondman); but if I am not near Him, if I am not in His confidence, and I begin to do something to satisfy my conscience, there is no doubt I am doing it legally, and not as simply suits Him. It is to make myself easy and satisfied. When this is the case, I do not consult what He would like me to do, but I do what I think best to be done. It is not His pleasure guides me; it is my own mind, as to what is suitable and proper. It may be quite necessary, as Martha's service; but Martha was evidently thinking of the services which were incumbent on her to render, and not governed by the pleasure of Christ.

Here is where we fail, undertaking to serve where it is in a degree creditable to ourselves, or we get disappointed (if we are true-hearted) because we have not the acknowledgment of His pleasure. How can He acknowledge what we have undertaken and done to satisfy our own conscience and to please ourselves therein? It is evident that when I am occupied with services (however useful and necessary, which I have undertaken of myself, feeling that they devolved upon me), that I must lose the sense of His presence. Sitting at His feet, Mary-like, is lost and neglected. There is no growth of soul up into Christ. Self is in the service from beginning to end. It is most blessed to work for Christ, it is fruit-bearing; but if my work engrosses me more than Christ, there is damage to me, and I am not working for Him. "Without Me ye can do nothing." If I am really working for Christ, and growing up into Him, sitting at His feet is the natural posture of my soul. Whenever you find anyone serving without sitting at His feet, you may be assured they are Martha-like. When any are sitting at His feet, hearing His word, they will not be behind in true and pleasing service.

If you begin with serving (as many do nowadays), you will never sit at His feet; whereas if you begin with sitting there, you will soon serve wisely, well, and acceptably. The serving quiets the conscience, and the sitting is overlooked and neglected. The enemy gains an advantage; for it is at the sitting the conscience is more enlightened, and the pleasure and mind of the Master are better known. Hence there is damage done, and loss is sustained by the soul, when service pre-occupies one to the exclusion of sitting at His feet, or where service is most prominent.

I never met with anyone making service prominent who knew what it was to sit at His feet. But, thank God, I know indefatigable workers who

enjoy sitting at His feet above any service. And it is clear that they who sit most at His feet must be competent to serve, and most in His confidence, which after all is the clue to all efficient service.
J.N.D.

6 pages – Pamphlet – Author: J. N. Darby