

MARY MAGDALENE

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“Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.”
Mark 16:9.

EXPERIMENTAL preaching, when truthful, is almost always profitable. As the Spouse of old desired to see the footsteps of the flock, so souls in distress are always happy to observe the proofs that others have trod that same pathway before. It may be, and I trust it shall be, that while we are speaking upon the life of Magdalene, and showing how the Lord was pleased to lead her up from the depths of mental distress to the heights of spiritual joy, some who may be in like circumstances may be led to hope that for them also there may be deliverance, and others who have already received like favors, may have their grateful recollections refreshed, and may be made to bless the Lord who brought them up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and has now set their feet upon a rock. We shall begin with Mary of Magdalene where God began with her, in a way of Effectual Grace.

I. Mary Magdalene furnishes us, in the first place, with A SAD INSTANCE OF SATANIC POWER.

She does not appear to have been a great sinner; it is scarcely possible, and certainly very improbable, that she could have been a transgressor in the sense in which the term “Magdalene” is generally understood. Custom has attached the title of Magdalene to those who have forfeited their good name by open sins against the Seventh Commandment. Mistaken though it is, let the name always remain as the sole treasure of fallen women, for, if we can give them one honorable designation to act as a shield, pray let them have it, for the world is cold enough and scornful enough towards such offenders. It is worthwhile, however, to declare for the honor of Mary Magdalene, that she was no Magdalene in the modern sense; it could scarcely have been so, she was probably a raving demoniac, therefore not at all likely to fall into the sins of the flesh. We are never told of her that she was a great sinner; in fact, not a word is said against her personal character; we are simply informed that she was possessed with seven devils, which is an affliction rather than a crime. I do not deny that sin may have prepared her for the Satanic possession, and was no doubt also occasioned by it, but she is not brought before us in Scripture as a transgressor, nor is she the representative of great offenders, but rather the type of a class of persons who for years are sorely vexed in heart, greatly depressed in spirit, heavily burdened with despondency, bound with chains of melancholy, subject to distracting forebodings, to alarms of coming wrath, and to an insufferable despair.

Mary Magdalene represents those who have come under the tormenting and distracting power of Satan, and whose lamp of joy is quenched in tenfold night. They are imprisoned not so much in the dens of sin as in the dungeons of sorrow, not so criminal as they are wretched, nor so depraved as they are desolate. We do not with any certainty understand the precise nature of being possessed with a devil. Holy Scripture has not been pleased to acquaint us with the philosophy of possessions, but we know what the outward symptoms were. Persons possessed with devils were unhappy; they found the gloom of the sepulcher to be their most congenial resort. They were unsocial and solitary. If they were permitted, they broke away from all those dear associations of the family circle which give half the charms to life—they delighted to wander in dry places, seeking rest and finding none—they were pictures of misery, images of woe. Such was the seven times unhappy Magdalene, for into her there had entered a complete band of devils. She was overwhelmed with seven seas of agony, loaded with seven manacles of despair, encircled with seven walls of fire. Neither day nor night afforded her rest, her brain was on fire, and her soul foamed like a boiling caldron. Miserable soul! No dove of hope brought the olive branch of peace to her forlorn spirit, she sat in the darkness and saw no light—her dwelling was in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Among all the women of Magdala there was none more wretched than she, the unhappy victim of restless and malicious demons.

Those who were possessed with these evil spirits, were defiled thereby, as well as made unhappy; for a heart cannot become a kennel for the hounds of Hell without being rendered filthy and polluted. I suppose that in addition to the natural corruptions which would be in Mary as well as in ourselves, there would be a more than human nimbleness to evil, a vivacity, an outspokenness about all her sinful propensities which only the indwelling fiend could give. Satan being within, would be sure to stir up the coals of impure thoughts and evil desires, so that the fire of sin would burn vehemently. Her inner self may have been sorely troubled with such excess of wickedness, but she was without power to dampen the furnace of her mind. She would be incessantly assaulted by unearthly profanities and hideous suggestions; not as with us, proceeding from the devil without, who is a dreaded antagonist, but from seven devils within, who had entrenched themselves upon a dreadful vantage ground. She was in that sense, no doubt, greatly polluted, although it would be difficult to say how far she was accountable for it, on account of the dislodgment of her reason. In addition to the unhappiness and the defilement occasioned by Satanic possession, these persons were frequently dangerous to others and to themselves. Sometimes, we read, they were cast into the fire, and others into water; some cut themselves with knives or sharp stones, others tore their garments in pieces, and even when bound in chains—according to the old-fashioned method of controlling lunatics—they burst their bonds. Such persons must have been very undesirable inhabitants of any house, however remote their chamber. It must frequently have been necessary to confine them apart, for in their madness they were not to be trusted; for, as is often the case, those who had been nearest and dearest to them, became the first objects of their enmity.

To give a spiritual turn to the subject, let me remark that it is one of the most dreadful things about some of those who are plunged in unbelief, that the mischief of their misery is not confined to themselves, but extends to their families and connections. Their example drips like the upas tree, with poison; they are like the clouds that gathered over Sodom, full of fiery hail; they bring sadness and sorrow wherever their influence is felt. The man who has laid in beds of spices, spreads perfume on all sides; but the man who is familiar with horrors, like one fresh from the morgue, bears all the seeds of death about him in the gloom and melancholy which he spreads abroad. To sum up much in a few words, there is no doubt that Mary Magdalene would have been considered by us to be demented—she was, practically, a maniac. Reason was unshipped, and Satan stood at the helm instead of reason, and the poor ship was hurried here and there under the guidance of demons. What a dreadful state to be in! And yet, dear Friends, though actual Satanic possession is unknown among us now, we have seen several cases extremely like it, and we know at this hour some who baffle altogether all attempts to comfort them, and make us feel that only the Good Physician can give them rest.

I remember a man of excellent character, well beloved by his family and esteemed by his neighbors, who was for 20 years enveloped in unutterable gloom. He ceased to attend the House of God, because he said it was of no use; and although always ready to help in every good word and work, yet he had an abiding conviction upon him that, personally, he had no part nor lot in this matter, and never could have. The more you talked to him, the worse he became; even prayer seemed but to excite him to more fearful despondency. In the Providence of God I was called to preach the Word in his neighborhood; he was induced to attend, and, by God's Gracious Power, under the sermon he obtained a joyful liberty. After 20 years of anguish and unrest, he ended his weary roaming at the foot of the Cross, to the amazement of his neighbors, the joy of his household, and the Glory of God. Nor did his peace of mind subside, for until the Lord gave him a happy admission into Eternal Rest, he remained a vigorous Believer, trusting and not being afraid. Others are around us for whom we earnestly pray that they also may be brought out of prison to praise the name of the Lord.

Magdalene's case was a perfectly helpless one; men could do nothing for her. All the surgery and medicine in the world would have been wasted upon her singular malady. Had it been any form of physical disease or purely mental derangement, help might have been attainable, but who is a match for the crafty and cruel fiends of the pit of Hell? No drugs can lull them to sleep, no knife can tear them from the soul. The loving friend and the skillful adviser stood equally powerless, perplexed, bewildered, dismayed. Mary was in a hopeless condition. There was nothing known by any, even the wise men of the East, of any method by which seven evil spirits could be dislodged. However expensive the remedy, her relatives would have resorted to it; but who can cope with devils? Doubtless all who knew her thought that death would be a great relief to her, and would relieve her family of wearisome anxiety and fear. Although willing to help, they could not aid in the slightest degree, and had the hourly sorrow of seeing her endure an agony which they could not

alleviate. Magdalene was the victim of Satanic influence in a most fearful form—sevenfold were the spirits which possessed her; and there are men and women nowadays who are tempted by the great enemy of souls to a most awful degree. Some of us have endured temporary seasons of frightful depression, which have qualified us to sympathize with those who are more constantly lashed by the fury of the infernal powers. We too have had our horror of great darkness. We have groaned with David, “I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. . . I am feeble and sorely broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. . . My heart pants, my strength fails me: as for the light of my eyes, it also is gone from me.”

We have been, though only for a few days or hours at a time, reduced to such an utter prostration of heart, that our soul chose strangling rather than life, for the sorrows of death compassed us, and the pains of Hell got hold upon us—we found trouble and sorrow. Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, this is no child’s play, but a thing to turn the hair gray, and plow the furrows of the brow. It is no trivial sorrow to lament with the weeping Prophet, “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger. From above has He sent fire into my bones, and it prevails against them: He has spread a net for my feet, He has turned me back: He has made me desolate and faint all the day. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by His hands: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck: He has made my strength to fall, the Lord has delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up.”

It is a sad fact that some persons continue for months and years to drink this cup of trembling. John Bunyan’s case is to the point, for he floundered in the Slough of Despond as long as any of the Pilgrims whom he has so graphically described. In his instance, those succeeding shadows, those variations of unbelief, those recurring glooms all arose from the same fruitful source of ill—Satan was afraid that he was about to lose a bond slave, and therefore awakened himself to prevent his captive’s escape. Like the city of Mansoul when besieged by the troops of Immanuel, when Diabolus was loath to leave, the Evil One barricades the doors, and strengthens the walls, so that there may be no entrance for the Word of Truth. Moreover, as we are told in the Revelation, the devil has great wrath when he knows that his time is short; and he takes care, like a bad tenant, to do all the mischief he can before he is ejected. I may be addressing some such persons here, or in later days my words may meet the eyes of poor tortured souls, O that they might find rest! It is painful in the extreme to meet with such unhappy minds, they are the great difficulty of a pastor’s work; so great indeed is the difficulty, that workers with little faith are ready to give up the task, and to leave the matter as impracticable. We have known those who have felt that they could pray no longer for their inconsolable friends: verily, Beloved, we must not yield to so heartless a suggestion! As we said the other Sabbath morning, [Sermon #789, Vol. 14, *Lingers Hastened*, preached January 12, 1868] until the gate of Hell is shut upon a man, we must not cease to pray for him; and if we see him hugging the very doorposts of damnation, we must go to the Mercy Seat and beseech the Arm of Grace to pluck him from his dangerous position. While there is life there is hope, and, although the soul is almost smothered with despair, we must not despair for it, but rather awaken ourselves to awaken the Almighty Arm. The case of the Magdalene is a mirror in which many souls wrung with anguish may see themselves.

II. Secondly, Mary Magdalene became A GLORIOUS TROPHY OF DIVINE GRACE.

She is described in the text as, “Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.” Sovereign Grace is resplendent in Mary’s history; in the first place, because this cure was *unsought by her*. Others who were sick sought the healing hand of Jesus, but no person possessed of an evil spirit ever did or ever could cry for deliverance to the Son of David: their friends might bring them, but they never came of themselves. The evil spirit drives men as far as possible away from Christ, and clamors against Jesus as a tormentor; but it never guides men into the pathway of the merciful Savior. Even thus is it with us all, and especially with desponding souls. If we are saved, it is not because we have the first motions of desire towards Christ, but because Eternal Love casts its cords around us, and draws us towards the Lord Jesus. There may be disputes about this as matter of Doctrine, but I do not believe it can be questioned as a fact in experience. All Believers unite in the song—

*“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God.”*

We all feel that, if we are converted, the Power which turned us is from above—

*“’Tis not that I did choose Thee,
For, Lord, that could not be;*

*This heart would still refuse Thee,
But You have chosen me:
You from the sin that stained me
Washed me and set me free,
And to this end ordained me,
That I should live to Thee.”*

If we have repented, our repentance was not a plant indigenous to the barren soil of our corrupt hearts—the seed of it was sown within by a gracious hand. If we have believed in Jesus, our faith was not fashioned on our own anvil, but bestowed upon us from the armory of God. Faith is as much the gift of God as Salvation itself. Brothers and Sisters, we cannot, in our own cases, do otherwise than ascribe all the Glory to Sovereign Grace. “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.” “I am found of them who sought Me not.” No sinner is beforehand with God, but God’s Preventive Grace outruns the sinner’s first desire; yes, Divine Grace comes to dead souls when as yet they are not capable of a right emotion. Mary’s case, as it illustrates this principle, may help us to see clearly the great Love with which Jesus loved us, even when we were dead in sins. Poor trembling Soul, Jesus can come to you if you cannot come to Him. If your miseries have shut *you* up, they cannot shut *Him* out. Your extremity is God’s opportunity, therefore be of good cheer.

It is most likely that Mary *resisted* the healing hand, for so it was with other demoniacs: “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God?” The devil was no sooner aware of Christ’s Presence than he began to cry out against his Conqueror. If it was not so with Mary, it certainly is so with us, and especially with the subjects of despair. How we resisted conscience! We used what means we could to strangle it, so that its cries might not alarm us. How we labored to quench the Holy Spirit! We had no heart to leave the ways of flesh-pleasing lust, we held to our iniquities as the leech to the flesh. We were willing to run all risks of Hell, and lose the glories of Heaven. We chose our delusions and hugged our destructions—we were in darkness, and we loved darkness rather than the Light of God, because our deeds were evil. Our corrupt heart was enmity against God, and was not reconciled to him, neither indeed could it be. Strange to say, despair is often voluntary, and men resolve to remain in it, being as fond of the prison as the poor wretch who after years of confinement found liberty to be a pain. Like David’s fool, we abhor all manner of meat, though dying for lack of it; we blow out the candles lest we should see the light; and we battle with the Mercy which comes to our rescue. Great Lord, what a madman a sinner is! How irrational are those who pine in despondency, and yet thrust hope away with both their hands! It is a hard task for the surgeon when his patient tears open the veins which he labors to bind up. His skill must be great if he can heal a patient who struggles in his arms, and refuses his affectionate care.

Brothers and Sisters, since in a measure, we have all acted thus, let us admire the dear Patience and precious Love which bore with our ill manners and would not let us die! How shall we magnify, sufficiently, Effectual Grace which without violating the freedom of our will, led our captivity captive, making us willing in the day of His Power? Let the highest and sweetest notes of all believing psalmody be to Omnipotent Grace, which worked in us according to the working of His Mighty Power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand. Glory be to God, though a legion of devils possessed the heart, the Power of Jesus is able to cast them out of him, yes, and to set aside the present mad unwillingness which makes the sinner despise his own mercy and hasten to his own ruin.

Those possessed with devils were healed *by a word* from Jesus. Beloved, if we have been saved, the instrument which the Holy Spirit used was the Word, either read in private or heard from the lips of God’s minister. “He sent His Word and healed them.” The Word is the living and incorruptible Seed. The ordinance of preaching can scarcely be too much prized, for “it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them who believe” “For the preaching of the Cross is to them who perish, foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the Power of God.” You who are desponding, I pray you, do not forsake the gathering of yourselves together; although despair may hang about you, still resort to the place where the Word is dispensed, and before long like that daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound for 18 years, who yet went up to the synagogue, you shall, like she was, be made whole. While the Word of God is within your reach, there may yet be a love-word for you, even for you. While earnest lips are telling out the Love of Jesus, wait with the hope that as the small rain drops upon the tender herb, Divine Grace may drop lovingly upon you. “Faith comes by hearing.” Why may it not come to you? The Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come in His Temple; He may tarry, but to every sincere seeker His coming is sure.

She was healed instantaneously, for the cures of our Lord were always such. He said, “Come out of her,” to the unclean spirits, and out came the spirits without delay; so that in a single moment, poor demoniac Mary was made to sit at Jesus’ feet in peace, and in her right mind. My Brothers and Sisters, what a change it must have been for her! Her soul had been like the Lake of Galilee when lashed with a storm—but Christ had said, “Peace, be still,” and now there was a great calm. She had been ready to tear herself and hurt others, but now she was obedient to the Master’s command, and ministered to Him with joy; she drank in the Words of Truth, and told them out to others: defiling influences were cast out of her, and she sought after holiness. Had you met her after her cure, you would not have known her to be the same woman. Those disheveled locks no longer remained to identify the maniac, and those straining eyes and that tortured brow, and all the air and bearing of a distraught one—all these were changed. She was admitted into society as a reasonable being; she was taken into the family circle as a welcome member—Jesus became her Teacher, and His Apostles her friends. What a miracle of Love! Let us entertain hope for our friends in their worst estate, that the same may happen to them. Perhaps God may permit some of His people to fall into this desperate condition, that He may exhibit illustrious instances of what conversion can do. In Heaven there is joy over a sinner’s repentance—angels do not rejoice in extraordinary conversions only, but “over one sinner that repents”; still, as far as you and I are concerned, when we sit at Church Meetings and hear of cases of conversion, the more remarkable ones give us greatest joy. When we hear of a sinner brought to Christ, or of another being comforted who had been in dreadful depression of spirit, we are all filled with wonder and delight. It sheds a luster over the Lord’s work, and acts like a tonic to our spirits, it refreshes the doubting ones, and those who have become dispirited in service, take courage and say, “We shall never doubt again, for after such an instance as this, we must believe that all things are possible with God.”

I think the Lord suffers these Magdalenes to be here and there discovered, that they may be proof to all the world that He can do whatever He wills, and that none are beyond His Power. Do I address one who is in such a state? I cannot pass on without the hope that such a troubled mind may speedily look to Jesus. Friend, He can heal you. I know the devil within you says, “You are cast out forever,” but Satan is the father of lies, therefore care not for his suggestions. Did you notice how the text declares that Jesus *cast out* the seven devils? The evil ones did not go out themselves; Magdalene did not drive them out, but *Jesus cast* them out with Force and Power. The Evil One is strong, but Christ is stronger than he, and drives him out speedily when he comes to claim dominion. “Ah,” you say, “if He ever gets the devil out of me, I will praise Him.” That’s the very reason why I think He will do it, in order that He may win your heart, and make you, as long as you live, to wonder, and adore, and admire.

III. After she had thus obtained her healing, she became AN ARDENT FOLLOWER OF CHRIST.

We are informed by Mark and by Luke, that Mary Magdalene and other holy women followed Jesus into Galilee upon His memorable preaching tour; and when He came up from Galilee to Jerusalem, we find Mary still at the head of that blessed company. I suppose that she had no family, most probably no children, and that her relatives may have come to feel as if she was not one of them at all, through her having been so long possessed. She probably possessed some small property which yielded her sufficient income for her needs. When she was restored, her friends, though exceedingly glad to hear it, might feel as if she had never been one of the family, and therefore did not wish her to return to them, especially when she had become a Christian. Everything leads us to suppose that she had no one near who claimed her personal care, and having a little income, she resolved to devote her life to listening to the Man who had delivered her from her terrible disease. A wise resolve! Happy was she to be allowed to hear His gracious Words and see His mighty deeds. She not only listened to Him, but she followed Him. Whoever might turn away, the Magdalene was always close at His side. Through floods and flames, if He was pleased to lead, she had resolved to go. In addition to this, we are told that she ministered unto Him of her substance. That bag which Judas carried, would always have been empty had it not been for this woman of Magdala, and for the wife of Herod’s steward (and perhaps Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus), but these generous hearts, knowing that the laborer is worthy of his hire, were glad to contribute of their temporal goods to Him who so greatly enriched them in spiritual things.

So Magdalene gave herself, her ears, her feet, her heart, her substance, her all to Jesus. It was not an unusual thing in the Jewish nation for great rabbis to be followed both by men and women in their tours of instruction throughout the country, so that she was not outraging the customs of her people. No doubt our Lord would have said to Mary, “Go home to your friends,” if duty required her there, but as she had no other duties to demand her attention, she was

allowed to give up all her time to sacred study and to hallowed service. Now, it is not desirable that you or I should leave our kindred and forsake our vocations, but we can nevertheless abide with Jesus as closely as the Magdalene. If we have been delivered from great sin or from great despair, should we not say in our souls, “Now, from this day I will be the constant student of Jesus Christ’s teaching. The Gospel has done so much for me, that I will seek to know all of it that can be known this side of the grave. I will pry into its mysteries, press into its spiritualities, and learn its precepts. And while I am a learner I will also be a follower. Where Christ is I will go. His example shall be Law to me. I will pray to have His Spirit. I will ask to be conformed to His Image, and what the Master was, that shall the servant be. “I will give to Him of my substance. If I can, I will give much, but if I have not much, I will give in fair proportion. I will make a system of offering to God—He shall have a set portion of all my income, and that I will put aside so that when there is a call for it, I shall not imagine that I am giving from my own purse, but I will give my Lord’s money, which has already been consecrated. Then I shall not feel as if I were giving, but as if I were only a steward, handing out what belonged to Christ.”

Where persons love little, do little, and give little, we may shrewdly suspect that they have never had much affliction of heart for their sins, and that they think they owe but very little to Divine Grace. He who has received much, if his heart is right, is sure to give much to the Lord, and to say—

*“And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great
That I would give Him all.”*

Behold and admire the difference between the poor demoniac and the faithful follower of Christ—the woman possessed with seven devils, and now the honorable Christian woman ministering unto the Lord of Angels! What cannot Grace do? No doubt, Mary of Magdala had to suffer much in thus following Christ, for all the disciples had to partake in Christ’s Cross. They were all thought to be madmen and fools in taking up with the Man of Nazareth, but we never read that Mary shrank. “From that time many went back, and walked no more with Him,” but Magdalene was true. Again we read, “Many were offended at Him because of this saying,” but we find not that the woman of Magdala was offended. She held to her Lord in holy faith. She knew the Shepherd’s Voice, and she followed Him where ever He might be pleased to lead. Happy are those who from their earliest days have been led to see their indebtedness to Christ, and are now resolved to cleave to Him, to serve Him with all their heart, and soul, and strength, to sit at His feet to catch His Words, and then to go abroad and practice what they have learned! I wish we could all attain to a high state of spirituality, that we were more strict in our obedience, more close in our communion, more consecrated in our actions. Perhaps it is because we think we have had little forgiven, or owe but little, that therefore we are such little doers and little lovers. O Holy Spirit, out of the great sinners of this wicked city, out of the midst of horrible blasphemers, or out of the midst of those who are far gone in horrible despair, call men and women who shall become enthusiasts, flaming with vehement devotion to the Lord!

IV. Magdalene appears to us farther on in Scripture as a FAITHFUL ADHERENT TO HER MASTER UNDER TRIAL.

It was a dark day for the disciples when Christ was Crucified, amid mocking and jeering enemies. We are told by Mark, that Magdalene and Mary, the wife of Cleophas, stood afar off and watched our Lord; but we are informed by John that, among others, there stood at the foot of the Cross, Mary Magdalene. I suppose that at the first, when our Lord was nailed to the tree, the disciples could not get into the inner ring, the priests and the Jews were so angry, and the Roman soldiers were so rough, that a woman, however brave, might not venture there. Therefore, as they could not do what they would, they did what they could; they stood at a distance and sobbed and sighed, until their eyes were red, and their hearts were swollen with anguish at the sad sight of Him whom they loved mocked and despised, and shamefully put to death. But by-and-by the crowd grew tired of their cruel amusement, and suddenly there was a darkness over all the land—and it may be that then these timid doves mustered courage and flew to the foot of the tree, passed unnoticed through the soldiers and the crowd, and stood at His feet, and though they could not help Him, yet they could rally round His Cross. If they could not feel the nails, and bleed as He did, yet their hearts were bleeding, and the nails went through their souls. Where was Peter? Where was James? Philip and Andrew, and Nathanael, where were they? I do not

know, but I know where Magdalene was; she was at the tree of doom there, hard by her Lord, glad to confess a persecuted Christ!

Here is the test of true love. To follow Christ in peaceful times is easy, but to follow hard after Him when He is despised and rejected of men—here is the pinch. Ah, some of you young people profess to be Christians when you are with Christian people, but will you bear it when your companions sneer at you as a cant and a hypocrite? Can you follow your Lord? Can you follow your Lord when the many turn aside? Can you witness that He has the Living Word, and none upon earth beside? Can you stand for Him when you have to suffer loss and reproach, and when His name is the drunkard's song and the fool's proverb? If you can, then blessed be the Divine Grace that has taught you to practice so hard a lesson. If there are any who can do this readily, surely they are such as once passed through the deepest waters of soul trouble.

We find Mary, lastly, at the sepulcher, viewing the place where the His body was laid, and how it was laid; and they spent the evening till the Sabbath hour approached in preparing the spices; then they rested, like devout women, upon the seventh day. It was deep love that made the Magdalene follow the corpse of the Well-Beloved right to the tomb. Of that lifeless body every limb was dear to her. He had worked so great a thing in her, that she could not but feel her heart melt at the thought of His corpse being treated with disrespect. She must see whether they laid it tenderly, whether they put it into its rest with gentleness and honor. She was first at the sepulcher, and was the first to whom Christ appeared! She was faithful to the end. She won the commendation of those of whom it is said, "He who endures to the end, the same shall be saved."

Be it yours and mine, my Brothers and Sisters, to cling to the Truth of God, even though, like Elijah, we have to say, "I, only I, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." To keep to a dead cause and an expiring Church, to cling to Christ when His cause is rolled in the mire, to be ready to be drowned with Christ, to sink with Christ, and rise with Christ—this is genuine affection. This was the Magdalene's love, and let it be ours!

Another sorrow afflicted her after the death of her Lord—it was the fact that the Lord was lost to her. She would have had some melancholy satisfaction if she could have found His body, but in the morning she came to the tomb and found it empty. The beloved body was gone. She wept as one utterly inconsolable. Angels spoke to her, but what were angels to her—she wanted *Him!* They would have cheered her, but she turned her back—she cared for nothing but her Lord. Those who can worship angels have not Magdalene's spirit, for she turned her back on them. For Christ she sighed. She must have Him or die. You and I may expect times when Jesus will be hidden from us. If we love Him much, we shall weep till we see Him again. They who can rejoice when Christ is absent, have little of His Love in their hearts, for where the beams of the Sun of Righteousness are not at the fullest, there ought to be a winter in the soul. We should sigh and cry till our Lord withdraws the veil, crying out in our hearts, "O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat!"

It is a fine point in Magdalene that she knew how to persevere. She continued to wait and to watch, and while John and Peter had gone home and could be satisfied without seeing Christ, she could not—she must see her Lord. The whole earth could not compose her mind, nor Heaven's angels give her comfort till she saw Him whom her soul loved. O Heart, are you thus hungering and thirsting after Him? You shall be well satisfied; meanwhile, count it a great honor to hunger and thirst thus, for you would not do so if you had not loved Him and received much at His hands.

V. I must conduct you one step further. This woman became ONE OF THE MOST FAVORED BEHOLDERS OF CHRIST, for while she sighed and wept, Jesus revealed Himself to her; and after this manner was the revelation—He called her by her name, "Mary."

It has always been thought to be a high distinction when God has called a man by his name. When he spoke and said, "Moses, Moses," then it was a sign that Moses had found favor in His sight. When Jesus said, "Mary," I can imagine that the word brought up all her history before her mind; her demoniac days, when her distracted mind was tossed on fiery billows; her happy days, when she sat at her Master's feet and caught His blessed words; the times when she had seen His miracles and wondered; when she had given Him of her substance, and been only too glad to minister unto Him. If we love Jesus much, and cannot be content without Him, we too may expect to hear Him in the secret of our soul, calling us by our name. He will say, "I have called you by your name: you are Mine." Then Mary Magdalene had such a manifestation of Christ's Glory as no other woman ever had. It has been beautifully remarked by one of our dear

Brothers in the ministry, that that expression, “Touch Me not,” shows to us that Mary had gone farther in communion than most of us ever think of going, because, she had drawn as near to Jesus as she might be allowed to go. Jesus said, “Touch Me not.” You and I need not be afraid of His saying *that* to us; we do not make it necessary. We are at such a distance that He has need to say, “Come near, and nearer still”; but as for Mary, her heart was so knit to Christ, that she approached so near to Him in love, that the Lord knew she could not bear any more, and that her higher joys must be reserved for a higher sphere, and therefore He bade her pause. Besides, He would have her know that He was her Lord and Master as well as her Friend. Affection must not degenerate into familiarity—Jesus must be revered as well as loved.

Very different was His dealing with Thomas. He commands him to touch. Thomas is such a weak thing, he *needs* that help, but Mary does not need it; her heart is knit to Him—it leaps for joy—and Jesus having given her as much joy as she could stand, stays her hand. Surely she was like good Mr. Walsh, who said when he was full of the Lord’s Presence, “Stop, Lord! Remember I am an earthen vessel, and if You give me more I shall die, therefore stay Your loving hand.” So was it in the case of Mary. She had very near, and dear, and close communion with her Master, because she had followed Him and kept close to Him all the days of her life.

VI. Lastly, Mary became AN HONORED MESSENGER OF CHRIST TO THE APOSTLES.

I feel it no small privilege to be the means of bearing God’s message to this congregation. It pleases me when I know that many gray-headed Believers, who know far more of experimental Truth than I can be supposed to know, have nevertheless been comforted by the message which my Master has sent to them by me. But what an honor to have a message for the Apostles! Oh, the Power of Divine Grace! Mary, once a demoniac, becomes a preacher to preachers! I dub her Doctor of Divinity indeed, for she has to instruct these mightiest of messengers in the faith.

Note the message. Did ever man preach a better sermon than this woman preached? Had ever minister a more weighty text than this Magdalene had to handle—“I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God”? Angels told of the Incarnation, but Magdalene told of the *Ascension*. She must be made to do, alone, what a company of angels had been made to do before, to proclaim another step in the Savior’s pathway to Redemption! My dear Friends, you who are so low and distressed this morning, does not this history of Magdalene make you feel like Mercy in the “*Pilgrim’s Progress*” who laughed in her sleep? Christiana said, “Why did you laugh?” She replied, “Because of my dream.” Does not it make your heart leap to think that you—*that you* may one day teach Christ to some of the greatest of His saints; that you a poor distracted wretch on the very brink of Hell, may yet see Jesus over and above what others ever see of Him, and may be able to tell angels, and principalities, and powers, what you have tasted and handled of the good Word of God? Surely this should breathe hope into you! If you have known my Master, any of you, and have been saved by Him, continue to keep close to Him.

If you have known my Master, any of you, and have been saved by Him, continue to stay close to Him. If you lose His company, sigh after it, but when you find Him again, (when He finds you again), make it your delightful business to tell His Brothers and Sisters that He has returned to you, and make their hearts glad as the Lord Jesus has made yours.

I shall leave the matter in the hands of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord raise many a Mary Magdalene in the midst of this Church, for His name’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 20:1-18.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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