

# One Thing Have I Desired

By RT Nusbaum

*"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord... and to inquire in his temple" Psalm 27:4*

The main emphasis of this verse pertains to what a man may desire. Many Christians have a myriad of desires, including finding the right job, obtaining a beautiful home, or ending up with that chosen spouse. Most people feel that they will be satisfied if they can get all these other things. But out of all the desires a person could have, David reduced his down to just one thing, which he described in Psalm 27:4: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple."

There is a reason that David had only one desire. As king, he had already experienced position, riches, wonderful living quarters and a number of wives and children, but not one of these things, nor all of them together, had brought satisfaction to this man. Though he had experienced so many wonderful things, yet the "one thing" that brought satisfaction had eluded him.

In the first four verses of this Psalm we see that David was facing adversity on every front. Even though that was the case, amazingly, he was not seeking the Lord for deliverance; he was just seeking the Lord! Even when hedged in by enemies, his one desire did not seem to change. He was not seeking to be removed from his enemies but to dwell with the Lord, beholding the Lord's beauty. According to his words, that one goal would never change, for he would seek after this all the days of his life.

We all may say that we desire only "one thing", but if we were put in the midst of attack and turmoil, I wonder how quickly our prayers would change from desiring to see the Lord to getting the Lord to deliver us. I know that most who read this booklet have some deep, burning desire at work in them also. Is it a desire for the Lord, and is that your only desire?

## Mary Found Satisfaction

Many seem satisfied simply to minister to Jesus. An example of this would be the story of the sisters Martha and Mary found in Luke 10:

*"Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Luke 10: 38-42*

People can find their souls stirred up for many things. In the case of Martha and Mary, Jesus told Martha that "one thing" is needful! How many of us really believe that only "one thing" is needful? I am afraid that though we say such things, we are not totally convinced of it. Some claim that Christ is the fullness and fulfillment of all things, and yet they are quick to judge that concept to be unbalanced when they are not offered other teachings and outlets. My belief is that no other thing is needful. I also believe that if any area of truth is to have any real meaning at all, then somehow Christ must fill it and be the fullness of the area of truth under consideration. The only way this could become a possibility is when ministers and Christians cease to study other subjects, sit down at His feet, and see Him in all things.

If we are to hold Jesus' words as true, then we must agree that though many things have value or bring us pleasure, yet only "one thing" is actually needful. Martha was troubled and concerned about "many things". Most likely not one of the things she was concerned with was sinful. Some of them were absolutely essential to the timely preparation of the meal, but what was essential to a meal and what was considered needful by the Lord were two different things. The two are not even in the same league. Remember that our Lord did not rebuke Martha because of rebellion or sin but because of the fact that she seemed unaware of the need for "one thing". She thought life was bound up in many things. She did not realize that no matter how important those things appeared, only "one thing" was truly needful.

Jesus said that Mary had chosen that good part. What was that? It was not just that she sat down to listen to Jesus' word. There had been people doing that during Jesus' ministry who constantly came and went. No, the good part that Mary had chosen was that in her heart only "one thing" had her highest and only desire – the Lord Himself. Let me make this clear: many people who had come before her had desired the Lord, but Mary, like David, had removed all other desires from the table of her heart so that Jesus was her only desire. Even though her heart was tested with enemies and trials, she, like David, still desired only "one thing".

As in the case of Martha, we may find the Lord rebuking us. Why? We are rebuked, not because we are too busy for Him or serving others. The rebuke does not come because of what we are doing but because of the state of our heart. Martha's heart was in a flurry of movement to help the Lord, but it had yet to come to that place where it was moved by only "one thing". In all that is done and accomplished by God's people, only One Thing will ultimately satisfy His heart.

### **The Rejection of the Rich Young Ruler**

A heart that has removed all other things out of the place of its first love means everything to Jesus. Just as He is to be a treasure to us, even so, such a heart is a treasure to Him. However, finding people with such a heart is more daunting than it might appear. Even among Christians there seems to be some confusion about what it is that moves the Lord. Many assume that it is some specific work that pleases Him most, and these set out to "do the right thing". Such is the case of the rich, young ruler. I am sure he had been moved by

the goodness of the Lord, and that led him to come to Jesus in the first place. We read in Zechariah 9:17, "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty". Why is it we speak more of His goodness and give it more place in our hearts than His beauty? Is it because His goodness has us in view, while His beauty has Him in view? Much of the time His goodness is related to His hands while His beauty is related to his face. Are we seeking His hands or His face?

*"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, All these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up thy cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." Mark 10:17-22*

The disciples felt that Jesus had every right to want this man to join them. He would bring in new levels of influence because he was rich, young, and a ruler. What church group would not jump at the chance to have such a person join them? But Jesus is looking for something far more valuable than this. When Jesus was with the Father, He had riches beyond what could be imagined. Old age was not a factor to Jesus, for He would never age. As far as rulership, He was king of the universe. This young man had nothing to offer Jesus that He was not vastly more acquainted with. There is only "one thing" that Jesus truly longs for that He did not have before His incarnation, and that is a people who care nothing for the trifles of this life but lovingly seek out the beauty of the Lord.

From the story, we find that the young ruler had kept all the commandments from his youth up. Who among us can claim that accomplishment? There appeared to be no flaw in the young man. Jesus, however, wanted to know what it was that this man treasured. Did he have only one love, or was he capable of being troubled about many things? The real subject here was not one of obedience or whether this man had something to offer. The question that was at hand was whittled down to only one point – love – which we see in verse 21, which says that Jesus loved him. The thing that was active in Jesus' heart when he questioned this young man was love. Jesus loved this young man and wanted to know the state of his heart in return.

But, alas, the rich young ruler did not desire only "one thing" of the Lord. Jesus was not his only treasure and his one desire. When faced with the loss of material possessions, it was found that they were great treasures to him. The Scripture says that the rich young ruler went away disappointed, and I believe that Jesus did also.

### **Paul Had Only One Thing**

From the view of Scripture, there seems to be no question as to the Lord's pleasure in His servant Paul. Why is this so? Our answer can be found in Philippians 3:13-14 where we read, *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus".*

What that "one thing" is exactly might not be immediately evident. One might assume that it only pertains to forgetting and forgiving; however, Paul goes on to make reference to the "prize of the high calling in Christ". We are not truly going to understand what this refers to and what the "one thing" that Paul desires is unless we look at the context more closely. Until we have read what has preceded this verse, we may misconstrue what the "one thing" is to which Paul refers.

*"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*

*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:7-14*

Immediately we begin to find where Paul's true treasure lies. The things that were gain to him are the things most people want to hold onto as treasure, but not to Paul; he willingly gave up all treasures. In fact, he went beyond this. In light of his true Treasure, anything else is counted as manure. In this passage, we have no difficulty finding that there was only "one thing" that he desired. He counted everything else loss just to know the Lord more fully. As with King David and Mary of Bethany, this heart is not tempted by other loves.

### **Sell All For The Treasure – Matthew 13:44**

In the case of Paul, we found that he was willing to give up everything for Jesus. When Jesus becomes the one object of your seeking, there will be a loss of other things. We see this in the case of the following parable:

*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy of it goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Matthew 13:44*

Like the rich young ruler, most people are missing the priceless treasure. He could have gotten rid of all other loves and clung to the Lord only, but he did not. The reason most do not sell all and buy the field containing this treasure is because they have never found Jesus as the Treasure. Many believers may be thankful for Jesus' saving grace, but they still consider things of the earth to be great treasure. We also treasure all of our natural abilities because they help us get by or succeed in this life. Therefore, to sell all and go after the true Treasure, which is Christ, would require us to "sell all" our abilities, desires, and ministry. The field we are to buy is the one that contains the Treasure, which is Christ. What a great Resource this is! You will no longer buy into or value the things of earth and self but sell all to gain the true Treasure.

Do you have a passion for the treasure and value Him above your chiefest joy? Does joy over that Treasure cause you to sell all to obtain it? There are those who have walked away from everything just to follow after this Treasure. Upon considering the loss of this Treasure Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:68).

"For Joy – Selleth All"

One of the accompanying attributes to a heart that is single is joy. David wrote hundreds of songs of love that proceeded out of pure joy. There is a great contrast between joy and depression when it comes to finding Christ as our only treasure. As seen in the case with the rich young ruler, to lay hold of one treasure, we must give up another. And also like the rich young ruler, many go away sorrowful. Their lives are dismal and depressed, and yet they do not seem to know why. They have not traded earth treasures for the Treasure.

For those who find Jesus as their only desire there is great joy. An example of this is the woman in Luke 15 who lost her coin. What was her immediate response after sacrificing time and energy to find the treasure again? She had fullness of joy and a desire to call her friends and communicate with them the joy she had. There is joy when you find this Treasure!

Many discover that the sacrificing of other things is nothing in light of finding Jesus as the Treasure. We find ourselves gladly giving up the things that enriched our lives before. Paul described them as the things that are gain and give confidence in the flesh. A heart that is single does not give up out of duty to the Master but out of love for the Groom. You are not just "doing the right thing"; you are joined to the One you love. His life streams to you.

Jesus is more concerned about love that flows from the heart than the carrying out of our duty. His resurrection words to Peter were, "Do you love me?" This shows not a concern for ministry, but for the heart of those who minister. The Great Treasure cries out to those to whom He offers Himself and says, "How much am I worth to you?" Such was the case when Jesus was invited to eat in the house of Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7:36. There was plenty of food, and I am sure it tasted good, but Jesus was looking for something else: *"Thou gave me no water for my feet... thou gavest me no kiss"* (see Lk. 7:44-45). In this story, Simon's treatment of Jesus is contrasted with the woman who concentrated her love on Him and poured it out. Apparently acts of personal love and care for Jesus are more important to Him than material blessings.

### **When The Heart Turns To The Lord**

We saw how the rich young ruler was obedient and dutiful before coming face to face with the Treasure. Apparently he already had lived a life of duty and faith before ever meeting Jesus and therefore without His help. But believing in God is no great thing, for the Scriptures say that even the devil believes there is a God. The rich young ruler obeyed the Lord on every point of the law. The highest calling in most religions of the world is belief in its system of doctrines, worship, and obedience. Issues of belief, duty, obedience, etc. are all important, but they miss the "one thing". That "one thing" was presented in the very first commandment. The greatest commandment, all by itself, fulfills the whole Law. And what is

that commandment? It is to love the Lord thy God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. It is not just the greatest commandment but the greatest desire of the heart of God.

It is sad how much of Christianity is given to "many things". They are not sinful or even selfish things per se, but the hearts of so many believers have never really turned to the Lord. I realize that we turned to the Lord when we needed salvation and that we also regularly turn to the Lord for daily needs, but I am not speaking of turning to the Lord for something. I speak of a heart that has turned away from all other treasures and loves, not out of duty or requirement, but because it has finally found its Treasure. When the heart of man sees Jesus' worth and beauty, everything else is easily given up. In many cases the person may be unaware that they are turning from anything, because in his heart he is only turning unto Someone. However, many are not prepared to be detached from earthly things so as to be simply here for Christ. But when we sit under His shadow with great delight, everything else becomes so small and loses its hold upon our hearts.

To obtain Jesus as our one desire is not a simple matter of prioritizing our lives. If there is only "one thing" filling your mind and heart, then prioritizing is not an issue. It takes more than one thing having importance to put them in proper order. The shame is that the Martha's whom the Lord loves so deeply will probably see a booklet such as this as a clarion call to try to make Jesus first. But people such as David, Mary, and Paul already have only "one thing". They do not need instruction in this area. If you have to talk someone into it, then the desire probably was not there in the first place. It is to people such as Martha and the rich young ruler that Jesus must say, "One thing is needful," or "One thing thou lackest". To those who do not have it in their heart, you can allude to this "one thing", but you can never fully explain it. That is the something that a booklet such as this cannot do. Hopefully, this booklet will encourage and bless those who have a heart like David. One would also hope that it might awaken the deep recesses of love that lie in the heart of one who is like the Shulamite in the Song of Solomon, where she is stirred from her slumber and goes after her Beloved.