

# Do What You Can

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

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*Robert Murray M'Cheyne encourages believers to actively express their faith through love, holiness, and service to others in his sermon 'Do What You Can'.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 5:4, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 25:40, Luke 6:38, John 11:2, 2 Corinthians 9:8, Galatians 5:22-23, Philippians 4:19, James 1:27, 1 Peter 4:13

**Topics:** "Active Faith", "Service to Christ"

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## Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne emphasizes the importance of active faith through the example of Mary, sister of Lazarus, who not only sat at Jesus' feet but also took action by anointing Him with costly ointment. He urges believers to express their love for Christ through their actions, live holy lives, and seek the salvation of others, reminding them that true faith produces fruit. M'Cheyne challenges the congregation to do what they can for Christ, whether it be through prayer, service, or sharing the Gospel, and highlights that Christ has done everything for us, thus we should respond in kind. He also addresses objections to serving, affirming that everyone, regardless of their situation, can contribute to God's work. Ultimately, he reassures that Christ will reward our efforts and that a devoted life is the true mark of a Christian.

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## Transcript

FROM THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 11:2, we learn that this woman was Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. We have already learned that she was an eminent believer: "She sat at the feet of Jesus, and heard His word." Jesus Himself said of her: "Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Now it is interesting to see this same Mary eminent in another way, --not only as a contemplative believer, but as an active believer.

Many seem to think that to be a believer is to have certain feelings and experiences; forgetting all the time that these are but the flowers, and that the fruit must follow. The engrafting of the branch is good, the inflowing of the sap good, but the fruit is the end in view. So faith is good, and peace and joy are good, but holy fruit is the end for which we are saved.

I trust many of you, last Sabbath, were like Mary, sitting at the Redeemer's feet, and hearing His word. Now I would persuade you to be like Mary, in doing what you can for Christ. If you have been bought with a price, then glorify God in your body and spirit, which are His. I beseech you by the mercies of God.

These are things which we can do.

We could love Christ, pray and praise more. --What this woman did she did to Christ. Jesus had saved her soul, had saved her brother and sister, and she felt that she could not do too much for Him. She brought an alabaster box of ointment, very costly, and brake the box, and poured it on His head. No doubt she loved His disciples--holy John and frank Peter--yet still she loved Christ more. No doubt she loved Christ's poor, and was often kind to them; yet she loved Jesus more. On His blessed head, that was so soon to be crowned with thorns--on His blessed feet, that were so soon to be pierced with nails--she poured the precious ointment. This is what we should do. If we have been saved by Christ, we should pour out our best affections on Him. It is well to love His disciples, well to love His ministers, well to love His poor, but it is best to love Himself. We cannot now reach His blessed head, nor anoint His holy feet; but we can fall down at His footstool, and pour out our affections towards Him. It was not the ointment Jesus cared for --what does the King of Glory care for a little ointment?--but it is the loving heart, poured out upon His feet; it is the adoration, praise, love, and prayers of a believer's broken heart, that Christ cares for. The new heart is the alabaster box that Jesus loves.

We could live holier lives.--The Church is thus described in the Song of Solomon: "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" The holiness of the believer is like the most precious perfume. When a holy believer goes through the world, filled with the Spirit, made more than conqueror, the fragrance fills the room; "'tis as if an angel shook his wings." If the world were full of believers, it would be like a bed of spices; but oh, how few believers carry much of the odour of heaven along with them! How many you might be the means of saving, if you lived a holy, consistent life--if you were evidently a sacrifice bound upon God's altar! Wives might thus, without the word, win their husbands, when they see your chaste conversation coupled with fear; parents might in this way save their children, when they saw you holy and happy; children have often thus saved their parents. Servants, adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things; let your light shine before men. The poorest can do this as well as the richest, the youngest as well as the oldest. Oh, there is no argument like a holy life!

You could seek the salvation of others.--If you have really been brought to Christ and saved, then you know there is a hell--you know that all the unconverted around you are hastening to it; you know there is a Saviour, and that He is stretching out His hands all the day long to sinners. Could you do no more to save sinners than you do? Do you do all you can? You say you pray for them; but is it not hypocrisy to pray and do nothing? Will God hear these prayers? Have you no fears that prayers without labours are only provoking God? You say you cannot speak, you are not learned. Will that excuse stand in the judgment? Does it require much learning to tell fellow-sinners that they are perishing? If their house was on fire, would it require much learning to wake the sleepers?

Begin at home.--Could you not do more for the salvation of those at home? If there are children or servants, have you done all you can for them? Have you done all you can to bring the truth before them, to bring them under a living ministry, to get them to pray and give up sin?

Do you do what you can for your neighbours? Can you pass your neighbours for years together, and see them on the broad way, without warning them? Do you make a full use of tracts, giving suitable ones to those that need them? Do you persuade Sabbath-breakers to go to the house of God? Do you do anything in Sabbath schools? Could you not tell little children the way to be saved? Do you do what you can for the world? The field is the world.

Feed Christ's poor.--I am far from thinking that the wicked poor should be passed over, but Christ's poor are our brothers and sisters. Do you do what you can for them? In the great day, Christ will say to those on His right hand, "Come ye blessed, for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat." They stand in the place of Christ. Christ does not any more stand in need of Mary's ointment, or Martha's hospitality, or the Samaritan's drink of water. He is beyond the reach of these things, and will never need them more; but He has left many of His brothers and sisters behind in this world, some diseased, some lame, some like Lazarus all covered with sores; and He says, What ye do to them, ye do to me. Do you live plainly, in order to have more to give away? Do you put away vain and gaudy clothes, that you may be able to clothe the naked? Are you thrifty in managing what you have, letting nothing be lost?

Reasons why we should do what we can.

Christ has done what He could for us.--"What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?" (Isa. 5:4). He thought nothing too much to do and to suffer for us. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Greater love than this hath no man. All his life, between the manger at Bethlehem and the cross of Calvary, was spent in labours and infinite sufferings for us. All that we needed to suffer, He suffered; all that we need to obey, He obeyed. All His life in glory He spends for us. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He is head over all things for us; makes everything in all worlds work together for our good. It is all but incredible that each person of the Godhead has made Himself over to us to be ours. The Father says, "I am thy God"; the Son, "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee"; the Holy Ghost makes us a temple: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them." Is it much that we should do all we can for Him--that we should give ourselves up to Him who gave Himself for us?

Satan does all he can.--Sometimes he comes as a lion--your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; sometimes as a serpent--"as the serpent beguiled Eve"; sometimes as an angel of light. He does all he can to tempt and beguile the saints, leading them away by false teachers, injecting blasphemies and polluted thoughts into their minds, casting fiery darts at their souls, stirring up the world to hate and persecute them, stirring up father and mother against the children, and brother against brother. He does all he can to lead captive wicked men, blinding their minds, not allowing them to listen to the gospel, steeping them in swinish lusts, leading them into despair. When he knows his time is short, he rages all the more. Oh, should not we do all we can, if Satan does all he can?

We have done all we could the other way.--This was one of Paul's great motives for doing all he could: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord for putting me into the ministry; for I was a blasphemer, and persecutor, and injurious." He never could forget how he had persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it; and this made him as diligent in building it up, and haling men and women to Christ. He preached the faith which once he destroyed. So with Peter.: "Let us live the rest of our time in the flesh not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God; for the time past of our lives may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." So with John Newton: "How can the old African blasphemer be silent?" So with many of you: you ran greedily after sin; you were at great pains and cost, and did not spare health, or money, or time, to obtain some sinful gratification. How can you now grudge anything for Christ? Only serve Christ as zealously as you once served the devil.

Christ will own and reward what we do.--The labour that Christ blesseth is believing labour. It is not words of human wisdom, but words of faith, that God makes arrows. The word of a little maid was blessed in the house of Naaman the Syrian. "Follow me" was made the arrow to pierce the heart of Matthew. It is all one

to God to save, whether with many, or with them that have no might. If you would do all you can, the town would be filled with the fragrance. Christ will reward it. He defended Mary's work of love, and said it should be spoken of over all the world, and it will yet be told in the judgment. A cup of cold water He will not pass over. "Well done, good and faithful servant."

If you do not do all you can, how can you prove yourself a Christian?--"Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." You are greatly mistaken if you think that to be a Christian is merely to have certain views, and convictions, and spiritual delights. This is all well; but if it leads not to a devoted life, I fear it is all a delusion. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

Let us answer objections.

The world will mock at us.--Ans. This is true. They mocked at Mary; they called it waste and extravagance; and yet, Christ said it was well done. So, if you do what you can, the world will laugh at you, but you will have the smile of Christ. They mocked at Christ when He was full of zeal; they said He was mad and had a devil. They mocked at Paul, and said he was mad; and so with all Christ's living members. "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ,," "If ye suffer with Him, ye shall also reign with Him."

What can I do?--I am a woman.--Mary was a woman, yet she did what she could. Mary Magdalene was a woman, and yet she was first at the sepulchre. Phebe was a woman, yet a succourer of many, and of Paul also. Dorcas was a woman, yet she made coats and garments for the poor at Joppa. I am a child.--Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God perfects praise. God has often used children in the conversion of their parents.

I have too little grace to do good.--"He that watereth others, shall be watered himself." "The liberal soul shall be made fat." "It pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell." There is a full supply of the Spirit to teach you to pray; a full supply of grace to slay your sins and quicken your graces. If you use opportunities of speaking to others, God will give you plenty. If you give much to God's poor, you shall never want a rich supply. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." "Bring all the tithes unto My storehouse, and prove me now herewith." "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."

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