

WHEN YOU HAVE LOST A LOVED ONE, REMEMBER JOHN 11
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"When he (Jesus) had heard therefore that he (Lazarus) was sick he abode two days still in the same place where he was." The home in Bethany was strangely silent. Lazarus was dead, and his sisters were devastated. The laughter known during the visits of Jesus had disappeared. Martha, who was an excellent cook, had no desire to remain in her kitchen. Everything had changed. She and her sister had nursed their ailing brother and toward the end of his illness sent an urgent appeal for assistance to Jesus.

Alas! They now believed their request had fallen upon deaf ears. Their Friend was not interested. He had remained two days doing things which could have been postponed! Now it was too late to do anything. Their brother had been buried, and life in the home seemed meaningless. It was difficult to decide which was worse—that Lazarus had died or that Jesus had let them down. Their outlook was intensely bleak, and probably Martha and Mary would have disagreed if someone suggested the sun would shine again.

Let us not blame them. They had watched the sufferings of their brother and had prayed earnestly that God would spare him. Their prayers had remained unanswered, and apparently even Jesus did not care. Such circumstances challenge the faith of even the greatest Christians. Inevitably the question arose, "Why did God allow this to happen to us?" It should always be remembered that shadows are caused by light—there are no shadows in darkness. Even stars reflect the light of the sun, and although storms may temporarily hide it, the sun is always shining.

God's Profound Patience

When Mary and Martha believed the Lord had insufficient interest to respond to their desperate plea for help, He also was troubled. He could never forget His friends, but much more was at stake than the extension of a man's life. Good photographs are only developed in darkness. Jesus was waiting for gloom to envelop His dearest friends in order to produce within their souls His likeness. They were waiting for Him, and He was waiting for them

42

God's Prepared Plan

When Jesus eventually arrived in Bethany, Martha went to meet him and said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee" (John 11:21-22). The subsequent Scriptures reveal that her faith related to events of the last day. Jesus was more concerned that she understood the significance of what was to happen that day. His followers had recognized Him to be a wonderful Friend, a tremendous Teacher, and even a possible Messiah. None, however, believed Him to be God's Son. The raising of a dead man was nothing compared with opening their blind eyes.

Gods Prepared Place

Christ knew what He intended to do. Lazarus would soon be home again, but there was much more at stake than performing a miracle. Lazarus would eventually die again, and there would be no earthly healer to whom a message for help could be despatched. If people believed Him to be the Son of God, then just as easily as He brought Lazarus back to be with them in Bethany, He could also

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guarantee his presence in heaven. The happiness of those bereaved sisters did not depend on the immediate resurrection of their brother, but on their increasing understanding of the greatness of their Friend, Jesus of Nazareth. This truth was enunciated when a little later Jesus said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

God's Perfect Peace

It is easy to hear the Lord saying, "Mary, if you are still alive when your brother dies again, do not grieve. Stand by his grave and say exultantly, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'" (1 Cor. 15:55). When the women understood His message, the sun was shining again! God's ways are not always our ways, but His ways are always best. If darkness surrounds you now, be of good cheer. It will pass!

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