

"THE DISCIPLE IS NOT ABOVE HIS MASTER"

"The Disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." Matthew 10:24-25.

Our Lord spoke these words to His disciples whom He was sending forth to witness for Him in a hostile world. He did not leave them in the dark regarding the persecution which they would be called upon to encounter and endure for His sake. He warned them that their efforts to testify for Him by word and by life would result in them having to face persecution. He also told them how they should react to persecution.

It is very obvious that in expressing the relationship which existed between the Twelve and Himself that our Lord used two figures, namely, disciple and Master, and servant and Lord. The disciple is a learner, and the servant is the one who is faithful in carrying out the will of the Lord. If the Twelve were to take their proper places, it was necessary for them to sit at Christ's feet and learn from His instructions. After learning what their duties were, they were obligated to serve Him faithfully.

Christ is not only our Saviour and Friend, but He is also our Master and Lord. Therefore, we need not expect better treatment than that which was meted out to Him. One is our Master, even Christ. His life is our ideal. Spirituality is not a vague abstraction, but it is a growing conformity to Christ. Years of intimate and loving fellowship with Him will reflect themselves in our Christlikeness. If our Saviour was burdened, and misunderstood, and sometimes sorrowful, we should not complain when we are called upon to endure such dark and trying experiences. It is enough that we should be like Him. The highest praise that can be given to any man is that others, who really know him, should refer to him as being Christlike. That is the noblest ideal in the world.

The path which God the Father chose for Christ to follow was not easy. It certainly was not strewn with the favors of men. He was not applauded by the world. He suffered, and left us an example to follow. He had to go to Gethsemane and to Calvary. Some have counted the cost of being Christians, and then have not been willing to pay the price. Others have professed to be Christians without counting the cost, and then, when temptation, opposition, suffering, persecution and seeming defeat have come, they have been terribly disappointed and soon proved themselves to be very unfaithful. Christ has never deceived any whom He has called to be His disciples. He has told them very plainly: "In the world ye shall have tribulation."

Christ never promised His followers that they would have freedom from trouble. Rather, He pointed out to them that they would be in the midst of adverse situations quite frequently. However, it is well for us to remember that tribulation tends to cultivate and build strength of character. Somehow, it brings us closer to God.

I. Our Master Was Poor.

When He was born, the best door that opened to Him was a stable door, the best bed afforded Him was a litter of straw, and He was wrapped in the swaddling clothes of poverty. He lived in Nazareth which was noted for its poverty. There He earned His living as a carpenter by the sweat of His brow. Christ did not ride in a chariot, but He walked His weary way, footsore o'er the flints of Galilee. He did not have a place to lay His head. After watching the fox as it hurried to its burrow and the fowl as it went to its resting place, He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to

lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). He did not live in luxury; He did not accumulate wealth; He was not a moneygrabber at all costs. Our Master was a worker, one of life's toilers. He is the worker's friend. If we could get workers to see that He is their friend and advocate, they would not reject Him.

Even though He made the earth, and it was therefore His by right of creation, Christ did not even own a cemetery lot. After His death, He was wrapped in a borrowed shroud. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. What a shame that the Son of God should be buried in a borrowed tomb!

We should remind ourselves that we are called to follow the One Who was poor in material things though rich in spiritual things. Paul said, "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace" (I Corinthians 4:11). When we think of the sacrifice of Christ and of the sufferings of the early Christians, we are embarrassed by our poor discipleship. Mighty things could be done if all Christians gave and sacrificed as did the followers of Christ in the first century. There is entirely too much worldliness among those who profess to be orthodox in their beliefs.

II. Our Master Was Weary.

Even though Christ was incarnated for man's redemption, He was weary frequently. In John 4:6 we read, "Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well." "Being wearied" means to be tired, to be fatigued. He had toiled so much that He was exhausted. We cannot read and believe these words without seeing our Lord's self-chosen limitations, His true humanity. He was not playacting at Jacob's well. He wasn't pretending to be weary. He really was tired. Have you ever felt literally exhausted? The Master felt that way, so He can sympathize with us. He knows all about the strains and stresses of life, and He can help. Have you ever done without anything for the sake of Christ? Have you ever sacrificed anything in order that the kingdom of our Lord might be extended? Salvation is free to the one who receives it, but real service for Christ costs. True servants of Christ have times of great exhaustion in the Lord's work. Even Christ was so weary once that He fell fast asleep, with His head on a pillow of wood in a fishing boat. As He was traveling to Calvary, He became so weary and exhausted that His cross was transferred to the shoulder of Simon of Cyrene. There were various times when He was utterly exhausted. He has told us that it is enough for us to be like Him.

III. Our Master Was Misunderstood.

Christ breathed the pestilent atmosphere of misunderstanding most of the time. He was misunderstood when He wrought so many of His deeds of mercy. When He healed the blind and dumb fellow who was possessed of a demon, by casting out the demon and giving him the senses of sight and speech, the Pharisees claimed that He performed that miracle through the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. Christ was also misunderstood when He was hanging on the cross.

When we are misunderstood, we should remember that Christ said, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Matthew 10:24-25). To be misunderstood is always very bitter. Nothing so adds to the joy of spiritual service as to be certain that it is appreciated. Appreciation is always a spur to more devoted toil. But to toil on, as many have to do, misunderstood even by those whom they love, is one of the heaviest crosses in the world. That sort of thing quickly sours the milk of human kindness.

IV. Our Master Was Tempted.

Our Lord was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Temptation swept the whole field of His life, but He never succumbed to it. The sinless Christ was subjected to temptations far more subtle, far more powerful, and far more difficult to overcome than any through which we are called upon to pass. His sinlessness did not mean that His temptations were unreal and weak. Satan used his strongest weapons against Christ, and did it repeatedly, but he failed every time.

Temptation is the common experience of every disciple of Christ. We ought not expect to fare better than He did. Not all are tempted in the same way, but all are tempted in some way. We must face temptations in the power of the Holy Spirit and overcome them. The pathway of true Christian discipleship runs through the valley of testing, the jungles of temptation, and the sunless gorge of sorrow and loss, but all the way there is the fellowship of the living Christ. He taught His disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." So, let us not yield to temptation!

V. Our Master Was Sorrowful.

Christ was the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Of Him Isaiah said, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isaiah 53:3). In Gethsemane He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38). His soul was encompassed with sorrow. It was very sad or deeply grieved. He was overwhelmed with distress. Judas was to betray Him; Peter was to deny Him; the rest of the disciples were to forsake Him; He was to be subjected to a mock trial; He was to be denied common justice; He was to be crucified; He was to bear the sin of the world; and above all He was to suffer the separation from the Father's face. He suffered as no one else ever did. He suffered because He was rejected by those who should have accepted Him, because His message was rejected, because His offers of love and mercy were refused, because His own disciples did not understand Him, and because He was to bear the penalty of the sins of others. We sometimes forget that we are called into fellowship with a suffering Redeemer, that we are to follow a rejected Saviour. Paul said, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29). The passion of the great apostle was that he might know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. He was always facing death for Christ's sake, but at the same time he knew more and more of the risen life of Christ in him. If we have to suffer for Christ, we should remember that He suffered, that others are suffering for Him today, and that our light affliction is for a limited time only, and it works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

VI. Our Master Was Hated.

Our Lord said, "They hated me without a cause" (John 15:25). To His own brothers, who did not believe on Him, He said, "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil" (John 7:7). In His farewell address to His disciples He said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). By the world here is meant that which has no room for Christ. Too often we court its favor instead of declaring that it is evil. The Christian is in the world, but he is not of it. He does not follow its fashions, believe its philosophy, approve its evil ways, seek its approbation or accept its false standards. The world hates the Christian because he loves Christ, who is opposed to the world, and because He says that it is doomed.

God's judgment is sure to fall on all that is opposed to His Word and His Son Jesus Christ. If we bring the world into the church, and, if we say nothing against the sins which abound in it, the world will not hate us. But, if we love Christ, bow to the authority of His Word, preach His message and seek to do His will, then the world will not smile upon us.

VII. Our Master Was Persecuted.

To His disciples our Lord said, "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). Christ also said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). Some are being persecuted today because they firmly believe the fundamental truths of the Word of God. Let us pray for them! If we were more loyal to Christ, and less conformed to the world, we would experience more opposition. If persecution came, would you stand firm? Are you following Christ closely, or only afar off?

Ever remember, "the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord;" therefore, the Christian need never expect to fare any better than his Lord. You are not better than our Lord. Since He had to endure hardship and persecution, you should never expect to be borne to glory on flowery beds of ease. It is enough when and if the disciple is as his Master, and the servant is as his Lord.