

SERVANT NOT ABOVE 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 into a hostile world to be His witnesses. He warned them that they would be persecuted and then told them how to react to persecution.

Christ is not only our Saviour and Friend, but He is also our Master and Lord. 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; it is growing conformity to Him. If He was burdened, and misunderstood, and sometimes sorrowful even unto death, we must not quarrel with such dark experiences. It is enough that we should be like Him. The highest praise that can be given to any man is that others, knowing him, should call him Christlike. That is the noblest ideal in the world.

The pathway of the will of God for Christ was not easy; it was not strewn with the favors of men. He was not applauded by the world. He had to go to Gethsemane and Calvary. He suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. Some have counted the cost of being Christians, and they 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 disappointed and failed to be faithful. In calling us to be His disciples, Christ Jesus does not deceive us. He says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation."

Christ never promised His disciples freedom from trouble. Rather, He pointed out to them that they would be in the midst of adverse situations quite frequently. The tendency of tribulation is to form strength of character. Somehow, it brings us closer to God.

I. Our Master Was Poor.

So, the servant need not expect to fare any better. Christ 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 was born in a stable and laid in a manger. He worked at a carpenter's bench. He died on a cross and was buried in a borrowed tomb. 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.

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 dwelling-place" (I Corinthians 4:11). He also said, "As poor, yet making many rich." When we think of the sacrifice of Christ and of the suffering of the early Christians, we should be ashamed of our discipleship. Mighty things could be done if all Christians suffered, sacrificed and gave to the Lord's work. There is entirely too much worldliness among those who profess to be orthodox in theology.

II. Our Master Was Weary.

Even though Christ was incarnated for man's redemption, He was really weary. In John 4:6 we read, "Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well." The word means to be tired, to be fatigued. He had toiled so much that He was exhausted. We cannot read these words and believe them 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 like that, and He can sympathize. 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 Christian service costs.

III. 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.

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 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 testifying of it 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 it is doomed. God's judgment is sure to fall on all that is opposed to His Word and His 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.

VI. 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 know more about opposition. If persecution came, would you stand firm? Are you following Christ closely, or only afar off?

Ever remember, that the servant is not above the master; therefore, the Christian need never expect to fare any better than his Lord.