

# DIDASKALOS

## TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

### ARE YOU IMITATING YOUR TEACHER?



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"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.

**W**e have all been to school more or less. We all remember some of our teachers. We have all learned something from our teachers whether we liked it or not, or whether we agreed to its truth or not. Do you resemble your teacher? Do you believe what you have been taught? Are you still following those things that you learned in school?

The words of our text were often on the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ. Like other teachers, He too has His favorite saying, the light of which He wanted to flash into many dark places. One of His sayings when He taught was, "To him that hath shall be given." We have a similar saying now in our study of this text in Matthew.

Several other of our Lord's messages, which are repeated more than once in the gospels, have too hastily been sometimes assumed to have been introduced erroneously by the writer in varying connections. This half-proverb occurs four times in this gospel, and in three different connections, pointing to three different subjects. Here, and once in John's gospel in chapter 15, it is used to enforce the lesson of the oneness of Christ and His disciples in their relation to the world, and that His servants cannot expect to be better off than the Master was.

"If they have called Me Beelzebub they will not call you anything else." In Luke 6:40 it is used to illustrate the principle that the scholar cannot expect to be wiser than his master, that a blind teacher will have blind pupils, and that they will both fall into the ditch. Of course the scholar may get beyond his master, and will not be his scholar any longer as long as he is a scholar. The best

that can happen to him, and that will not often happen, is to be on the level of his teacher.

Then in another passage in John 13:16, the saying is used in reference to different subjects to teach the meaning of the symbolic foot washing, and to enforce the exhortation to imitate Jesus Christ, as generally in conduct, so specially in His wondrous humility. "The servant is not greater than his lord. I have let you an example that ye should do as I have done to you."

If we put these three instances together we get a threefold illustration of the relation between the student and the teacher in respect to wisdom, conduct, and reception by the world. These three, with their bearing on the relation between Christian students, and Jesus Christ our Teacher, will open out large fields of duty and of privilege.

The very center of Christianity is discipleship (students), and the very highest hope, as well as the most imperative command which the gospel brings to me is "be like Him whom you profess to have taken as your Master. Be like Him here, and you shall be like Him hereafter, for sure."

**The first teacher-student relation that we will study is likeness to our Teacher in wisdom, which is the student's perfection.** "If the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch." "The disciple, student, is not greater than his master, teacher." It is enough for the disciple that the best that can happen to the scholar is to tread in his teacher's footsteps, to see with his eyes, to absorb his wisdom, to learn his truth.

We may apply it in two opposite directions. First, it teaches us that the limitations, and the misery and the folly of taking men for our masters, and then, on the other hand, it teaches us the large hope, the cleansing,

freedom, and joy of having Christ for our Master, for our Teacher.

The word "disciple" in the original Greek language of the New Testament (MATHETES) means "student or taught one, one who has sat under a teacher." The word for teacher is DIDASKALOS, i.e., pastor. First we look at the principle as bearing upon the relation of student or disciple, and a human teacher.

All such teachers have their limitations. Each man has his little circle of favorite ideas that he is perpetually reiterating. In fact, it seems as if one truth was about as much as one teacher could manage, and as if, whensoever God has any great Truth to give to the world, He had to take one man, and make him its sole apostle. So that teachers become mere fragments, and to listen to them is to dwarf and narrow oneself.

The chances are that no scholar shall be on his master's level. The eyes that see Truth directly and for themselves in this world are very few. Most men have to take Truth at second hand, and few indeed are they who, like a perfect medium, receive even the fragmentary Truth that human lips can compare to them, and transmit it as pure as they receive it. Disciples present exaggerations, caricatures, misconceptions, the limitations of the master becoming even more rigid in the pupil.

Schools spring up which push the founder's teaching to extremes, and draw conclusions from it which he never dreamed of. Instead of a fresh voice, we have echoes, which like all echoes, give only a syllable or two out of a sentence.

Teachers can tell what they see, but they cannot give their followers eyes, and so the followers can do little more than repeat what their leader said he saw. They are like the little suckers that spring up from the "stool" of a cut down tree. They are like the kingliest, among whose feebler hands the great empire of an Alexander was divided at his death. It is a dwarfing thing to call any man master upon this Earth.

Yet man will give to a man the credence which they refuse to give to Christ. The followers of some of the fashionable teachers of today, protest in the name of mental independence, against accepting Christ as the absolute Teacher of Christianity, and they go away and put a man in the very place which they gave denied to Christ, and swallow down his "diet" whole. **Such facts show how the soul craves a teacher, how discipleship is ingrained in our souls, how we all long for some one who will come to us authoritatively and say "Here is truth, believe it, and live on it."**

Yet it is fatal to pin one's faith on any, and it is miserable to have to change guides perpetually, and to feel that we have outgrown those whom we reverence, and that we can look down on the height which once seemed to touch the stars. And if we cut ourselves loose from all men's teaching, the isolation is dreary, and few of us are strong enough of arm, or clear enough of sight, to force, or find the path through the tangled jungles of error.

So take this thought, that the highest hope of a disciple, pupil, learner, is to be like the master, the teacher, in wisdom. In its bearing in the relation between us and Christ, look how it then flashes up into blessedness and GRACE and beauty. Such a Teacher as we have in Christ has no limitations, and it is safe to follow Him absolutely, and Him alone. All others have plainly borne the impress of their age, of their nation, or their idiosyncrasy in some way or another. Christ Jesus is the only Teacher, "DIDASKALOS," that the world has ever heard of, in whose teaching there is no mark of age or generation or set of circumstances in which it originated.

This water does not taste of any soil through which it has passed. It has come straight down from Heaven, and is pure and uncontaminated as the Heaven from which it has come. Wisdom from above is first pure. This Teacher is safe to listen to absolutely. There are no limitations there. You never hear Him arguing. There is no sign about His Words as if He had dug out for

Himself the wisdom that He is proclaiming, or had ever seen it less distinctly than He sees it the moment.

Christ's teaching is that He does not reason, but declares that His, "Verily, verily" is the confirmation of all His messages. His teaching is Himself, Other men bring lessons about truth, He says, "I am the Truth." Other teachers keep their personality in the background. He crashes His down in the foreground. "This is life eternal, that ye should believe on Me." This Teacher of ours has His message level to all minds, high and low, wise and foolish, cultivated and rude.

This Teacher of ours does not impart wisdom by words as from without, though He does that too, but He comes into men's spirits, and communicates Himself, and so makes them wise. Other teachers fumble at the outside, but "In the hidden parts He makes me to know wisdom."

In following Christ as our Absolute DIDASKALOS, there is no sacrifice of independence or freedom of mind. But listening to Him is the way to secure these in their highest degree.

We are set from men, we are growingly delivered from errors, and misconceptions, in the measure in which we keep close to Christ as our Master. The Lord is the Teacher, and where the "Spirit of the Lord is, there and there only is liberty," freedom from self, from the dominion of popular opinion, from the coterie speech of schools, from the imposing authority of individuals, and from all that makes cowardly men sit as other people sat, and fall in with the majority. Freedom from our own prejudices, and our own errors, are cleared away when we take Christ for our Teacher, and cleave to Him as Master, Teacher. "We need that no man teach us."

"Christ will set you free, and you will be free indeed."

Now we have the second application of this principle. The likeness to the teacher in life is the law of a pupil's, learner's, student's, disciple's conduct. That wonderful, compassionate, gracious story about the foot-

washing in John's gospel is meant for a symbol. It is the presenting, in a picturesque form, of the very heart and essence of Christ's incarnation in its motive and purpose. The solemn prelude with which the evangelist introduces it lays bare our Lord's heart and His reason for His action.

"Having loved His own, which were in the world, He loved them to the end." So His motive, then, was love. Again, the exalted consciousness which accompanied Christ's self-abasement is made prominent in the words, "Knowing that the Father had given all things into His hand, and that He was come from God, and went to God."

The majestic deliberation and patient continuance in resolved humility with which He goes down the successive steps of the descent, are wonderfully given in the evangelist's record of how He... "Riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments and girded Himself, and poured water into the basin." It is a parable. This, in the consciousness of His Divine authority and dignity, and moved by His love to the whole world, He laid aside the garments of His glory, and vested Himself with the towel of His humanity, the servant's garb, and took the water of His cleansing power, and came to wash the feet of all who will let Him cleanse them from their soil.

Then having reassumed His garments, He speaks from His throne to those who have been cleaned by His humiliation and His sacrifice, "Know ye what I have done to you? The servant is not greater than his lord." The student is not greater than his teacher, the disciple is not greater than the Lord. The MATHETES is not greater than the DIDASKALOS.

That is to say to you as Christians, this one incident, which is the condescension, so to speak, of the whole spirit of His life, is the law for our lives as well. We too are bound to that same love as the main motive of all our actions. We too are bound to that same stripping off of dignity and lowly equalizing of ourselves with those below us whom we would help. And we too are bound to make

it our main object, in our intercourse with men, not merely that we should not please nor enlighten them, not succor their lower temporal needs, **but that we should cleanse them and make them pure with the purity that Christ gives**, the Spirit-filled life. "The fruit of the Spirit is love..."

The Christian way of life is moved with animated self-denuding love. It came along for men and women to make them better and purer. All the influences of it tended in the direction of helping poor, foul souls to get rid of their filth. How different it would be from our lives.

What a grim contrast much of our lives is to the Teacher's example and command. Did you ever strip yourself of anything in order to make some poor wretched creature a little purer and like the Saviour? Did you ever drop your dignity, and go down to the low levels in order to lift up the people that were there? Do men see anything of that example as reproduced in your life, of the Lord, the Master, the Teacher, that lays aside the garments of Heaven for the vesture of Earth, and dies upon the cross in order that He might make our poor souls purer and like His own?

But hard as such imitation is, it is only one case of a general principle. Discipleship is likeness to Jesus Christ in conduct. There is no discipleship worth naming, which does not, at least attempt that likeness. What is the use of a man saying that he is the disciple of incarnate love if his whole life is incarnate selfishness? What is the use of a man saying that he is a Christian, and saying you are follower of Jesus Christ when He came to do God's will, and delighted in it, and you come to do your own will, and never do God's will at all, or scarcely at all, and then reluctantly, and with many a murmur?

What kind of a disciple is he, the habitual tenor of whose life contradicts the life of our so great Teacher, and disobeys His teachings, His commandments? I am bound to say that this is the life of an enormously large proportion of the professing disciples in this age of conventional Christianity.

"The disciple shall be as his master."

Do you make it an effort to be like Him? If so, then the saying is not only a law, but a promise. For it assures us that our effort shall not fail, but progressively succeed, and lead on at least to our becoming what we behold, and being conformed to Him whom we love, and like the Master to whose wisdom we progress to listen.

They whose earthly life is a following of Christ, with faltering steps and a far off, shall have for their heavenly blessedness that they shall "Follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

Another principle, the likeness of the Master in relation to the world is the fate that the disciple must put up with. "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household?"

"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." Our Lord reiterated the statement in another place in John's gospel, reminding them that He had said it before. If we are like Jesus Christ in conduct, and if we have received His Word as the Truth upon which we rest, depend upon it in our measure and in varying fashions, we shall have to bear the same kind of treatment that He received from the world.

The days of "so-called" persecution are over in so-called Christian countries. But if you are a pupil, a learner, a student, a disciple, in the sense of believing all that Jesus Christ teaches, and taking Him for your Teacher, the public opinion of this day will have a great many things to say about you that will not be very pleasant. You will be considered to be old fashioned, narrow, "behind the times," etc. Look at the bitter spirit of antagonism toward an earnest and simple Christianity, and adoption of Christ as our authoritative Teacher, which goes through much of our high class literature today.

It is a very small matter as measured with what Christian men used to have to bear, but it indicates the set of things. We may make up our minds that if we are not contented with the pared down Christianity,

which the world allows to pass at present, but insist upon coming to the New Testament for our beliefs and practices and avow, "I believe all that Jesus Christ says, and I believe it because He says it, and I take Him as my Model, we shall find out that the disciple has to be "as his Master," and that the Pharisees and the scribes of today stand in the same relation to the followers as their predecessors did to the Leader.

If you are like Him in conduct, you will be no more popular with the world than He was. As long as Christianity will be quiet, and let the world go its own gait, the world is very well contented to let it alone, or even to say polite things to it. Why should the world take the trouble of even persecuting the kind of Christianity that so many of us display?

What is the difference between our Christianity and their worldliness? The world is quite willing to come to church on Sundays and to call itself a Christian world, if only it may live as it likes.

Many professing Christians have precisely the same idea. They attend to the externals of Christianity, and call themselves Christian, but they bargain for its having very little power over their lives. Why, then, should two sets of people who have the same ideas and practices dislike each other? No reason at all. But let Christian men live up to their profession, and above all let them become aggressive and try to attack the world's evil, as they are bound to do, let them fight the mental attitude of worldliness, let them fight the lust pattern of great cities, let them teach the Ten Commandments as the Magna Carta of Christianity and teach the principles of biblical business practices and you will very soon hear a pretty shout that will tell you that the disciple who is a disciple has to share the fate of His Master, the Teacher, notwithstanding 19 centuries of Christian teaching.

If you do not know what it is to find yourselves out of harmony with the world, I am afraid it is because you have less of the Teacher's teachings and Spirit than you have

of the world's teachings and spirit. The world loves its own. If you are not "of the world, the world will hate you." If it does not, it must be because, in spite of your name, you belong to it.

Listen to His teachings. Walk in His footsteps. And you will share His sovereignty and sit on His throne. It is enough, more than enough, and nothing less than enough, for the disciple, that he be "as" and "with" the Master. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness."

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher, DIDASKALOS, come from God, for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with Him." John 3:2.

Acts 13: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, DIDASKALOS, as Barnabas and Simeon, that was called Niger, and Lucius of Curene and Mansen which has been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch and Saul."

1 Corinthians 12:28, "And God hath set some in the Church first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, DIDASKALOS, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."

Ephesians 4:11, "And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastor-teachers, DIDASKALOS."

The gift of apostleship and the gift of prophets were only temporary gifts until the completed Canon of Scripture, which occurred in 96 A.D. So these temporary gifts have ceased, and now in the Church Age we have pastor-teachers and evangelists, one in the local church and one outside the local church. Do you have a DIDASKALOS? What did he teach you about our Lord-Teacher?

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