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WARNING TO THE DISCIPLES.

– JUNE 7. – *Luke 22:24-37.* –

Golden Text – "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." – Phil. 2:5.

ALTHOUGH the twelve apostles had been for three years in very intimate association with Jesus and had been greatly benefited and blessed by the association, they had yet many things to learn, and one of the last lessons that Jesus endeavored to impress upon them was that of humility and self-forgetful service of others. The occasion of this lesson was furnished by a little discussion among them on the evening of the last supper, as to which should be greatest. The context seems to indicate that the discussion originated with Peter; for while they all seem to have been involved, or at least interested in the discussion, and all were addressed in the Lord's reply, a pointed portion of the answer was addressed specially to Peter. Peter was one of the most prominent and active of the apostles, and by his zeal and energy he naturally became a leading one, as he himself probably realized in a measure, and the others doubtless conceded.

But the Lord realized what the apostles evidently did not, that even a very little prominence may become a dangerous snare unless it be coupled with great humility. Hence the warning to the disciples, and especially to Peter, against the ambition for self-exaltation and preferment. The warning lesson was given by an apt illustration, Jesus himself, their Lord and Master, performing for them the most humble service, washing their feet. (Compare Luke 22:1,24; John 13:1,13-17.) To the illustration he also added his words of counsel, showing how different must be the disposition among his disciples from that which characterizes the godless world.

"And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors." Thus he called attention to the fact that the disposition of the world is toward tyranny on the one hand, and servility on the other; the one class becoming arrogant and self-assertive, and the other class dependent and truckling, both of which are ignoble traits of character which he desired to see entirely eliminated from all of his disciples. "But ye shall not be so [Ye shall not cultivate in yourselves a spirit of arrogant pride, by seeking to lord it over others; nor shall ye cultivate in others a spirit of truckling servility, unworthy of noble manhood], but [on the other hand, cultivate in yourselves the spirit of humility and loving service, "in honor preferring one another"; and thus, also, by example, show others how becoming and beautiful is true worth of mind and heart linked with loving, self-forgetful humility] he that is greatest among you [he that has superior ability of one kind or another, let him not allow his talent to be offset by a corresponding **[R1987 : page 127]** weakness of character which tends to self-glorification, and is easily intoxicated with the spirit of pride and selfish ambition, but let him think soberly of himself, realizing how far short he is of actual perfection], let him be as the younger [very meek and modest]; and he that [by qualifications and providential circumstances] is chief, as he that doth serve." "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." – Matt. 20:27,28.

Peter, while considering the question of superiority with some measure of self-complacency, little knew how great a trial would in a few hours put the metal of his character to the test. Nor did the other disciples comprehend the critical hour to which they had come. But the Lord fully realized it, and endeavored to prepare them for it; and to Peter he solemnly said, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat [this is no time for considering questions of superiority and self-exaltation; it is a time for sober thought and for humble watchfulness and prayer]. But I have

prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not [under the coming trial], and when thou art converted [from this disposition, to a sober humility, then] strengthen thy brethren." The other brethren would also need strengthening, and Peter's hopefulness and fervent devotion and leading characteristics would be of great service to them; but not until he himself should first come into the proper attitude. But Peter, still unconscious of his weakness and his need, though full of loving loyalty to the Lord, replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee into prison and to death." But Jesus knew his weakness, and said, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me"; and it was so. So great was the trial that all the disciples were in dismay, and though they loved the Lord, yet in fear they all forsook him and fled (Matt. 26:56); and while Peter, loth to leave him, followed him afar off, yet by and by his devotion succumbed to his fears so that he openly denied him.

How much Peter needed the Lord's prayer and warning, and how graciously the Lord considered his need! But while we thus view Peter's error and Peter's need, as well as the needs of all the disciples, let us not forget our own; for we also are men of like passions: a very little exaltation, a very little success or praise or preferment, often serves to engender a pride of heart [R1988 : page 127] which becomes manifest to others in unbecoming self-inflation and self-exaltation. Let us guard against these tendencies by prayer and by the cultivation of humble, sober thought, remembering always the inspired teaching, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth"; and with the apostles, let our rejoicing be this, – "the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom [the wisdom of this world which depends on self and takes credit to self], but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." – 2 Cor. 1:12.

While the words of warning were solemnly given, the Lord did not forget to give them also words of encouragement, pointing them to the glory to follow the present scenes of suffering and humiliation,

saying, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Yes, the end of all the humiliation and cross-bearing and suffering according to the will of God in this present time was to be the glory of the kingdom and joint-heirship with Christ. But none can gain that glory except by the way of present humiliation and cross-bearing. "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." "And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." – Luke 9:23; 14:27; Matt. 10:38.

This present Gospel age is the appointed time for this cross-bearing, when all the true members of the body must "fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of the Christ"; for the body, as was also the Head, must be subjected to the discipline of suffering and thereby be proved worthy to reign with him. It is important, therefore, that we realize this; for if we turn aside from the path of humiliation and daily cross-bearing, and strive for present exaltation and preferment, we are forgetting the very conditions upon which the future exaltation depends, and seeking instead the mean rewards of the present.

In verses 35-37 the Lord indicated that the disciples would henceforth meet with changed conditions in their work. Hitherto he had sent them out without purse or scrip or shoes (Mark 6:7-11) to preach the gospel of the Kingdom to a covenant people whose duty it was to receive and entertain the messengers of the Lord, and whose receiving or rejecting of them would be a test of their fidelity to God as his covenant people. In receiving the disciples of Christ they were to that extent receiving Christ, and the Father also whom he represented – "He that receiveth you receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." – Matt. 10:40.

In thus going forth under the Lord's direction, and as his representatives, the disciples had lacked nothing, and great success

attended their labors; for the common people heard them gladly, and were greatly moved by their teachings and their works. But henceforth they would find all this changed; "for," said he, "I say unto you that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me. And he was reckoned among the transgressors; for the things concerning me have an end [the prophecies concerning me are about to be fulfilled in my crucifixion]." Israel as a nation had now rejected Jehovah's Anointed, and were about to crucify him; and henceforth the name of Jesus would be a name of reproach, and his disciples would be hated and despised, and their teachings denounced.

Consequently the instruction he would now give them would be the very reverse of that formerly given; – *viz.*, that henceforth they should go out in no wise dependent upon the people to test their loyalty to God which had already been disproved; but they should provide for themselves such things as they should need, and thus, being independent of the people, show them that self-denying zeal for God which would gladly espouse an unpopular cause with no hope of earthly gain, and for it endure reproach and persecution that thereby they might recover some from the blindness and sin into which the nation had stumbled. **[R1988 : page 128]**

The instruction to provide themselves with swords, and the statement that two were enough, was probably merely to show that though there were at hand these weapons of defence he would not permit their use, but that he gave himself up a free-will offering for the sins of the world. When he was betrayed he sought not to escape, but, knowing the plot beforehand, he deliberately went to the place where they would seek him; when he was falsely accused, he opened not his mouth; when Peter unsheathed the sword in his defence, he ordered it to be put away, and immediately healed the wound of his enemy; and while twelve legions of angels were at his service for the asking, he asked not. Thus he freely gave his life a ransom for many; and though in him was no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth,

yet he was numbered with the transgressors, condemned as a law-breaker, and crucified between two thieves.

The golden text of this lesson is aptly chosen, – "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Amen, so let it be.
