

The Old Paths

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“Two Masters”

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Perhaps when you read the title of this article, your mind went to passages like Matthew 6:24 or Luke 16:13. While these are good passages to study, this article is going to go in a little different direction than that. In thinking about “two masters,” I would like to study Luke 15:11-24 and make some observations from that text.

Luke 15:11-24 is commonly known as the parable of the prodigal son. (Please read this parable first before proceeding if you are not familiar with Jesus’ words in this text. It will help you in this study.) Yet, in this chapter, I also see much said about the father of that prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-12, 17, 20-24, 28, 31-32). One of the things we learn about this father was that he was a “master.” He had hired servants in his household, which he apparently treated quite well (Lk. 15:17). In this parable, we also read about another man. I do not know the number of servants he might have had, but I do know that the “prodigal” was his servant - at least for a time (Lk. 15:15-16, 20). However, the prodigal’s experience as a servant was quite different from what he had witnessed growing up in his father’s house. It is the contrast between these two masters that I would like us to study in this article. When we study the “two masters” in Luke 15, we see

One Master Was Generous, The Other Was Not.

When we read Luke 15:16-17, we see that the prodigal had hit “rock bottom.” He was so hungry, he would have eaten the pods/husks, or the “hog’s food.” He was ready to eat such because no one was feeding him. Though he was working in the pig sty, he still was not fed! I do not know what might have been promised by the master, but it is obvious the prodigal was getting nothing for his labor! “*No man gave unto him,*” (Lk. 15:16) and this obviously included his “master,” too!

Contrast this master’s actions with the words of the prodigal when he thought of his father at home. When this young man finally came to himself, he said, “*How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*” (Lk. 15:17). The contrast is clear, is it not? The young boy understood that his father was generous. The man he was working for was not generous to him at all. We might think it is obvious that one would have to feed and take care of servants in order to keep them working. This master didn’t think so. He was stingy, and had no concern for others. The father on the other hand, was very generous toward others, whether they were his servants, or his own family!

One Master Was Loving, The Other Was Not.

It is evident that when the son “*came to himself,*” he realized just

how much his father loved him. It is obvious this love was shown at home in abundance, because when the boy hit “rock bottom,” he still knew that he could go home (Lk. 15:18-19). Evidently, the master in the far country cared nothing for the boy. He didn’t even feed him! Yet, the prodigal realized he had a loving father who would accept him back when he returned. True love had been expressed to this boy in the past, and he knew he could repent and return to his father.

One Master Cared For Others, The Other Did Not.

I return to the observation made by the son when he said, “*How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*” (Lk. 15:17). This once rich young man (v. 12-13) was now in a pig sty, working for a master who apparently did not care for him at all. In fact, no one in this “*far country*” cared for the young man (v. 15-16). It is evident that the father cared for his servants, and had their best interests in mind. The master for whom the prodigal worked had no one but himself in mind as he sent the boy out to the swine herds, and refused to feed him. He wanted only the things that the boy as a servant could provide. The master had no interest in providing anything! Yet, the father was concerned for others, and made provisions for his servants in abundance.

The Masters Are God And Satan

I imagine anytime we have heard this account preached, those preaching compared the prodigal’s father to God, and then made the necessary applications. I would agree with this position, but will take it a step further to say that

if the father of the prodigal is symbolic of God, then the other master must be symbolic of Satan! Think about it: When the boy went to the “far country”, leaving his father (i.e., God), to whom could he go? The only option left is Satan! The boy left his father and became enslaved in sin by Satan. Therefore, the only thing he could do to get out of his predicament was to go home to his father in repentance, seeking forgiveness. This is exactly what he did.

This is not the only time we read about sin being enslaving. Jesus spoke of this in John 8:34, saying, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*” The apostle Paul taught the Romans, “*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*” (Rom. 6:16). Finally, the apostle Peter spoke about the enslaving effects of Satan and his false teachers when he wrote to Christians, and warned them, saying, “*While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage*” (II Pet. 2:19).

Satan wants to “devour” us (I Pet. 5:8). Yet, he cannot take us unwillingly. He must get us to accept his terms by submitting to our selfish desires and sinning (Jas. 1:14-15). In order to do this, one thing he will promise is “liberty.” He will try to get us to think that God’s ways are hard, are foolish, and are holding us back from having real “fun.” He wants us to think his ways lead to freedom, when in fact, just the opposite is true. We do not know what the master in the far country said to the prodigal to get him to work with the swine, but he

had to have said something to encourage the boy to work for him instead of returning to his father sooner than he did! Yet, in the end, the boy realized where true freedom is, and where true bondage is! Thankfully, the boy ran out of money before he ran out of time!!

Conclusion

Let us take time to examine our lives. The story of the prodigal son is nothing new. In fact, it is played out in the lives of many families even today. Yet, even if you enjoyed a “perfect” home life growing up, be mindful of the fact that Satan is still trying to ensnare you in his “far country,” (I Pet. 5:8) while God your Heavenly Father loves you and wants you to be in His household (II Pet. 3:9; Rom. 2:4). God wants “*all men to be saved*” (I Tim. 2:4). Will we accept His terms and become a Christian (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38)? If we have done those things, will we remain faithful to Him all the days of our lives (I Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10)? Remember that when one obeys the gospel, it is not an occasion of sadness and servitude. Rather, it is to experience true freedom, for it is at that time we are made “*free from sin*” (Rom. 6:18)! “Two masters” have an interest in your soul. Submit today to the Master who truly loves you and wants you to be in Heaven with Him!

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