

## Sabbath School Lesson #11 – Practicing Supreme Loyalty to Christ – 2-8 Sep 2023

**C**hrist said to his disciples: “Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master; and all ye are brethren;” “Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ” (Matthew 23:8, 10). It is the master who sets the task for each pupil or servant. It is to the master that the servant looks for his reward. Therefore it is the master alone who has the right to give orders, and to pronounce judgment if there is failure. “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant?” (Romans 14:4). If you have not the power to reward his success, you have not the right to judge his failures. As the Lord alone is our Master, how are we to apply the memory text, where Paul says, “And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him” (Ephesians 6:9)? The key is in practicing supreme loyalty to Christ.

Every soul on earth might, if he would, say with the Psalmist, “O Lord, truly I am Thy servant” (Ps 116:16), for the Lord has purchased all mankind with His own blood. He “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us” (Tit 3:14). “Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price” (1 Cor 6:19-20). “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,” “but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet 1:18-19). And He has proclaimed liberty to all who are bound (Isa 61:1). It matters not who the man may be, he is the Lord’s servant; for Christ has bought all. He tasted death for every man (Heb 2:9). But there are two classes of servants, – those who serve, and those who do not serve, – the “good and faithful” servants, and the “wicked and slothful” servants. That a man does not acknowledge himself to be a servant, does not diminish his obligation to serve. He who does not acknowledge himself to be the Lord’s servant, is a slave. “For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom 7:14). “Everyone that committeth sin, is the bondservant of sin” (John 8:34). “Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is He brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:19). “Ye have sold yourselves for nought, and ye shall be redeemed without money” (Isa 52:3). This last text shows not only that all who do not serve the Lord are slaves, but also that those who serve Him are free. Whoever says from the heart, “O Lord, truly I am Thy servant,” may also as truly say, “Thou hast loosed my bonds.” “He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s free man” (1 Cor 7:21). So the sum of the matter is that all men, from the greatest king to the humblest peasant, are in truth the Lord’s servants; those who do not acknowledge the Lord as their Master, are slaves, even though they be kings; while those who yield themselves to the Lord’s service, are free, even though they be servants. “One is your Master, even Christ.” He is the only rightful Master. Thus, the rightful Master promises us all: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Lk 10:27).

**Sunday: Advice to Children** – What advice does Paul give to children, and how does he support that counsel from the Old Testament? In Eph 6:2-3, he quotes, “Honour thy father and mother;” [Ex 20:12] comments, “which is the first commandment with promise;” finishes the quote, “That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” [Ex 20:12].

**Monday: Advice to Parents** – Compare Eph 6:4 and Col 3:21. What motivation does Col 3:21 provide for avoiding irritating one’s children? “And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6:4); “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged” (Col 3:21). Simply, let not the correction be given in such a way as to provoke, torment, or make the child angry, because this might result in discouraging him. Use no extravagant language, such as, ‘I will cut your ears off!’ ‘If you disobey, the lion will come and eat you!’ Such things are shameful, and should never be indulged in. Let your aim be to have your children realise that you always speak the truth. Never forfeit their confidence. If stories are told, let them be such as will raise the child’s thoughts to God, and help it to understand that God is a good and merciful Father. May it ever be our study, how to bring up our children in the admonition of the Lord.

**Tuesday: Slavery in Paul’s Day** – How did Paul spread the gospel among slaves and their masters and what lesson is there for us? The customs of that day were at variance with God’s plan, but Paul says nothing about them. He preaches the gospel to servants and masters, and leaves the gospel to regulate the customs. Let us follow his example in our

labours. He taught the slaves to be submissive and faithful in all their work. He taught the masters that they have a Master in heaven, and that they ought to deal with their servants as they would have their heavenly Master deal with them. When slaves and masters have both done this, then slavery exists no more. The same principle will apply in every case. Let us not trouble our minds about the customs, and try to fix them up; for in doing this we leave the gospel out, and the result is that the Spirit of the Lord cannot work upon hearts to make our efforts effectual, and they only get angry with us. But let us preach the gospel in all its purity and simplicity, and leave it to change the customs, and it will be effectual than ourselves.

**Wednesday: Slaves of Christ** – What does Paul require of Christian slaves in his detailed instructions to them (Eph 6:6-8)? Let it not be forgotten that the Lord is the only Master. This is shown by the fact that we are to serve Him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind (Luke 10:27). If all our strength is given to the Lord, there can be none left for any one else. Thus, Paul says: “Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men” (1 Cor 7:23). Yet the same one who wrote, “Be not ye the servants of men,” wrote also, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ” (Eph 6:5); and “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God” (Col 3:22). There is no contradiction here. The secret is found in the last clause of each verse quoted, and in what immediately follows. “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col 2:22, 24). And so also in Ephesians where servants are exhorted to serve “in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Eph 6:6-7). If all servants acted on this plan, regarding themselves not as servants of men, but as servants of Christ alone, no employer would ever have occasion to complain of unfaithful service. With such a servant it would make no difference whether his master were present, or not; his real Master is Christ, who is always present. “No man can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24). The servant who thinks to follow two lines, making a distinction between service to Christ and his Master according to the flesh, will become hopelessly confused. No matter what our grade of service, we have only to consider what will please the Lord. He who does this, will render to man every service that he has any right or duty to give. If other servants refuse to serve, persecute or entice the faithful servant, he must not neglect his duty. “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Prov 1:10).

**Thursday: Masters Who Are Slaves** – Assuming that you are a Christian slave master who is listening to Ephesians being read out in your house church, how might you react to this counsel, offered in the presence of your slaves (Eph 6:9)? Remember now that all men are alike servants to God. After the exhortation to servants, Paul addresses masters, saying, “Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven” (Col 4:1); “Ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening; knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respecter of persons with Him” (Eph 6:9). Both masters and servants are servants of one Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. If earthly master forgets his duty to the one Master, demands his servant to what is sinful, offering inducements; we have an injunction, “If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” If a servant in high office abuse his office, humble servants are not to neglect their duty. We instructed: “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Pet 2:18-20). If a servant did everything that even the wicked master told him to do, he would have no occasion to suffer. But the fact that he is exhorted “for conscience toward God” to “endure grief, suffering wrongfully,” shows that one may be obliged to refuse obedience to evil commands, since it will involve sin against God. In that case, he must suffer patiently the buffeting that may follow. The Lord, Master of both, will settle the case when He comes, for He has told what shall be the fate of that evil servant.