

It Is Written

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Two Master

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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 will go in a slightly different direction. 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 before proceeding. It will help you in this study.) In this chapter, much is 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, whom he treated quite well (Lk. 15:17). In this parable, we also read about another man. I do not know the number of servants he had, but I do know that the “prodigal” was one of his servants - 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 this contrast between these two masters that I would like us to study in this article. When we examine 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 this because no one was feeding him. 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 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 evident that one would have to feed and care for servants to keep them working. This master didn’t think so. He was stingy and had no concern for others. On the other hand, the father was very generous toward others, whether they were his servants or his own family!

One Master Was Loving; The Other Was Not.

When the son “came to himself,” he realized just how much his father loved him. This love was shown at home in abundance because when the boy hit “rock bottom,” he still knew he could go home (Lk. 15:18-19). 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 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 was not interested in offering anything! Yet the father was concerned for others and made abundant provisions for his servants.

The Masters Are God And Satan.

I imagine that anytime we hear this parable preached, those preaching compare the prodigal’s father to God and then make 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 son went to the “far country,” leaving his father (i.e., God), to whom could he go? The only option left is Satan! The prodigal 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 precisely 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). To do this, one thing he will promise is “liberty.” He will try to get us to think that God’s ways are complicated and foolish and hold us back from having real “fun.” He wants us to believe 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 (unclean animals to the Jews), but he had to have said something to encourage him to continue working for him, continuing to be unclean, instead of returning to his father! Yet, in the end, the son realized where true freedom is and where true bondage is! Thankfully, the prodigal returned before he ran out of time!

Conclusion

Let us examine our lives. The story of the prodigal son is nothing new. It is played out in the lives of many families today. Yet, even if you enjoyed a “perfect” home life growing up, be mindful of the fact that Satan is still trying to trap 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. Instead, becoming a Christian is to experience true freedom, for it is at that time we are made “free from sin” (Rom. 6:18; Jn. 8:31-32, 36)! “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!