The Disciple Who Comes to Resemble the Teacher

The Lord Jesus left His disciples a command: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:” (Matthew 28:19). He did not say "make forgiven people". He said "make disciples".

This command shows how the citizens of the Kingdom of God live. They do not receive forgiveness in order to stand still. They enter the school of their King and learn from Him how to be like Him.

What, in fact, is a disciple? It is not the apprentice at a vocational school who learns a trade from a master craftsman. The word in Scripture means "disciple": one who follows the teaching of his Master and carries it on.

A disciple listens to his teacher until he comes to speak the way his teacher speaks. He takes on his habits and his whole way of being. He wants at all costs to be like him. The Lord Jesus said the same thing about His disciples: “The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.” (Luke 6:40). And on another occasion: “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” (Matthew 10:25).

Why does the Lord want disciples who resemble Him? Because this is God's plan. Paul writes: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Romans 8:29). God wanted brothers for the Lord Jesus, people like Him. The command "make disciples" stands under this plan.

If the plan had been only the forgiveness of sins, the command would serve no purpose. Some would be disciples, others merely Christians; some higher up, others lower down. The Lord did not create such levels. Forgiveness has its place, but it is neither the central place nor the end. No one can say: "I have received forgiveness, and with that God's work in me is finished."

Where, then, does discipleship begin? At the new birth. That is when a person enters the school of disciples and begins to learn to be like his Teacher. That is where life starts: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The new things come from the Lord Jesus, just as a disciple receives from his teacher everything he knows.

The person who has stopped at forgiveness speaks differently: "With me, not all things have become new. I still have many old things. I live in anger and in many other things." Why does he live like this? Because he has not started school. He has not yet begun to learn from the Teacher.

The disciple also shows how high the standard is. How must I live? Like the Lord Jesus. If I want to purify myself, how far do I go? I do not set the limit myself: I must be pure as He is. The apostle John writes: “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (1 John 3:3). It is a very high standard. That is precisely why the disciple measures himself against it: he has no other model than his Teacher.

The command also has a second part: “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:20). All things, not ninety-five per cent. The disciple receives the Lord's teaching whole. He takes nothing away from it and adds nothing to it, just as a disciple does not change his teacher's words.

Here we see how serious this matter is. To teach someone else to observe everything, I must be the first to observe everything. If I observe ninety per cent, I will teach the other person ninety per cent at most. And if I am convinced that the remaining ten per cent need not be observed, I will tell him the same. My disciples will be, at most, what I am.

That is why the Lord wants disciples of His own, not disciples of ours. A disciple who copies a man becomes like that man, including everything that man lacked. The one we teach must resemble the Lord Jesus, not us. The Lord Jesus did not come only to forgive us. He also came to teach us how to live in the Kingdom of God, and His commandments are its law.

Think again of the disciple who, over time, comes to speak like his teacher. That is how the disciple of the Lord Jesus grows too. He measures everything he does against Him and asks himself: am I like Him? And the goal is shown to him by the Lord Himself: the perfect disciple will be like his Teacher.

Do not stop at forgiveness as if it were the end of the road. Enter His school, receive everything He teaches you, without setting anything aside, and let Him be your measure. May the Lord help us all to live the life of a true, perfect disciple.

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