

Sermon Outlines
Why Does Pride Have No Place in Christian Service?

Bible Reading

Mark 10:32-45

The maxim of verse 31, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last first," was totally lost on the disciples, because six verses later James and John were clamouring for priority of position to reign with the Lord.

Again when we discover how carnal the disciples were, we might ask, were these men made of the right stuff to be disciples at all? We gag at the insolence, and outright rudeness of their request to sit at the Lord's right hand in His glory. Two brothers wanted to have the upper places given them. Worse still, Matthew records that they used their mother to make the request for them (Matt. 20:17). Mrs. Zebedee is caught up in this family pride-of-place for her two sons. In light of this family request, human nature comes out at its worst.

1) The message of Christ's death and resurrection that prompted the request (v33-34)

Going up to Jerusalem was fearful to the disciples. See how they were "amazed." This meant they were confused and greatly troubled at the danger which the Lord was walking into. He would encounter the wrath of the religious scribes and chief priests in their own stronghold, Jerusalem. They were aware of the hostility that was toward their Master and knew things would be different from ministering in Galilee.

Going up to Jerusalem was to fulfil all things for Christ (v33-34).

Note the perfect detail in time order of each event that would befall Him. The Lord was not ignorant of how he would lay down his life and how He would raise it up again. While wicked men would seek to have their way, the will of God would be carried out in perfect detail in the Lord's arrest, judgment and crucifixion.

In going up to Jerusalem nothing was left to chance in the Lord's death. He would suffer and die as appointed Him by His Father. Jesus came to fulfil the Father's will. It's hard to tell how many of these details registered with the disciples, but we can see how they took note of the Lord's rising again on the third day. We see how James and John wanted a part in the glory that would follow. It was that word of victory and triumph over death that stirred James and John to request that they sit at the Lord's right and left hands.

The desire to reign with Christ was not wrong, but to claim it's honours above the other disciples was wrong. Let us rejoice in the power of Christ's death and resurrection, but let it be with joy for all the people of God. All the redeemed will be there. God's grace to the least and the last will shine forth on that day and bring joy to all the saints in glory.

2) The ignorance of Christian service that formed the request (v38)

The Lord's answer cut to the issues of the disciples' foolish and carnal thinking. The Christian life here on earth is not about promotion and power, but about suffering for Jesus' sake and about serving in His name.

The reference to drinking the cup of which the Lord drinks and being baptized with His baptism has the one idea of enduring hardship. At times believers shall be overwhelmed with fierce criticism and opposition. Christ's followers may endure a life of bitterness and hardship. Christ knew the sorrows of being rejected of men and He did not hide the reality of this from His disciples.

Many professing Christians are given to think that Christian discipleship is the end of all earthly problems. They may assume that before long it will change their financial status or make them stand out as leaders of the community, only to be ostracized and demoted among men. Christians in this life need to be prepared to endure many things for the Lord's namesake. They must be willing to suffer as Christians and endure hardness joyfully as Christians are inspired to do.

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The modern contemporary church errs here as it seeks to use entertainment to turn worship into fun. They miss the real joy that is in the gospel.

The same Peter, who needed to learn these lessons later taught his flock, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Pet. 4:16).

If more believers understood these things and were prepared for offenses and oppositions, fewer would leave off their profession of Christ before the world. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Christians need to pray for the Lord to prepare them and to give them the grace to bear hardship.

The psalmist prayed, "My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word."

Paul exhorted the younger Timothy, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (1Tim. 2:3).

We should also plead the promises of the Lord for strength in our hour of temptation: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa_41:10).

3) **The lesson on humble service that arose out of the request (v42-25)**

The Lord taught that pride of position is wrong. We are not to be like the Gentiles who, "exercise lordship over them." In the Christian church, position is not an excuse to ride roughshod over people. Rather it is a calling to serve people. The church is an opportunity to use our strengths and gifts to benefit the weak. The chiefest shall be servant of all.

This has been seriously forgotten in the history of the Lord's church. Apostasy has led to systems of tyranny as in the Roman Catholic church. Political power, lands and riches have driven clergy to abuse of power and position. The principle of humble service must operate in every gospel ministry.

Christ, Himself, demonstrated the servant attitude in His death (v45). In spite of His rightful place to receive honour from men, the Lord gave "his life a ransom for many." He was the supreme servant who offered Himself for His people.

From this closing example of Christ's sacrificial death, we must note that as a servant the Lord did not die a common death. He did not die as a martyr, nor even as a good person wronged by the wicked. Christ died to offer a public payment for sin and as a substitute for sinners.

His death was unique for it cannot be compared to any other death. His sacrifice was the will of God to purchase redemption for all God the Father had given to the Son. For them, He died.

We must pray for grace to serve in the same attitude as the Lord - all for the good of His church. He was required to die for the church, we are required to live for it.

Pray for more of the heart of Christ to rule your heart. Ask for a servant spirit like the Lord's. The more we are taken up with the deep love of the Lord Jesus for His people the more we will serve Him and His people.

. . . . Ian Goligher