



Conducted by
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“Luke 6:40 contains the statement, “everyone when he is fully taught will be like his teacher.” Could you please explain the phrase “fully taught” and do you believe this perfecting process extends to the relationship between Christ and his disciples?”

This quotation is evidently from one of the translations more modern than the King James Version, so let's state it as it is in that version, “The disciple is not above his master; but every one that is perfect will be as his master.” The Revised Standard Version reads more like the question before us, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher.”

This is an important question because it indicates an achievable level of attainment by the disciple relative to the full knowledge of the teacher. If we accept that Jesus is the teacher, and that any individual christian is the disciple, then we can understand how fundamentally important it is for the disciple to be “fully taught”, whatever the implications of that phrase may be. We shall need to put the statement into its context so that we can get a clearer picture of what Jesus was teaching on this occasion. It seems to me that christians have grossly underestimated what the true relationship with Christ should be; perhaps an explanation of this question will help us to clarify our thoughts on this important subject.

THE CONTEXT

The statement we are discussing is sandwiched between two seemingly ludicrous illustrations; one dealing with blind people attempting to lead other blind people, and the other dealing with a person who has a plank of wood in his eye trying to remove a tiny speck out of someone else's eye. Each of these illustrations, together with verse 40, poses the fundamental

question: how can a person point the way ahead to someone else,

- a) if he himself is blind to the way
- b) if his knowledge of the way is limited, and
- c) if his vision is seriously impaired?

A person who is spiritually blind can be compared with someone who is continually handling potentially dangerous substances; the effects are not noticed until it is too late to take remedial action. Jesus is using the metaphor of blindness to illustrate that degree of spiritual imperception which was so evident in the so-called Jewish leaders who were purporting to be the guides of others. Paul in his Roman letter scathingly condemns those who rest in the law and hold circumcision to be a sign of the true child of God, and goes on, "And art confident that thou thyself are a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness" (Rom. 2:19 Read all the chapter to get the true sense). What in effect Jesus is saying in Luke 6:39 is, "Can one blind man be guide to another"? The answer, of course, would seem to be an unqualified no.

The other illustration of seemingly impaired vision concerns the mote and the beam. The mote could be a tiny speck of sawdust or a bit of wool, whereas the beam would be the great piece of wood which runs from wall to wall and supports the roof. Jesus is again speaking metaphorically, of course, and seems to be saying that the man with great faults in his life cannot see clearly to attempt to remove the minor fault in another's life. What he should be doing is to remove that which is greatly impairing his vision so that he can point others to the right way. A salutary lesson, if I may say so, for each one of us.

Sandwiched between these two illustrations is the passage under consideration. This concerns the disciple and his teacher. A disciple is a learner, and the word indicates thought accompanied by endeavour. In other words, a disciple is not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence he is spoken of as *imitating* the teacher. In John 8:31 we read, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." Again he said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." (John 15:8). So in these two scriptures we have the true picture of the disciple; he must listen to the words of the teacher, and he must imitate in action what the teacher himself would do. When Jesus required something different than this he usually specified it. On one occasion he said, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All things whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matt. 23:2,3).

So what is Jesus teaching his disciples? He seems to be saying that by following him the disciples are implying that he knows the way; he is no blind guide. He can point out to the disciple the true path of progress until the disciple comes to *his* true destiny, to become as his teacher is. Matthew records that when the chief priests and scribes heard the people crying out in the temple and saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David' they said unto Jesus, "Hearest thou what these say?" And Jesus saith unto them, "Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise" (Matt. 21:15,16). We can say then, that perfecting the knowledge of the disciples would be like saying that they were "fully taught" concerning the truth, and when they were fully taught they would be as their master (teacher) in expressing that truth and living their lives in accordance with it. So what does it mean to be 'fully taught'? I suspect it has something to do with the 'new and living way.'

THE NEW AND LIVING WAY

John presents us with the statement of the Lord, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). As if to consolidate this, the writer to the Hebrews says, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ... (Heb. 10:19,20). It is no coincidence that the first Christians were referred to as those of 'that way', indeed, Paul's brief as he journeyed to Damascus was to apprehend any of 'that way' and bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Well, how did the people hear about 'that way'? Why, through the apostles, of course. And who sent the apostles out with the message? Why, Jesus did, of course. And what was the message? Well, it was the message of sins forgiven through the gospel; of justification by faith in, and obedience to, Jesus, the Saviour; of fellowship, worship, and work in the Church; of a

life perfected through holy living, and an eternal home in heaven. This, I believe, was the teaching of the master teacher; this was the way pointed out; this was the message and work of the master teacher himself, and when he had passed this on to his disciples, he expected that when they had been taught all, they would imitate him by taking the word and work to others. In this sense, the disciple would be as his master (teacher).

THE DISCIPLE/TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

There is a sense, of course, in which the disciple can never be as Jesus was and is. Jesus is, by his divine nature, part of the Godhead and the true Son of God. The disciple, by *his* nature, is a sinner saved by grace; through his obedience to the gospel he has become a child of God by adoption. Nevertheless, he is a joint-heir with Christ of all the heavenly glories, and has been elevated to a position of considerable eminence, being a son of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

However, there is a sense in which the disciple, the pupil, *can* be as Christ, the teacher; that is, by absorbing the teaching, becoming fully taught, and expressing the fundamental details of that teaching in his personal life. When that happens, the disciple will not be expressing *himself*, but Christ, the teacher, will always be held up before people because of the willingness of the disciple to let Christ be seen in him. This is the only way by which the purity of the message can be maintained.

I believe that this desirable state of affairs can be brought about by applying three fundamental christian principles:

i) By total commitment to the teacher and that which is taught. The world may need more christians, but what the Church certainly needs is more *committed* christians.

ii) By being in a state of readiness to take the teaching out to people. When God said, "Whom shall we send, and who will go for us", Isaiah responded at once, "here am I, Lord; send me." The state of readiness should be maintained at all times.

iii) By being suitable. The christian is sanctified, set apart for the Master's use. He is an earthen vessel in which is contained, if he is fully taught, the revealed will of God as expressed by Christ. The disciple should never be satisfied with sustained mediocrity; he should always be striving to achieve that spiritual maturity which will ensure his effective witness for the Lord.

Yes, I believe that when the discipole is fully taught in the essentials of the message then he will be as his teacher, in the sense in which we have said. I also believe that this will have a profound bearing on his relationship with the teacher. (All questions etc....)