

# John 15:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also.

## Analysis

**Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord**—Jesus recalls His earlier teaching (John 13:16, Matthew 10:24) using *doulos* (slave/servant) and *kyrios* (lord/master). The principle establishes hierarchy and shared experience: slaves cannot expect treatment superior to their master. This isn't abstract theology but practical preparation for persecution.

**If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you** (εἰ ἐμὲ ἐδίωξαν, καὶ ὑμεῖς διώξουσιν/*ei eme ediōxan, kai hymas diōxousin*)—the conditional assumes reality: they DID persecute Jesus (throughout His ministry—attempts to stone Him, drive Him from towns, now culminating in crucifixion), therefore they WILL persecute disciples. The verb *diōkō* means to pursue, chase, harass, drive away—systematic hostility, not mere disagreement.

**If they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also** (εἰ τὸν λόγον μου ἐτήρησαν, καὶ τὸν ὑμέτερον τηρήσουσιν/*ei ton logon mou etērēsan, kai ton hymeteron tērēsousin*)—the verb *tēreō* means to guard, observe, keep. Jesus acknowledges that those who received His teaching will receive the apostles' teaching. This promise encouraged first-century missionaries: genuine seekers who believed Christ would believe apostolic testimony.

The verse balances realism and hope: expect persecution like your Master

suffered, but also expect receptivity where Christ was received. The same message that divides will also save.

## Historical Context

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Jesus spoke this hours before His arrest. The disciples needed preparation for imminent trauma—their Master's crucifixion—and subsequent opposition. Within weeks, they faced the Sanhedrin's threats (Acts 4:1-22, 5:17-42). Within years, systematic persecution scattered the church (Acts 8:1-4) and martyred leaders like Stephen and James.

The principle "servant not greater than lord" appears across Jesus' teaching because disciples struggled with ambition and status-seeking (Matthew 18:1-4, 20:20-28, Luke 22:24-27). Here it reframes suffering: persecution isn't divine abandonment but shared experience with Christ. Paul later develops this: "that I may know him, and the fellowship of his sufferings" (Philippians 3:10).

The balanced prediction (some persecute, some receive) proved true throughout church history. Same apostolic preaching produced both martyrdom and mass conversions. Same Reformation gospel sparked both Inquisition burnings and Continental awakenings.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How does viewing persecution as sharing Christ's experience rather than divine punishment transform your response to suffering?

2. What forms does "persecution" take in contemporary Western contexts versus openly hostile cultures?
3. How can the promise that some "will keep your saying" encourage faithful witness in the face of opposition?

## Interlinear Text

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μνημονεύετε	τοῦ	λόγον	οὗ	ἐγὼ	εἶπον	ὑμῖν	Οὐκ
<b>Remember</b>		<b>saying</b>	<b>that</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>said</b>	<b>unto you</b>	<b>not</b>
G3421	G3588	G3056	G3739	G1473	G2036	G5213	G3756
ἔστιν	δοῦλος	μείζων	τοῦ	κυρίου	αὐτοῦ	εἰ	ἐμὲ
<b>is</b>	<b>The servant</b>	<b>greater than</b>		<b>lord</b>		<b>If</b>	<b>me</b>
G2076	G1401	G3187	G3588	G2962	G846	G1487	G1691
διώξουσιν·	καὶ	ὑμᾶς	διώξουσιν·	εἰ	τὸν	λόγον	μου
<b>persecute</b>	<b>also</b>	<b>you</b>	<b>persecute</b>	<b>If</b>		<b>saying</b>	<b>my</b>
G1377	G2532	G5209	G1377	G1487	G3588	G3056	G3450
τηρήσουσιν	καὶ	τὸν	ὑμέτερον	τηρήσουσιν			
<b>they have kept</b>	<b>also</b>		<b>yours</b>	<b>they have kept</b>			
G5083	G2532	G3588	G5212	G5083			

## Additional Cross-References

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**2 Timothy 3:12** (Parallel theme): Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

**John 13:16** (References Lord): Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

**Matthew 10:24** (References Lord): The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

**Ezekiel 3:7** (Parallel theme): But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted.

**1 Corinthians 4:12** (Parallel theme): And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

**2 Corinthians 4:9** (Parallel theme): Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

**John 8:51** (Parallel theme): Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

**John 10:31** (Parallel theme): Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

**1 Thessalonians 2:15** (References Lord): Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

**Luke 6:40** (Parallel theme): The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.