

Christian Character: A Progressive Development

by John Follette

The sermon emphasizes that Christian character develops progressively through spiritual growth, obedience, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:10

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Character"

Description

John Follette preaches about the importance of spiritual reality, emphasizing the eternal significance of our spiritual lives over material possessions. He highlights the Divine process of developing our spiritual potential and responsibility, urging us to value and multiply the spiritual life deposited within us by God. Follette explains that spiritual growth is a gradual process of being tested and proven, leading to the development of a Christian character in God's image. He encourages surrendering to the Lord for a continuous growth process towards spiritual maturity.

Transcript

This that I share is truth which I have discovered in the field of spiritual reality. This world of spiritual reality is abstract and invisible, but it is more real than the material world.

There is a Divine process in which the Lord is far more interested, than in those things about which most people are concerned. The entire material scheme of life will someday be pushed into oblivion, and these former things will no longer come into our remembrance.

At that time, all that will remain will be as much of spiritual vision and life as we had possessed during our lifetime.

The Lord will look into the record of our earthly life to see what we did with the talent He had given us.

This "talent" is not a natural gift, such as music. Rather, He has given to each of us the same talent, but in a portion which varies according to our several ability. This talent is the spiritual potential and

responsibility which God places upon a redeemed, intelligent spirit.

Each one of us should carefully consider how we respond to this talent. That is, are we rightly related to this marvelous potential called "spiritual life" which has been deposited within our being. Do we value it enough, that by our touching God and He touching us, it is being multiplied?

This multiplication takes place as we through our response to God in obedience, expend our spiritual lives through the power of God. This is accomplished through the operation of gifts. These gifts are given to us, but they are not the talent. Rather, they are the means by which the talent may become expressive and develop.

In the realm of the Spirit, God is just as exact in the application of spiritual laws and techniques as those that operate in our natural lives. He, the Holy Spirit, will lead us into all truth. The most powerful, profound agency in the universe is the Spirit of God; at the same time He is the most delicate and gentle, and must be approached as such.

After being saved, we may have received many revelations and have several gifts of the Holy Spirit in operation. But if there is nothing more, we will remain a babe in Christ. This is because no experience which God brings to us will ever mature us. We do not grow by these.

Spiritual growth is not an immediate position, but rather develops through a process of our being tested and proven. When we are saved, through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, we are made a new creation and become a partakers of the divine nature. We are no longer the same person who was born into this world.

As a spiritual babe, the Lord gives us the pure milk of the Word to satisfy our spiritual hunger. This urge to live and possess is basic within us. Concerning this seeking element, which the Lord has placed within us, He says, "I have given you a vast territory for the expansion of your new creation life, and its outreach. Possess, multiply, and live."

As the Lord increasingly possesses us, there is a resultant desire to move toward Him. It is through this eternal urge that we are brought to the heart of God, where we belong. There, He will project us upward into new realms of life.

Jesus saw the deeper need of His disciples through His discerning power. He told them that the seeking

urge which was within them had lost its adjustment, and they were projecting their desires into lesser realms. He was not condemning their seeking, but rather correcting it.

He said, "Seek first your spiritual adjustment in the realm of God, and because of a Divine law, which is just as real as the law of gravity, all of the things on the lesser plane will be automatically added to you."

We become concerned with the more tangible things - what we eat, drink, or wear. The Lord is not condemning possessions; we are to have all these things, but first we are to seek our adjustment to spiritual reality and lift our seeking to this level.

If we will do this, we will have found a spiritual law which also operates concerning natural things, and all these things will be added unto us. Many years ago, the Lord caused me to know that if I would live in Him and allow Him to fully possess me, I would not have to be concerned about anything. He has been faithful in this.

The Lord gives us, as a gift, a deposit of spiritual life and we become partakers of His Divine nature.

This is not the end, but rather the first moving of God. Now He intends us to build a Christian character that is formed in His image and likeness. Our body and all that we do will perish, and all that will remain will be the amount of the image and likeness of His Son which has been etched upon our immortal spirit.

It is not what we do, but how we do what we do. All these things are merely for the culture and development of an immortal spirit which will live forever. He does not give us a reward on the basis of what we have done. We cannot buy so many pounds of faithfulness. The reward is a spiritual thing, the character quality that He is looking for.

The Lord sees our spiritual hunger and then feeds us, not because we had been seeking Him, but because He has been seeking us and has at last gained possession of us. This is not so we will be able to do something for Him, but rather, our doing will automatically flow out of the fact that the Holy Spirit is possessing us.

We can be saved in a moment, but we cannot immediately expect to be spiritually mature. This is a splendid desire, but it cannot be accomplished overnight. However, the Lord will receive us as a candidate.

This can be seen in Genesis. The Lord was well pleased with Adam, but he had not yet functioned. The Lord cannot choose for us; but He can bring those things into play which will allow us to make the right choice.

Therefore, God planted a tree of knowledge in the garden. There is a positive and a negative approach to this tree. He bid Adam to take the positive attitude toward the tree, which is obedience - "Do not eat of it."

If Adam had not partaken, the Lord would have had His way and he, through obedience to the process of testing and proving, would have been released; and some of the lovely character qualities that God intended would have come to the surface. God would then have said, "Well done ... here is another test."

When we gain a victory, we cannot remain in that victory, as there will be another test, in His time and way. We are to rejoice in the overcoming victory we have gained, but we are not to allow the joy of that victory to blind us to the next battle that is ahead.

The enemy seeks to steal and destroy through the tree of (self) knowledge, but our Lord overcame each test that the enemy placed in His path, and made a way that we also might gain a victory in each of our testings and come into a greater release of life. When a trial disturbs us, we should not ask for prayer that the tree might be cut down. Rather, we are to learn how to rightly approach it, and then we will grow.

In the life of Jesus, there are two magnificent words. He "learned" and He "grew." These relate to Jesus in the human aspect of His life, and they hold the concept of an eternal progression.

Now, dare to surrender to the Lord all that you are and ever hope to be, and your Christian character will be built through a process of growth.

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