

Fellow With Christ in the Yoke

by John Follette

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being yoked with Christ to experience true fellowship, service, and rest in His will.

Scripture: Psalm 55:22, Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 30:21, Matthew 11:28-30, 1 Corinthians 1:9, Philippians 2:13, Hebrews 4:10

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Fellowship With God"

Description

John Wright Follette preaches about the deep work of God's plow in our hearts, turning us from self-hood to a field set free, and the joy of surrendering all to Him. He emphasizes the call from God to move from the natural to a life of the Spirit, developing intimate fellowship and communion with Jesus Christ. Follette discusses the phases of fellowship as a matter of growth, starting with a common basis in creation and deepening through the new birth and subsequent experiences.

Transcript

SINGING PLOWMAN

God's plow struck deep within my heart
And plowed long furrows, one by one,
Through fallow ground so hard and firm,
From early morn till set of sun.
The plow-share was eternal TRUTH
Which tore the hidden roots in me
And turned them to the light and air
Till self-hood lay a field set free.
I felt Him walk each furrow plowed,
I knew He felt the briars sting,
Tie field was His-- it was His joy,

For low I heard the plowman sing.
He only plowed that He might sow,
There must be seed to scatter wide.
And then I felt His presence near,
He stood in silence by my side.
And so I gave Him all of me--
My hopes, and dreams and inner throne.
All these He scattered far and near,
And left me naught to call my own.
They fell like seed in furrows deep,
And all were buried 'neath the sod.
All that I had went down in death
To wait the mighty breath of God.
He did not leave me then alone
To mourn the loss of earthly things,
To be thus stripped gave greater place
For life His radiant presence brings.
How could I grieve for heart thus plowed?
I covet now no sweeter thing
Than wait with Him till harvest day,
And in the mean time hear Him sing.

--John Wright Follette

There is a wonderful word in one of the Epistles upon which I often like to meditate. We find it in 1 Cor. 1:9. First, we notice there is a call sounding out from the heart of God to all of us as His children. We are called from and unto. Not only from the world and sin in their visible and common manifestations, but from the whole natural order and scheme of the Adamic and human limitations. The call is sounding today by the power of the Holy Spirit down in the depths of our hearts. It may take different forms but we are conscious that it is the will of God calling us (the personal individual) out from the natural and into a life of the Spirit where a certain fellowship may be developed.

It is about this fellowship that I wish to speak. As we ponder over the Word we are conscious of hidden possibilities and of very intimate communion and understanding with the Lord Jesus Christ. As I studied over this question of fellowship I found it was a matter of growth, and that there were phases of it which were logical and orderly. We will consider three phases and as we do so, note that the second is a sequel or outgrowth of the first, and the third, in turn, is the normal and perfect answer to the second. We must have, of course, a common basis for the fellowship. In creation we are given that capacity. We are created in the image of God. That image, in fact, is the capacity of receptivity for spiritual communion with God. We find no tracings of His image upon any other form of His workmanship. The new birth is necessary and all other subsequent experiences in order to deepen and enlarge the power of reception. One may be tempted to think the experience or crisis is the fellowship, but we make a grave mistake often in resting in the experience and not allowing it to act as a door into a new phase of life and fellowship. All experiences are beautiful, wonderful and uplifting; but do not park on any one of them. They are never in themselves the life or fellowship. They are but doors. They are to work out, in and through us a manifestation of the power and glory of God; to introduce us to and give us qualifications for the life. Salvation gives us an introduction, as it were, to Christ, but we must have more than an introduction. There is a merely bowing acquaintance. Many have that. They go to church on Sunday and bow to the Lord, but He wants us to come closer, to tarry often and to share in the interests which are upon His heart.

He wants our hearts to understand Him and desires a platform upon which He may come to break the bread and pour out the water of life, thus beginning a spiritual adjustment so that when we are released from this present here and new we will know how to move. The Lord always had such lovely long-distance vision; He never seemed to be upset with the immediate present but was continually looking beyond. Had it not been for that long-distance vision, He never would have dared to put into the hands of those trembling, weak apostles, the glorious torch of divine revelation. Do you not think that He knew they had wiggly, wobbly natures? Did He not know that Peter would lie and swear and curse? Certainly He did, but I have a God who can look at those things and yet never be fazed by them, because He saw Peter way down through the years to come, serving Him as a strong man of God. Vision and faith did that. It was because of these that He refused to be upset by the manifestation of that local, present condition. Are you bound by your immediate present condition? Are you interpreting your life by the things which just now touch you? If so, you are missing what He has in store for you. These present material things are only passing and effervescent. Make them serve you; get out of them everything you possibly can. I often told my students that they should try to get something out of everything that touched their lives, even the tragic experiences.

Now the very first movement to which we are introduced in connection with this fellowship, is a very normal and logical one. It came one day to the heart of Jesus to invite His disciples--and everyone throughout the whole age who desired it--to enter into it.

When He ministered He did so first and primarily to the House of Israel. But He found no receptivity there, for Israel refused the message, and when He found He couldn't minister to them He changed His tactics. He had worked His miracles, desiring to help Israel, but they refused His help. Our Lord knew that if they would not receive it somebody else would, and I have often thought of this in connection with the outpouring of the Spirit. The Lord started something wonderful but if we do not watch our step someone else will come along and walk off with the blessings and that which He planned for us. Are we aware of the full meaning of the moving of the Spirit? And do we know why the Spirit is moving here and being lifted there? Keep sensitive to God and know why He is dealing with you as He does.

When Jesus found that as a nation there was no response, He turned and did the thing that He always does. When the great mass refuse to follow, He begins to deal with the remnant. Did you know that God was a God of remnants? When Israel failed He had a remnant. When the Church as a body fails to testify and move on with Him, He takes from her midst a remnant. He is continually sifting and sifting, and then He takes the few kernels and sifts again. Have you ever felt Him sifting you? He is after saints to bring them into His highest purpose for them. When the great masses refuse to respond to the message and have no ear to hear, He begins to sift till He can get a remnant that will listen. How many out of that great mass of five or six thousand, do you suppose, really followed Him ? He had to sift continually and take out a remnant of those who would follow on in His further revelations.

Sensing the national failure He turns to the individual and says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." He so longs to have hearts and lives united with Him in the thoughts and purposes He has for them, that He turns and invites all those who are heavy laden to come unto Him. It is as if He would say, "You have walked with this burden upon you now for centuries; you have walked to the temple and you have walked home again with the same burden; you have walked to the Pharisees, to the scribes and leaders with your burden but walked home without any peace or victory in your life. Let Me tell you what to do." He doesn't say, "Come to the temple" nor does He invite them to any shrine; He doesn't invite them to any priest or philosopher, but only to Himself, for He is the center and supply for all that any heart may need, so He says, "Come unto me." By that He means to an individual personal contact with Him. This mass movement is all out of order; things don't move in great masses; His dealings are always with the individual.

Now please remember that when Jesus came He didn't come simply to bring us happiness or joy; He didn't come just to bring us rest. All of these are included in one great element which He brought and of which He knew the world was in desperate need. He came to bring life. Death reigned everywhere--spiritual death. Oh, yes, men could run and jump and sing and dance, but it was all physical. So when Jesus came He said to them, "I have come for this purpose, that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly." Not merely life enough to put a little breath in you and perhaps get you to heaven but life that will expand into an abundant display of God. We don't know very much about this abundant life. We may know something of its joy and exhilaration. But the life more abundant means something far above all that, and I fear most of us are touching only the fringes of the possibilities that this life holds.

Now here we are, strange personalities, yielded and surrendered, washed and lined up on the sin question and possessors of this marvelous life. We contact Him and the Spirit thrills us and we are conscious of that wonderful new life so that we feel we want to go out and convert the world. This new life wants to express itself and it is right that it should. It wants to go and preach and serve the Lord. If you are really born you have life.

Now the Lord understood all this and He knew that the first movement in this new life would be manifested in a fellowship of service for Him. He was very wise in meeting the situation and seems to say, "Now just wait a minute." But someone may say, "Wait ? Why, I have peace and victory, my burden is lifted and why should I wait?"

But He bids us listen till He has finished what He was about to say, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you---." And as we look we see a yoke--yes, a yoke. And we hear Him say, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me." But we say, "What do I want to do with a yoke ? That great big

clumsy thing to hang around my neck when I am free! No, no," and we turn away.

But if we are open to His voice we will hear Him say, "Come, wait, fill I put this yoke upon you. I bore a yoke and let me say that I am not quarreling with you because you have this new life; I know you have it, but if I left you alone in the manifestation of the new life you might never know the full meaning of real fellowship with me. New life alone never brings to you the burden that I am bearing." We say, "Oh, I am willing to do anything! I want to go as a missionary and work for you." But He answers, "Yes, I know you want all of that but I wear a yoke because I am bearing a particular burden and I want you to fellowship with me in service. Remember, I have my head under the yoke and there is a bow in this yoke for you." As long as you have your head in that yoke, you will not be doing the wrong thing. All this energy that you feel, all this desire to serve, and all these gifts will run in a channel which will be effectual in glorifying God; for this yoke is His will and as long as you are being yoked with Him His will is being accomplished. When He stands still then you will stand still and when He pulls, you will pull; in this way you will be having fellowship in service; you will be co-workers with Him, not for Him; serving with Him because you are yoked up.

I was born on a farm and I remember we had two oxen called Punch and Judy. I learned many a lesson there. One thing I noticed was that when those two oxen were obedient to walk in the path which was directed for them, everything was all right, but just as soon as they started wanting their own way--as folk will do sometimes when they don't want to do the will of the Lord--then there was trouble. One ox would pull one way and the other ox the other way and that was a tragedy, for when night came and our man, David, who helped father on the farm, would take off that yoke, their necks would be badly rubbed. The will of their director had galled them because they refused to obey that will. Did you ever have your neck galled? If so, let me give you a little remedy. Take the ointment of the Name of the Lord and apply it as a salve to that sore neck. He says, "My name is as ointment poured forth."

Another thing I noticed about these oxen was that when-ever they had to stop, they would look around and see some green grass that they wanted. They didn't see it as long as they were moving along and pulling together, but just as soon as they stood still they saw it and oh, they wanted it so badly! It looked so green and fresh. "Why not have it? We are just standing still." Do you know when the most severe temptations come? It is when you are standing still. When you are moving right along in the conscious presence of the Lord you do not think about the green grass; but you stand still and see if you don't get taken up with things that you never noticed before. They have been all along the road but you had been so occupied with Him that you didn't see them. But now that you are standing still your vision gets filled with other things.

So He says, "Take my yoke upon you, for my will is the most blessed thing that you can ever have." It steadies us; it holds us; it is the means of helping us bear our burden with ease. If you tied the yoke about the middle of one of these oxen and then tied him to the stoneboat, how long do you suppose that ox would go without having trouble? Suppose it were tied around its hind leg? The hind leg is strong, why not tie it there? But you know if that were done it wouldn't be long till the hind leg would be out of joint. How are you bearing the burdens that God has laid upon you? Is your leg pulled out of joint so much that you cannot walk in the Spirit anymore? If so, then you have been bearing your burden in the wrong way, "Oh," but you say, "I cannot understand what the Lord is trying to do with me. ! don't seem to be getting anywhere with Him." Perhaps you have the yoke tied around your middle and you are bearing the burden in a way He never intended you should. Let the yoke be fastened about your neck. The neck stands for subregion and when the will of God rests upon my neck I show that I am in sub-mission, that I am working

in perfect co-operation with my divine Companion.

One of the Gospels is called the Ox Gospel--Mark, the Gospel of Service. An ox was sometimes used as a sacrifice. You may either be a sacrifice or a servant. Can you be an ox for Him ? You know when you get yoked up with Him you get so close to Him that you can get His very breath; you can see His eyes, sense the pressure and feel the pull that is upon His heart so that you are consumed with Him instead of scampering around on some hillside. It is then that your service is sanctified, and owned of Him; kept where He wants it because you are yoked up with Him.

Now all these things which He asks us to take are symbolic. Our first service for Him is always manifested in some kind of activity and when we are made partakers of His life it moves out in some manifestation of service. Then how wise He is! The instant that He finds our love going out in service He says, "Now wait a minute! Get yoked up with Me and you will be safe." Otherwise that manifestation will get us nowhere; it may be a display but there will be no fruitage.

Now the next thing after He mentions the yoke, He says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." He has already given us the rest; that is an immediate possession--a gift. But having given the rest He wants us to learn of Him. Learn what? You say, "I am all right." No, we are but babes in Christ, little inquiring babes. Now little babes can be saved and sanctified and baptized and have gifts; all of this is not a sign of maturity. He wouldn't even give them to us, excepting, that in their reaction they mature us. Remember, it is never a sign that we are deeply spiritual or wonderfully developed in God when He baptizes or gives gifts. He baptizes us because we are babes that need life and help and then upon these weak bodies He deposits the gifts of heaven.

So Jesus said, "Take my yoke.., and learn of me." "Learn, when we have had all these wonderful experiences?" Why, yes, bless your heart! He has only started to get you ready, to introduce you to the schoolroom. He saves, sanctifies, baptizes and gives us the gifts and then sets us down in the primary department, puts a primer in our hands and says, "Now learn to spell." And then we begin to learn all sorts of lessons in obedience, lessons which will develop us and make us mature; and then He moves us up to the second grade. Oh, I know some of you thought you were graduated and ready to sit on a throne with the Lord! What under heaven would some of us do sitting on a throne as we are now? If in the next age He should give us some divine commission which required certain elements of character, and we had not had our training here, whatever would we do ? I am sure it would be a merciful thing to keep us from such a throne experience. Capacity, power, development--these are the things that will qualify us for such positions, and nothing else will ever do it.

Knowing all this, He says, "Take My yoke ... and learn of Me." We think we are serving Him so wonderfully when we are bearing this yoke, but let me enlighten you. He lets us think we are doing something when all the time He is bearing the burden and pulling the load. "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me." Do you see what He is trying to say? "I will take care of the pulling, for I am doing it anyway, only you don't know it." We are to learn of Him because we are stupid and ignorant. Blest beyond words to express, but stupid and untaught.

Just one little secret in connection with this. If the burden gets too heavy and the yoke too hard to bear, there is something wrong. He says, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." His yoke is His will, and the burden is that which we incur by doing His will. So when we find the yoke becomes uneasy and the burden too heavy it is very likely because we are doing our own will and bearing some burden which He has not

laid upon us.

In this verse we find two rests mentioned. First, the rest which He gives in salvation--the burden of sin is lifted and the soul, worn and tired from that burden, enters into the rest thus mentioned. However, as we journey down life's road there will be many burdens to bear, and our hearts oft times will become weary. But ample provision is made, for He says, "Ye shall find rest to your souls." This is progressive discovery. So we find the first phase of this fellowship consists of co-operation in service with our blessed Lord. His yoke (His will) is upon us, the power of His Spirit is thrilling the heart, and life finds a proper channel for its movements. Then God's heart is satisfied, His name glorified and we enter into an understanding of His will and purpose.

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