

Graduation

by John Follette

John Follette's sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and growing in Truth, tailored to individual capacities and spiritual maturity.

Scripture: Matthew 25:15

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Maturity In Christ"

Description

John Follette emphasizes the importance of our attitude toward Truth and our ability to receive it, highlighting three classes of people mentioned by Paul: natural, spiritual, and carnal man, determined by our love for and embracing of the Truth. The New Testament shows a progression from children to grown-up sons, symbolizing growth and learning as ongoing processes in our spiritual journey. Just as Jesus grew and learned in His human aspect, we are called to continually grow and learn in our faith, moving from one degree of glory to another.

Transcript

It is our attitude toward Truth, and our power to receive that classifies us. Paul mentions three classes of people: natural; spiritual; carnal man. The thing which determines the class to which we belong, is our capacity to understand: our love of Truth; our embracing the Truth, and letting it work in us. We should ask ourselves the question: "Am I actually a lover of the Truth?"

Gradation is all through the New Testament. It speaks about children, even little children, and by and by about sons and grown-up sons. Do you see a development? That is God. There is nothing static in Him. Gradation is also mentioned with regard to food: milk, meat, and strong meat.

He sometimes gets the superfluous stuff, the non-essentials, out of the way. He says "Let us grow in grace and love:" Two words in the Word of God have intrigued me: one is "TO GROW"; the Other is "TO LEARN." There is nothing in the two words of instantaneous acquisition, or grasping or holding. Salvation may be in a moment, but growing, and learning are processes. I am glad to find that they even relate to our Lord in His human aspect. When he took up the human concept to manifest and show to God what the Adam should be, He was restricted to it, and He GREW in stature and knowledge. HE GREW; HE LEARNED!

"And though He were The Son of God, yet LEARNED He the things of God through a law of suffering:" (Heb. 5:8) Well, that's the lovely Christ we have. Do you think we are exempt? No, Jesus said, "No scholar

is above his master:' We can grow just as much as we want to, and we can learn just as much as we want to. For both involve a process, but not an immediate possession. I can be saved in a moment, but it takes a lifetime to develop what God is after.

We am changed from one degree of glory to another. We am still being changed. Note how the Revelation Churches made a display of what they did. "I know thy works (now don't bring out all that to Me), but I have somewhat to say to YOU."

God is here, and He has plenty of food, but our portion of it is determined by how we react to the Truth. Proverbs 30:8 says, "Feed me with food convenient for me." The original reads: "Feed me with food which is my daily portion." What food may feed one, may not feed another who may not be able to grasp that portion of the Word at all, because we are all living on different spiritual levels. Our powers of receptivity have to be built up, and the hunger has to be created in us so that God can meet us.

So many people say, "You have this, and you have that -- God is good to this one, and God isn't good to that one." Now don't do that way. When He gave, it says distinctly in Matthew 25:15: "He gave to each according to his ability." How many can see that giving was governed by the individual, and not by God. He gave according to their capacity. The giving was regulated by the instrument; not by God. Yet people always say, "God did this, and God did that, and gave that one such and such." That's not true. God gives according to the receptivity of the individual, the capacity that is them. Now, none of us is accountable for that; we wake up with what capacity we have.

In John 21, throe kinds of sheep am mentioned: lambs (lambkins), sheep, sheep (old sheep), Jesus begins with the diminutive: "Pasture My little sheep." His first concern is His flock, but He is concerned with the potential sheep; not the old one. One can't do much with them.

That is why I covet young people, because their thought patterns haven't all been arranged for them; their little philosophies haven't all been cooked up by some evangelist or Bible teacher, or somebody else, and all fixed for them. I want young people who are freed, and cleared from a lot of that technique to which they have to surrender and die. I often say, "Don't read too much. You will probably have to die to all of it anyway."

John 21:15-17 says "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (agapao -- love unto sacrifice) thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea Lord; Thou knowest that I love (phileo--am fond of) Thee. He saith unto .him feed My lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (love unto sacrifice) thou-Me? He saith unto Him, Yea Lord; Thou knowest that I love (am fond of) Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (phileo -- fond of) thou Me? Peter was grieved be-cause He said unto him the third time, lovest thou Me? And he said Unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love (am very fond of) Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep,"

Peter can only come up to "phileo" -- I am very fond of You; not "agapao" -- a love unto sacrifice. -- Note: We get a beautiful lesson here. When we cannot measure up to the strong place He would have us reach, He comes down to us, and meets us in the measure of love of which we are capable. So the third time Jesus says, "Are you very fond of Me?" or "Am I dear to you?" This breaks poor Peter's heart, and he confesses, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I am fond (phileo) of Thee (not agapao)."

There are different methods of feeding too, which are not brought out in translations. Notice that the original words are different:

1. Lambs -- lambkins -- graze. My lambkins; you (Peter-shepherds) have to go out and find the food; they are not safe to choose.
2. Sheep -- immature -- lesser sheep who yet have to be grazed; they are not yet safe or able to discern error.
3. Sheep -- old sheep -- feed; should be able by now to be turned out into pasture, and have "their senses exercised to discern truth from error."

I ask the Lord to send me the people Who will be helped. So I always pray to keep away the people Who can't be helped, but bring in the People who need help, and know they need it, and are anxious to receive it. Then, I feel, that creates an atmosphere in which the Spirit of God can move. I have often prayed people out of the meeting, and prayed them in:

When Jesus taught, it was the same. He didn't have one message for everybody. He had a message for the multitude; peculiarly the message with physical phenomena, such as healings and visions; the things which would attract them physically. He used all of those as He taught in fascinating parables and stories, but, when He was alone with His disciples, Scripture says, "He expounded all things to them." Can you see the difference? "For without parables He did not speak to the multitude"; only with them. When He was alone with receptive hearts -- some that He could coach a little more, He was able to open even more.

If we follow the gradation in the New Testament, illustrated by those who followed Him, -we will be surprised to find He is always the .center, and about Him moves this multitude; it gradually reduces and reduces, until it becomes quite a unique little group, who can really have an ear to hear. In Revelation it says over and over: "To him that hath an ear, let him hear;" -- those who have capacity to hear. So I pray, for those who have ears, to come.

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