

The Purpose of Adam's Test

by John Follette

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of spiritual growth through understanding the Word of God and the significance of Adam's test in God's plan for humanity.

Scripture: John 8:32

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Bible Study"

Description

John Follette emphasizes the importance of growing spiritually through the study of the Word of God. He highlights that true Bible study should lead to spiritual growth rather than just intellectual knowledge, emphasizing the need for the Spirit to interpret and quicken the Word in our lives. Follette warns against being content with mere knowledge of the Bible without experiencing its transformative power. He delves into the creation of man, discussing the divine purpose for humanity to reflect the image of God and the necessity of moral character development through testing and discipline.

Transcript

In 1Peter 2:2 we find a very suggestive statement or command, "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Some people seem to think it reads, "That ye may be happy thereby," or "That ye may be refreshed." One might be both happy and refreshed in reading the Word; but the ultimate and final purpose of all real Bible study is given here, That ye may grow thereby. It is the reaction upon the spirit of the man that counts.

What effect or power has the Word upon your life? Do you continue to be just the same in spiritual measure, or do you find there is a mighty and mystical power moving in your inner being when the Word is mixed with faith, which causes you to grow ? I do not want to discourage anyone from Bible study--we need to know our Bible better. But even in this department of our Christian life there lurks a danger, "For the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." One may know the letter of the Word and its prophecies and be able to teach and preach and handle the Word wonderfully, from an intellectual point, and yet quite fail of the purpose God has in giving revelation. Unless one has the Spirit who breathed the Word, to interpret and quicken it to the inner life, there can be no growth spiritually. There may be amazing growth in mind and interest but these alone are not what God is after. So there is danger in knowing the scriptural settings of many of the doctrinal subjects which hold the attention of Christians and yet failing to have the power and spiritual significance of the same wrought out and reflected in the life and conduct of the one who knows all about the matter.

I think just now of the truth of the Second Coming--one of the choice teachings today. What a Blessed Hope! We could not fit in with any program of man and would be absolutely at sea did we not cherish this Hope and have the strength of its courage to back us. But why know all the technical prophecies and verses and their hair-splitting issues; why be able to chart the course of all nations and peoples, and not be ready when He comes! It is like studying a timetable and being able to name all the stations (in their order) and give the mileage, give descriptions of the country, and population of the cities, and alas! not have your ticket! I would rather read slowly and digest the Word than to read much and not have it made alive. We sit beneath a blaze of light these days--how much light has been converted into Life? Let us keep balanced. We do not discourage the study of the Word, but let us trust His Spirit to quicken it to us and let it have power to cause us to grow.

We read in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Here a suggestion of the purpose of study is given us. It shall set us free. Do not limit that to sin or to the apparent failures where we need the power of His redemption to liberate us. Truth is universal and absolute. No one has a corner on it. It is most powerful. It frees us from all bindings of the old creation, its teachings, philosophies and earthborn visions. As truth enters it frees us from mental and traditional hangovers of the old life. We need its continual liberating power. Why? "That we may grow thereby."

The new creation of Christ-life feeds upon the Spirit of truth. The revelation dawns and we are conscious that we are in a new realm. The mighty salvation, the glorious Baptism, the call of God, the thrusting out into service---all are wonderful and of God. But not one of them in itself can mature a soul. None are given because they can mature one--they are given because we are immature and need to grow. How many disappointed people there are I Do not mistake me. Not that they are disappointed in a very real and moving experience, but so many have found that the experience, in itself, did not do what they had expected. They had wonderful and marvelous experiences, yet after being in the way a while, they found they had to grow and be subject to a "process of becoming" and a life of discipline and training if ever they hoped to realize in actual life the vision of possibility held out in the experiences themselves. All experiences, services rendered, manifestation of His life in us are to an end--transformation, conforming, growth, building, edification, perfecting. So do not "park" on any one of the highways of the divine plan. Keep your vision up where it belongs. Let your thought life in these matters hold correct perspective and keep your emphasis on the things the Word has it on. Study and desire and hunger for the truth that you may grow and come into the purposes of God for you.

This matter of growth brings to mind the thought of God in our first parents. For a little study let us turn to the account of creation as given in Genesis. Here we find that God creates man. The Hebrew word, bara, suggests a specific act, not a process, not an evolving and coming from a lower order. In the act of creation man became a partaker of human nature. That is, he was created by God a human being--he possessed the natural, human make-up. In the Word we find there are four natures mentioned--the divine, angelic, human, and animal. These are each a special and specific order or form.

God is characterized by the divine nature--there are certain attributes, but we cannot go into detail concerning them. Enough to say, He is bound, limited as God, the Absolute, by the nature He bears--divine in character. The angels bear a nature quite their own. They are not God nor are they human; they are a creation of God--spiritual beings in a class and for a purpose of ministry all their own. Man never becomes an angel--nor are our dead ever angels.

Then the human nature is below the angelic and is characterized by certain marks which keep it so. And below that is the animal nature and that in turn is bound by certain laws and limitations which hold it as such. Each nature in turn has a structural law and is held by such. The animal never becomes human, neither does the human become angelic. Each retains its identity and potential values.

In making man, or creating him, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." This refers to a moral and spiritual likeness as suggested by Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10 and 1 Cor. 11:7. This image is in the form of personality; the stamp God placed upon him lifts man above all lower creation. The lower order is wonderful and many times shows marked signs of intelligence, yet no animal can respond to the appeal and conviction of the Holy Spirit; but fallen man can and does. The coin was lost, but it still retained the superscription and character of a coin--it did not turn into a potato or a stone. It was out of circulation and failed to fulfill its desired purpose when lost. It may have been a very shiny coin--but lost!

Man in the realm of the human--the fashion in which he was originally created, had two characteristic marks which I wish we might remember in relation to his first appearance, as God made him. He was limited and dependent. Please keep this in mind--he is purposely made so. In the act of creation he is limited, by the structural law of his nature, to do or not to do certain things. He can move and is expected to move only in certain relations because of his design and make-up. He is dependent upon God for life and guidance. He has no life source in himself but has the norm of his being in God. Their wills are still one and he draws life, inspiration and power from the Head--God. He can of himself originate nothing. He may do a thousand and one things, permitted in his power of manifestation, but he is dependent upon God for life and purpose. Let us remember that this limitation was not due to sin, for so far no sin had come to man, the creation of God.

So Adam stands before God, a human being--a man. But listen! Do not rest there. He is made for God's glory; that is, God is to be glorified through him; and the image of God, His likeness and character, are to be reflected through him. How? God's plan is revealed. In his make-up as a personality he has, along with his intellectual and emotional life, a strange power vested in him--he has a will. In the development of this man all departments of his personality are to find expression he is to grow.

As man stood before God, as we say, a created man---he was just that. But he had neither grown into, nor manifested the hidden, potential values of the human which were in him, which should have come forth in a display of the likeness of God--to the glory of God.

May I help you to see something here. There is a difference between nature and moral character. Adam had the one, human nature, by the act of creation, but not a developed moral character. He was holy and sinless. The human was unfallen, for nature is the result of a free, specific gift, while moral character is the result of testing, proving, discipline and culture. Again we come face to face with a divine law or principle which is always in evidence in the

economy and purpose of God, namely--moral character is built by God only by a process of testing. It is ever so. Do not quarrel in spirit over this matter. Face it and see it from God's point of view and rejoice. It is one of the divine arrangements. Since it is so, the moral character God desired to see displayed in the unfolding of the human nature in Adam, must be subjected to proof or test. So He places him under probationary law. Gen. 2:16, 17.

Many dear souls think it unkind of the Lord to make such a beautiful place, put man in it and then put that forbidden tree in the way. Well, dear child, listen! It was the best and only thing He could do if there ever

was to be a display of the purpose in making man. He has a will. How can it be tested if not in a place where it may have power to choose right from wrong. ? How can you make a choice if there is nothing on which to exercise the power to choose ? Therefore we find the test established. To cause Adam to fail ? No, to cause him to grow. Friends have asked me, "What do you think would have happened if Adam had not failed in that test?" I believe there would have been another test and still another to release the strength and beauty of the moral character, or likeness of God, in a wonderful unfolding by way of the human nature. In the strength of the one test he would have been placed in the next, a continual development and displaying of the image of God. From the very beginning it was God's desire that man should grow.

But we must leave Adam, the human, in a total wreck. The failure had a fearful reaction on the whole realm of his make-up. Through that surrender of his will he became a fallen wreck--spirit, soul and body. There was a seeming--only seeming--defeat of God's purpose to see a man after His own image. But we shall trace the purpose of God to the satisfaction of His heart. He is never defeated.

So let us grow -- "grow in wisdom and knowledge of our Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ."

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