

FOSTERING SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN OTHERS

By

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In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus taught the value of unselfish service to our brothers. The relation of this basic value to the dynamics of spiritual growth is twofold: First, we grow by serving; as worship gives us spiritual energy, so service is our spiritual exercise. Second, others grow because we serve. We are called to know the joy of helping to light the way for those who sit in darkness. Their spiritual growth may depend on it. In fact, we are actually called to save men, and the URANTIA papers would seem to teach us that this can even be a matter of cosmic life and death. Since this second aspect of service, fostering growth in others--or as the Master called it, saving souls --is so strongly emphasized in the URANTIA Book, this presentation looks at two sides of the commission to save men: First, the human condition, and second, the saving truth.

* The human condition is that of a finite will creature. Speaking of personality survival, a Solitary Messenger assures us that all will creatures "are to experience one true opportunity to make one undoubted, self-conscious, and final choice." But there is no second opportunity in the face of rejection of the first. (Page 1233:6) Furthermore, in discussing the Adjuster and the soul, * the same author warns that the material and human will can "rescind such a * choice and reject survival" "at any time prior to mortal death" (1218), and that * even if a mortal survives, he "still retains this prerogative of choosing to reject eternal life." (Pages 1218 and 1219) So the human condition is the necessity of persistently choosing life or death.

* Jesus spoke seriously to his apostles, especially to Peter, concerning the danger facing them. In his farewell discourse, he warned them, "This night you will all be in great danger of stumbling over me," (Page 1962) and in the resurrection appearance to Peter, Jesus said, "Peter, the enemy desired to have you, but I would not give you up." (Page 2039)

We are saved by our living faith in God, but like Peter we need help, we need the saving truth that there is one who will not give us up. It is a matter of life and death.

* Therefore Jesus went on to say to Peter, "No longer should you be concerned with what you may obtain from the kingdom but rather be exercised about what you can give to those who live in dire spiritual poverty." (Page 2039)

* The clear mandate of the URANTIA revelation for our time is to carry on what the apostles of Jesus were commissioned to do: "All URANTIA is waiting for the proclamation of the ennobling message of Michael, . . . the living, spiritual reality of the gospel of Jesus." (Page 1041) And over and over again the Master associates the proclamation of this message with the saving of men's souls.

* In his Ordination Sermon to his apostles, Jesus said, "You are commissioned to save men. . . ." (Page 1571) The URANTIA Midwayers on Page 1670 refer to the "saving message: the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man." In sending out pairs of apostles on the third preaching tour, Jesus told them to "proclaim the saving truth that man is a son of God." (Page 1681) Again the midwayers teach, in describing the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross, that "human salvation is real;" and is based on "the fact of the fatherhood of God and its correlated truth, the brotherhood of man." (Page 2017)

* Jesus in his morontia appearances particularly stressed the saving nature of the gospel, and in his final appearances he repeated this when he said to a gathering including the apostles, the women's corps and their associates, and about fifty other leading disciples, "Proclaim the whole truth of the good news, not just a part of the saving gospel. . . . Sonship with God, by faith, is still the saving truth of the gospel of the kingdom." (Page 2052)

I close with one of Jesus' most graphic statements about what one person can do for another. Speaking to his young associate working in the shipyard, concerning the challenge of helping the unjust foreman of the shop, the Master said,

* "It is a marvelous and transforming experience to become the living channel of spiritual light to the mortal who sits in spiritual darkness. If you are more blessed with truth than is this man, his need should challenge you. Surely you are not the coward who could stand by on the seashore and watch a fellow man who could not swim perish! How much more of value is this man's soul floundering in darkness compared to his body drowning in water!" (Page 1430:3)

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.