

Canadian Pulpit.

No. 8.

Spiritual Prosperity.

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TEXT—Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth.—I. John, 1: 2.

Whether Gaius was strong or weak in body the Apostle is quite certain the soul of his beloved friend is in a healthy and prosperous state. And he wishes above all things he may be as vigorous and "well-to-do" in body as he is in soul. Bodily health and prosperity in life are so eagerly sought after that we may well inquire as to the standard to which these temporal blessings are compared, "Even as thy soul prospereth." Can we wish our friends to enjoy health and prosperity in proportion to the healthiness of their souls? Would it not in many cases be a prayer for extreme emaciation and poverty? Would we desire this rule of proportion applied to our own lives and be no more strong and prosperous in body than we are in spirit? Our main concern then is to know what is meant by spiritual health. It implies a love of truth and living in the truth. The soul that is born of the spirit of truth, cradled and nurtured in the truth as it is in Christ is both healthy and prosperous.

As the laws and conditions of health are necessary truths to him who would enjoy a healthy body, so also are the great spiritual facts of God, Christ, sin, righteousness, retribution, a necessity to him whose soul is healthy. He must live in harmony with God. Like the apostle Paul, to believe in Christ is to live Christ, and to seek that which will honour Him in all the affairs of life. In every believer there dwells the spirit of Christ, and, therefore, in the spiritual experience of such there will be found one or all of the following works of soul prosperity:

1 A growing likeness to Christ. We grow to be like that upon which the mind dwells most. The associations of life, our companions and surroundings leave their impression on our lives, and so daily communion with God, letting the mind dwell upon thoughts that are pure and godly are certain to bring the mind and soul into richer spiritual experiences and to cause the inner life to reflect the mind of the Lord, and thus we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." At best our lives reflect the mind of the Lord very feebly, but at the same time what is feeble may become stronger, and Christian life become living Christ over again in so far as the human can live, the divine.

2 A deeper sympathy with the purposes of God to man. No one can enter into the mind of the Saviour without being deeply concerned about the well being of his fellow-men. If professed followers of Christ have failed to show any concern for the wants of humanity it was because they failed to grasp the mission of the Son of Man and the eternal purpose of God the Father in sending His Son to die for sinners. Is that soul in a healthy state that seldom think of or prays for those who have never heard the Gospel? Is that soul prosperous which acts as if the Lord came to save only a particular class, nation or church, and overlooks the blessed truth that Christ came to save the lost? Whatever may be the final award for those, who with all their hearts believe in the words of the great commission "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," there certainly can be no joy in prospect to those who shut out from their hearts this imperative command of the Lord of Life. And there can be no genuine prosperity to the soul which does not strive, however it may fail of performance, to carry out the purposes of the grace of God to man.

3 There will be an increasing desire for spiritual things. The soul grows by that it feeds upon. And the more it assimilates the more it can appreciate the word of truth. This will be shown in perhaps very simple ways. A well-known verse has through some experience in life become a very mine of truth. The place of worship may be very plain, but through hallowed memories it has become our "meeting" place with God, the place where refreshed and strengthened we go forth to do nobler things for our Lord. Such souls "go from strength to strength." It is not enough now to have an intellectual idea of God—there is a longing desire "to know even as we are known." Not enough to have tasted, and enjoyed, too, "the milk for babes," but there is a hunger "for the strong meat which is for men." No one is so keen for more knowledge as he who has gone the farthest in the field of research. The novice does not care because he does not know enough to care, and no seeker of truth seeks more eagerly for more than he who has already found the truth. For a healthy soul there is no decrepit old age, but a continual renewal of youth and increase of spiritual power.

4 The soul that enjoys spiritual health will overcome all trials. There will be dark days in every Christian's experience, but faith will cling fast to the assurance that all things are ordered well and sure. Reverses, misfortunes, unrealized ambitions are only lessons in that

divine school from which saints graduate to glory. "Is life worth living" seems a foolish question to a man with a healthy spirit, and yet to-day many, with neither poverty nor the prospect of hardship before them, are answering this question by taking their lives. The soul makes the man. Save that and all is saved; lose that and all is lost. See Paul and Silas in prison and there we find healthy spirits that cannot be imprisoned. To such "Hope rises triumphant," and all things are endured as "seeing Him who is invisible." The Christian faith brings the future before our minds as a reality and teaches us how in the highest sense to use the adversities of life. To be "rich toward God" is a good mark of spiritual prosperity. But this type of riches is forged in the furnace of trial and brought forth from the mine of deep heart experiences. All the things we call precious are so to us in proportion to the personal cost. Let us not use mere words, then, in speaking of spiritual health—soul prosperity, but let our experience prove daily that we prize above all things the attainment of character "the spirit and mind which follow near our blessed Lord, and seek to live the life that is lived with Christ in God. Let us, like Gaius, not only give good evidence of the truth that is in us by walking in the truth, but by all the means of grace, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If it is our heart's desire this morning to be right with God in Christ, to possess a mind and character that will reflect the character of the Perfect One, to be in sympathy with Christ and His mission to men, to hunger and thirst after spiritual things, then we shall enjoy spiritual health, and shall possess that measure of soul prosperity through which we will commend the Christian religion to others and become, like the beloved Gaius, the means of blessing brethren and strangers and show forth in all the Church "the bond of perfectness"—charity. Then, and then only, will it be a blessing for us to wish above all things that we may prosper and be in health even as our souls prosper.



REV. JOHN HAY, B.D.

A child of God! He is the child of one who has all power in his hands. He can raise up or cast down, kill or make alive, of One who loves his children as no other one ever loved; of One who invites his children, while they sojourn here, not only to cast their burdens, but their every care, upon him, the least as well as the greatest. He careth for them, and will not lay upon them one feather's weight more than is for their good. Under their burdens he will sustain them.

A child of God! He is one for whom the Father gave his Son to die, and from whom that Father will not withhold one thing which the personal good of his child requires; of one for the good of whom he will make all things work together; of one whom he will ultimately make an heir with himself and a joint heir with his Son, to an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away (I Peter i. 4); of one who has prepared a mansion for him in heaven, and will eventually free him ever more from all sufferings, sorrow and death.

A child of God! He is one for whom things are prepared in the future world which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and his future being is to run parallel with that of Him whose child he is.—Rev. Rufus Taylor, D.D.

Church and State.

BY REV. WM. MOORE, D.D., OTTAWA.

II.

To be sure these tendencies are in a large measure restrained in most Christian countries, notably in our own, by the fact that an immense majority of the people are Christians; and so, with very few exceptions, are our teachers. The teachers in our public schools being god-fearing men and women, no matter how strict the surveillance may be, they cannot but exert a wholesome influence. The character of our teachers may retard, but cannot wholly arrest the process. Principles are stronger than men and gradually mature their fruits in spite of all efforts to restrain or counteract them. Slowly but surely they form to themselves a people fashioned in their own image and then all the restraints of a timid conservatism are swept away.

If there was any other alternative; if, for example, there was any way by which our children could be withdrawn from such unwholesome influences and educated on sound Christian principles, so that their training for the earthly citizenship might be auxiliary to that which should fit them for the heavenly citizenship, perhaps this matter might be of less importance.

But there is not. The hour we have the children in the Sabbath school, which is particularly the children's church (or for that matter the hours of public worship one day in seven), is utterly insufficient to enable us to counteract the influence of mere secular teaching given continuously for six hours a day for five days in the week, and that for two reasons. (1) The mode of instruction is necessarily less direct and effective. The vicarious reading of the Scriptures and the sermonic form of address cannot compete with personal reading and instruction by question and answers. (2) And, besides, neither in Sabbath school nor church can we teach history and the sciences permeated with a Christian spirit, which we must needs do in order to offset the spirit of the age. Moreover, there are far too many children of whom it is true that if they do not get some notion of religion at