

THE WISH OF A FRIEND; OR, HEALTH OF BODY AND HEALTH OF SOUL.

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BODILY health and spiritual health are by no means always found together, many a healthy body is joined to a soul that is diseased, and many an one who is in a happy state as regards his

soul is sick and suffering in body.

A man was once in such good health as to his soul that his friend (who, it appears, had heard of him as ailing in body) could wish nothing better for him than that his body and all his concerns might be in as good a state as his *soul*. This friend was St. John, and the man was Gaius. St. John wrote to him thus: "Beloved, I wish above all things" (or rather, with respect to all things) "that thou mightest prosper and be in health, even as thy *soul* prospereth."

Happy Gaius! And so John thought him. He might desire for him better health of body, yet he thought him happy—this beloved friend—on account of the state of his *soul*. And who knows? Perhaps it was by means of sickness and suffering, as His instrument, that God had brought Gaius to prosper spiritually. It is often so.

But oh, how many there are, with regard to whom we must turn this wish the other way, and desire that their *souls* might be as strong and well as their bodies! How many there are in vigorous bodily health, without an ache or pain, who are woefully ill spiritually, nay, seem to have no spiritual life at all! It need not be so, sickness is not *necessary* to the health of the soul; one blest with a sound body may have spiritual good health also, and may be growing in grace. It *need* not be so; but it often *is* so.

We are not to judge one another. Yet take

some scene where a number of people are gathered together, for business or pleasure, some mixed multitude: with regard to many of them, you are driven to wish that their souls were but in such a state as their bodies seem to be. The gay voices, the loud laugh, the hearty entering into what is going on, the activity and keenness and energy (in none of which perhaps is there the least harm), proclaim health of body, good animal spirits, a sound frame. But is every *soul* there in a sound state? Is every heart at peace with God? Can they "rejoice in the Lord"? In their inner life, are they all prospering? Are they all growing in grace?

Suppose for a moment that in some such mixed multitude the health of the body were suddenly made to correspond with that of the soul. Alas, what a change would be seen! A great part of the assembly would appear to be smitten by some terrible disorder. Rosy cheeks would become pale, robust frames would shrink, the strong would suddenly become weak, the sturdy and active would begin to totter, numbers would sink to the ground, and from the lips of many groans of pain would come. There would be a cry for help, all the doctors of the place would be summoned, the hospitals would no longer have an empty bed!

This is but a *fancy*; perhaps an *idle* fancy; but thus would it be, if the health of the body were suddenly brought into agreement with the health of the soul. Is this a state to be content with? If the weak and pale and sickly and suffering would take all possible means for getting health, will the sick in soul take none?

And yet, all the while, the Healer is near; and He calls all the sick to come to Him! And He never fails, and His terms are "without money, and without price."

He can not only cure the sick, but strengthen the weak. If you would take a *tonic* for a weakly state of body, be not satisfied to go on with a weak and sickly *soul*. "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there?" If you have found healing and life in Christ, seek of Him growth and strength. "He giveth *more* grace." "Abide in Me, and I in you. . . . Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear *much* fruit." "*Grow* in grace." "Ask, and ye shall receive." "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

These are good prescriptions. No physician can prescribe so well for the body as the Great Physician does for the soul. These will not fail.