

## Church Prosperity.

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## II.—What Makes a Church Prosperous?

The success of any church is to be looked for in three directions.

(1). Ministry. If the church be not instituted to amuse, neither can this be the business of the Gospel preacher. The pulpit is not to prophesy only smooth things. It will not be occupied solely with those matters which men like to hear. The church does not exist to flatter the rich, the influential, or the distinguished. The minister is not to frame his sermons around the so-called questions of the day. These relate only to time. Temporal salvation is a very different thing from eternal salvation. A man may possess all that earth can bestow, and yet be unacquainted with Jesus. I have read of a very prosperous man, whom God called a fool, because time and not eternity reigned in his thoughts. With the Bible open before us, none can doubt that the supreme purpose of preaching is to show men and women where they come short of the Divine standard, and to help them, with the Spirit's aid, to correct these defects.

Let us see how some of the early heralds of the cross conducted themselves. They surely were very far from pandering to popular tastes. Before no audiences, under no circumstances, did they ever swerve a hair's breadth from the literal truth of God. I fancy Nathan's message was hardly consoling to King David. It entered his heart like a sword thrust. Herod was anything else than pleased at the words of John the Baptist. The language of the Christ cut men to the very quick. When Paul stood before the dignitaries of the earth, he delivered himself of no soaring oration upon their exalted station. On every occasion he seized the opportunity to reason with sinful humanity of righteousness, temperance and judgement to come. I suppose these were no more "drawing themes" than that they are now. But the Apostle never hesitated.

For a moment, glance backward over the territory we have traversed. If a church is to prosper, its ministers must be godly men, no matter whether they attract the crowd or not. They are not to be chiefly occupied with so-called topics of the day. As a rule, these matters belong to the political arena, the lecture platform, the college classroom, or the press—not to the pulpit. Ofttimes, neither his learning nor his experience enables the preacher to speak intelligently upon these themes. His book is the Bible. From that alone is to come the message he is to deliver. Daniel Webster affirmed, "Many ministers of the present day take their text from Paul and preach from the newspapers. When they do so, I prefer to enjoy my own thoughts rather than to listen. I want my pastor to come to me in the spirit of the Gospel saying, 'You are mortal; your probation is brief; your work must be done speedily. You are immortal too; you are hastening to the bar of God; the Judge even now standeth at the door.' When I am thus admonished," adds Mr. Webster, "I have no disposition either to muse or to sleep."

(2). With these words on the pulpit, we now pass on to the pew. Here, again, we turn to the Bible for light. A magnificent building, with all its beautiful appurtenances, does not constitute a church. These may be present, and yet life may be absent. The shrouded form may lie in a splendid casket. But silks and velvets are powerless to confer life on a corpse. We should never forget that neither wealth, intellect, nor social standing of members makes a church prosperous. In fact, unconsecrated wealth, social station, and mental learning, are not a help, but always a hindrance to any church.

On the day of Pentecost those who gladly received the Word were added to the church. They were converted. No other person can be a living member of Jesus. No other individual should be a member of Christ's church. If any church is to prosper its members must be godly men and women. The self life must be abandoned. The old man must be crucified, in fact as well as in word. We must open our hearts for the incoming of the Holy Spirit. We must live the resurrection life.

This is the *sine qua non* of success. Without it, all else is idle, futile, useless. No church can ever prosper where its members possess only a Sunday religion. We cannot pray acceptably on our knees in the church, if we prey on our neighbors in the business world. Our holy living through the week must support our earnest petitions and pious devotions in the synagogue on Sabbath. Day by day, are we keeping the Lord's commandments? Are our actions pure and clean? Do we follow the example of Jesus? Unless such be the conduct of its members, it is impossible for any church to enjoy spiritual prosperity. Only one thing else need be mentioned in this connection.

(3). The supreme test of church success is found in the character of its work. We are here to do the work which the Master began. We have no other loadstone for our feet. The Bible declares Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. For this object, are we giving, praying, laboring? Are we constantly found in the highways, compelling the people to come in? I have read that this is what the Saviour commands. The Lord bids every Christian to gather up the people from lanes and alleys, that his house may be filled. Would that every Baptist would to-day hear the voice of God, saying, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Any church with a faithful ministry, a faithful membership with faithful work, will be successful. It cannot help being so. There are, of course, many creeds. But, after all, there are only two kinds of churches. Without the Holy Spirit, no matter what else may be said of it, any church is dead. But with the Holy Spirit's blessed presence it will prosper. And it is a faithful ministry, faithful members, and faithful work, which cause the Holy Spirit to brood over any congregation in love.

HUNTINGDON, PA.

## Deacon George W. Chipman.

The funeral of the late Deacon George W. Chipman was held in Lorimer Hall, Tremont Temple, on the afternoon of the 27th. In the morning an opportunity was given to friends to look for the last time upon his face. The platform was one mass of floral designs, testifying to the love and respect which his relatives, church and business companions bore for the deacon. A large oil painting of the deceased occupied a conspicuous position on the platform, draped with black. The service began with the singing of "Abide with Me" by the Tremont Temple quartet. The Scripture lesson was read by Rev. Henry C. Graves, assistant pastor of Tremont Temple. Prayer was offered by Rev. Dr. R. J. Adams of Cambridge. The quartet then rendered "Cast thy bread upon the waters." Dr. George C. Lorimer, pastor of the Tremont Temple, then paid a brief eulogy to the deceased. He brought a message of grief from the venerable Rev. Dr. Howe, now in his 93d year, who has been associated with Deacon Chipman for a half century. Dr. Lorimer referred to the ideal of a free church which Deacon Chipman had at heart. Not until the mortgage on the church was greatly reduced last June did he appear at ease. Rev. Dr. Alvah Hovey gave some interesting reminiscences of Deacon Chipman, illustrating his wide range of interests and sympathies, and Rev. Dr. Justin D. Fulton spoke touchingly of his effectiveness as a Christian layman. Dr. Lorimer made the closing prayer, and the benediction was pronounced by Rev. Frank Cressey. On Sunday morning Dr. Lorimer delivered a Memorial Sermon to a great audience in Tremont Temple, and after this service, at the session of the Sunday school, appreciative references to Deacon Chipman were made by Mr. L. H. Rhodes, Deacon Chipman's successor in the superintendency of the school, Deacon O. M. Wentworth, ex-Mayor Hart, and Hon. C. W. Kingsley.

The following is a full abstract of Dr. Lorimer's memorial sermon:

*And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of*

*water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.—Isaiah 32:2.*

Commentators with marked unanimity apply these predictions to the Messiah. I agree with them as far as they go, but they do not go far enough. There is something more than a direct reference to Him; there is a broad doctrine that manhood is the supreme saving force in society, and that civilization is to be purified and elevated to beneficent activity, not so much by science and by material results, nor by ecclesiastical orders, as by the strength, sagacity, and spirituality of the human personality and influence.

Take the figure as a whole and its foremost feature is that of a rock, the emblem of strength, firmness, stability, whose shadow refreshes, which becomes a place of refuge, and from whose stricken bosom rivers flow forth. Let us remember the genesis of rocks. They are begotten in fire, they are born in struggle. The only way to make rocks is by the furnace and the conflict. When passing through the Alps, or in the West, we are impressed with the thought that the great peaks have shouldered others aside and then risen into prominence. What is true of rocks is true of men. As I read history and study my contemporaries, I see, or think I see, whether they were born to ease, or their personal greatness is the result of sore travail.

These truths are illustrated in the career of late Deacon George W. Chipman. What more pathetic than a lad starting at 13 to hire himself out, walking from point to point, asking: "Do you want a boy?" After trouble, toil, and a pittance, he journeys to Boston. The first temptation—to go to the theatre—he resisted, and said, "No." But there was pain in this also.

Perhaps the thought of himself as a lonely child, made him always tender to children, and his own temptation interested him in young men; one of his desires being, to the last, the establishment of a down-town Young Men's Christian Association.

The determination to rise, like a rock, pushing to the front, led him to enter business for himself. Of course, with his limited capital, he bought at a disadvantage—but character tells; and Mr. Beebe, of one of the great dry goods houses, trusted him. Then came his conviction of sin, and his entrance on church work. But his struggles ended not; he had them in business, and in religion, too, for let no one suppose that he became influential without difficulty and strain.

But when the rock has been produced, the first aspect is not attractive. To the world the Puritans were a disagreeable lot, and Matthew Arnold thought Shakespeare and Virgil would not have been pleased to voyage in the Mayflower with the Pilgrims. Certainly they were not perfect. History proves the church to have been very imperfect; but there has been a totality of influence making for good or she could not have endured. The same is true of men. If they are massive, they may be angular, sharp, overbearing, and may excite antagonism. Cromwell left much to be desired. Luther was certainly criticised. It is not the question, was a man always consistent; was he never wrong; did he never provoke antagonism?—but on the whole did his career make for righteousness? Whatever may have been Deacon Chipman's failures, the drift and bearing of his life were for good. The fact that he gained and retained the affection of the church and the respect of the community, testifies to this.

He had some characteristics that should be dwelt upon, for without reference to them his influence for good cannot be well understood. He had firmness or steadfastness. He was true to his earliest convictions, and he never yielded. He was always in his place in the church. I never knew of any one more regular. He subordinated everything to his religious duties. He would travel miles to be at his prayermeeting. When he went abroad he returned with his notebook filled with plans for his church. Do you wonder that the temple succeeded? It needs all these things to make a masterful character, and that Deacon Chipman certainly was. Our dear friend was also strong in his convictions. If he made up his mind, the thing was pretty sure to be brought to pass which he had resolved on. But he never would press a point, and I do not know a single instance