

Progress and Prosperity

by H.J. Vine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of making progress in God's things and experiencing spiritual prosperity through Jesus Christ, who provides pardon, power, and love to believers.

Scripture: Psalm 27:4, Matthew 9:1, Matthew 14:22, Matthew 28:9, Philippians 3:8, Hebrews 2:12, 1 John 2:2

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Trials And Faith"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about how storms and trials in life are allowed to bring out the qualities of individuals, leading to a deep desire for spiritual progress and prosperity in God. He emphasizes the importance of soul prosperity above all else, as seen in the story of 'beloved Gaius' in 3 John 2. Vine highlights the journey of seeking after Christ, becoming more like Him in faith, meekness, and love, and the assurance that both pardon and power are available to believers through Jesus Christ. He also discusses the significance of Jesus Himself in guiding believers through trials, encouraging them to focus on Him amidst life's storms, and ultimately leading them to worship Him as the Son of God.

Transcript

Storms, difficulties, trials, tempests and rough seas are often allowed to bring out the qualities of the traveller or the spiritual mariner.

Many are awakened, and deep desires to make progress in the things of God have arisen in their souls. They seek prosperity in that which is far more important than any earthly concerns.

And this is right, for the Lord Jesus showed that being rich toward God was the chief thing; and the Holy Spirit said by the apostle John that "beloved Gaius" experienced prosperity of soul, and, along with that, He desired for him health and prosperity in other things (3 John 2). Only soul prosperity is given the first place, the rest is to follow.

We read however of one who has desires but fails to attain what is desired. He makes no progress,--"the soul of the sluggard desireth and has nothing!" On the other hand, so earnest was another in his quest, that he exclaimed, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple" (Ps. 27:4). So today, the Spirit of God leads on those in whom are divine desires after Christ, to behold the glory of the Lord, and thus to become more like Him.

"Like Him in faith, in meekness, love,

In every beautiful grace:

From glory into glory changed

Till we behold His face."

But we do not reach this all at once. A beginning has to be made, and thank God, the start and the finish are ours through no efforts on our part, but solely through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered and died to redeem us eternally, and is coming again to take us to be with Himself and like Himself in the glory of God. Rough seas, as we have said, may intervene, but even these shall but further our highest good.

Pardon and Power

Matthew, who once taxed the true King's earthly people on behalf of the Romans, is nevertheless used of the Spirit to show us Israel's King "the Son of David" (1:1)--Jesus--Jehovah--Saviour-- Emmanuel. Royal, as well as Divine grace, becomes such an One. In this way we find Him acting therefore; and, though some opposed, yet He caused others to glorify God, by the way He met the need of one who was entirely helpless (9:1-8). So helpless was he, that others, relying on the grace and power of the Lord, brought him on a bed to Jesus. What rich and gracious words reached his ears! The Saviour said, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee," and again, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." He rose up and went home.

That was a good start, good progress, and a good finish. Others had the faith, the Lord had the power, and the man received the blessing. Beginning with pardons he received power to walk right home, and on the way he had the Lord's own word-- "Be of good cheer!" or "Be of good courage!"--ringing in his ears.

It is said of believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, "Your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake" (1 John 1:12); and "Ye have an Unction from the Holy One" (v. 20). Both pardon and power are ours: forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. We are also on the road to the Father's House, and that is sure. Let us not lose meanwhile "the happiness of the man . . . whose sins are forgiven . . . to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. 4:6-8. N.Tr.), for we are justified eternally on the principle of faith; but let us "serve the Lord with gladness," whatever difficulties may assail our passage. May we make true progress, always remembering His word, "Son, be of good cheer!"

Jesus Himself

Now although each individual believer receives forgiveness and the power of the Holy Spirit, yet, as he seeks to answer to the present mind of God for those who call on the Name of the Lord, he necessarily finds himself in the company of others. Indeed, after the Lord had used his disciples to feed the five thousand, He constrained them to go on board ship to cross to the other side (Matt. 14:22). He went up into a mountain apart to pray. He was there alone, a beautiful picture of the Son of God, our high Priest at the right hand of God today; for though none were with Him, His thoughts and sympathies were with those He had compelled to voyage across the sea. He knew all about the contrary winds and the raging waves which beset the ship and tested their faith; nor did He leave them to struggle on alone. Jesus Himself came to them walking on the sea.

He knows those who seek to do God's will: "The Lord knows them that are His;" and, as they call on the Lord Himself together, following righteousness, faith, love and peace, He succours and encourages them when they pass through various trials, making Himself increasingly precious in their hearts, as they prosper in the excellent knowledge of their Saviour and Lord.

The disciples, at first, thought it was an apparition which appeared to them in the storm, and they cried out for fear, but Jesus said, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And, at the word of the Lord, Peter received power, and "walked on the water to go to Jesus." Truly he failed after, by withdrawing the eyes from the Lord to look at the boisterous elements; but the Saviour lifted the doubting one into the ship, and the storm ceased. Yes, that is what many are distracted with today, they look at the stormy winds! and to do that, the look of faith is taken off the Saviour, who, nevertheless makes Himself better known to us through the tempest.

The disciples came and "worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the SON OF GOD." He accepted their homage. He was their Lord and their God. No testings which we pass through are wasted upon us when Jesus Himself is better known to our glad hearts, and responsively, we worship him, singing,

"Son of God our souls adore Thee,

While upon Thy face we gaze."

Once again then His voice of good cheer was heard, not as before in relation to pardon, but in reference to Himself. We surely can better understand now the spiritual prosperity the apostle Paul sought, when he said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8).

No one loves us like our Saviour. He gave Himself for us. "Christ loved the assembly and gave Himself for it," and He looks forward to the day when He will come again and present it to Himself holy, blameless and all glorious. The waters of judgment and of death could not quench His love. Through all He passed, and, for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, having despised the shame. His love is not lessened now He is risen and triumphant, rather is it free (now that His work for us upon the cross is completed) to lavish itself upon its objects, comforting and cheering them till He takes them to be for ever with Himself.

"All Hail!"

When He rose from among the dead, and met the women who had been at the tomb, our risen, victorious Saviour greeted them with the glad words ALL HAIL! (Matt. 28:9). Again we find Him accepting worship, which no creature true to God could do (see Rev. 19:10), much less Jesus if He were only Man. His very perfection as Man would refuse it. Truly He was David's Son, the King of Israel, but He was also David's Lord. He was truly Man. He was also truly God, and therefore we see Him receiving worship without question. "They came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him." Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, how worthy Thou art of the deep homage of our hearts! Oh, that free from distraction, we might prosper in soul by taking in more of Thine own love and glory, and so respond more fully.

Yes, our living Lord delights in bringing us into the joys of His victory over sin, death and the tomb, hailing us in resurrection life as His own, that we may know we are His brethren. However little our spiritual prosperity may have been, He is not ashamed to call us brethren (Heb. 2:12). Thus He sends His resurrection message by the women--"Go tell My brethren!" To Mary of Magdala He said on the first day of the week, "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to My God

and your God." When He afterwards stood in their midst, then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

What good cheer was theirs, and what good cheer is ours when our souls learn that Jesus has ascended to the Father, and that not only are we accepted in Him, the beloved One, but we are in the same relationship with Himself to our God and Father. It is surely a sign of real soul prosperity when we can truly sing

"His Father, and our Father,

His God and ours Thou art;

And He is Thy Beloved,

The gladness of Thy heart."

Moreover, not only has He ascended, but He is coming again to receive us to Himself, that where He is there we may be also. What a joyful prospect lies before us! He said, "I will come again," and He will not fail to keep His word. Oh, the joy of seeing His face! Oh, the joy of His own heart when He takes home His own, for whom He shed His life's blood! Every moment brings us nearer to that glorious goal. The One we have learned to know in the storm of earth, we shall see in the calm of heaven, and then,

"In heavenly songs this note shall swell,

That Jesus has done all things well."

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