

Prosperity Gospel

Stop it! Cut it out! No more! Enough of these lies about getting an experience of being filled with the Spirit and immediately becoming fantastically successful in soul-winning, church building and miracle working. The fable further suggests that you will be greatly enriched financially, that people everywhere will admire and flock to you and that every rough place in your path will be marvelously smoothed out. You are, so it goes, to have unchallenged success in binding the devil, healing the sick and changing perplexing situations by just pronouncing the magic words. Not So! It is not true!

Some preachers (from Rev. Ike on down) have indeed found themselves become popular because they have turned to this positive "good things" message. Their financial conditions have greatly improved because people are far more willing to be generous to the preacher who tells them smooth things than one who tells them the truth. Abraham was rich, but Isaiah went naked. Daniel sat near the throne, but Jeremiah languished in a pit.

We must not motivate people's obedience to God with promises of wealth, health and happiness. Any devil can be motivated to obey on that basis. God's people desire to walk with Him for Who He is . . . Because He is God; and the Holy Seed in them cries for holiness.

There *is* victory to be enjoyed. There *is* a positive Gospel. People must be informed of their *spiritual* riches in Christ. God *has* covenanted Himself to supply the needs of His people who obey Him. But let us not get the spiritual picture all out of focus with carnal lenses. The Bible speaks of a fierce spiritual warfare, of fiery trials and testings, of rejection, disappointments, privation, suffering, sorrows and perplexities. People who have walked with God have always found it so. We lie to men and show ourselves guilty of cheap salesmanship when we sell ourselves and our ministry with unfounded promises of cheap happiness. There is deep inner joy in Christ, but it is found in the midst of continuous outer conflict.

A child is born in the midst of his mother's travail. Even so, spiritual life comes forth from someone's suffering. The fire of God falls upon the altar where the fresh sacrifice lies slain. The law of spiritual life is life out of death. And there is no plateau of Christian living where this principle becomes a thing of the past. We die daily (John 12:24).

- C. M.