

No Greater Joy

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AM Service

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Text:

3 John 1 The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. 2: Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. 3: For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. 4: I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Introduction

3 John is the shortest letter in the New Testament. It is a very personal letter written to an individual rather than an entire church. It was written by the Apostle John to Gaius, one of the leaders of the assembly. It is difficult to identify who Gaius was, since there is not much information available concerning his identity. The name Gaius was very common in the first century. Paul baptized a man named **Gaius in Corinth**. One of Paul's traveling companions during his third missionary journey was named Gaius. Luke identifies him as **a Macedonian** in [Acts 19:29](#). Another traveling companions of Paul during his third missionary journey was named Gaius. Luke calls him "**Gaius of Derbe**" in [Acts 20:4](#). Here in [3 John](#), he addresses a man named Gaius. We don't know exactly who this Gaius was, but this we are sure, this Gaius was **a respected leader** of a local congregation that John ministered to. He was **a person with integrity and responsibility**.

The passage I want us to consider this morning is a well-known passage specially among parents and grandparents. In this passage John speaks as **a pastor** and **an elder**. He also speaks of himself like he were **a father**. He is not Gaius' physical father, but he is his spiritual father. **He views Gaius as one of his spiritual children**. He loves him and cares for him. Although John is not speaking of his physical children but spiritual children, we can apply the truths found in these verses to our own physical children.

Let's consider first ...

I – The Salutation

Look at John's salutation—his word of greeting.

[3 John 1](#) The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

John simply identifies himself as "**the elder**." At the time he wrote this letter, John was already old, around ninety years old. History tells us that in his later years, John pastored in and around Ephesus, ministering to the Churches of Asia Minor. He outlived all the other apostles and was **known as John the Elder** ([2 John 1](#); [3 John 1](#)).

John was a Galilean fisherman. He and his brother James were the sons of Zebedee. John, along with his brother James, were first known as the “**sons of thunder.**” Our Lord called them as “sons of thunder” for a reason. **In the gospels we find John debating** with the other apostles about **who was the greatest.** On one occasion, when the people in a village of Samaria were not responsive to the message of Jesus, **John with his brother James wanted to call down fire from heaven on them.**

Luke 9:54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

They asked the Lord, if they can call fire down from heaven to destroy the people in a village of Samaria. As someone has said, *“This response of James and John to the Samaritans reveals their “thunderous nature.””*

So, John started out a self-seeking, self-promoting, hasty, rough, quick temper, and reckless disciple. **But God transformed him and his brother.** At the end of his life, John, who was known as one of the “sons of thunder,” became known as the “**apostle of love.**” The theme of **love runs throughout his writings.** John greatly mellowed as he grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. No, he did not compromise truth as he grew older. He did not tolerate error and sin. You will see in this letter how **tender and loving he is and yet he stood firm** when it came to revealed truth. If you are familiar with John’s epistle, you know that **John is a man of grace and truth.** This is a quality and characteristic **he learned from our Saviour,** who Himself is full of grace and truth.

Look at how the apostle John begins this letter—he expresses his love for Gaius and his prayer for him. The apostle John now known as the apostle of love, who has a great love for this man Gaius, wrote these words ...

3 John 1 The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

John has great love and have deep concern for Gaius. John calls Gaius a “**well beloved**” (vs. 1), “**beloved**” (vss. 2, 5, 11). Note that John tells Gaius that he loves him in the truth. He is not just saying that he loves Gaius sincerely. That’s true. John does love him sincerely. But he’s saying **he loves Gaius in the truth; not just in truth,** but in “the truth.” This emphasizes that **genuine biblical love** is found in **the sphere or context of biblical truth.** J. Ligon Duncan writes, *“John is expressing his love to Gaius, but he is noting that the bond, the deep bond they share, is bound in the truth, bound in the gospel, bound in Jesus Christ.”*

What a wonderful testimony to the relationship between these two men. Quoting J. Ligon Duncan again, *“... we need to be assured in a day and in an age when there is so much perversion of love between men that we do not shy away in the opposite direction and neglect any proper legitimate expressions of affection between brothers in the church, sisters in the church, and brothers and sisters one toward another. To be sure there are things of which we must be careful. But again, there is an open and there is a sweetness and there is a sincerity to these expressions of love.”*

II – The Petitions

Having expressed his love for Gaius, the apostle John now lets Gaius know his desire and prayer for him.

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

Two petitions here: first, **that Gaius may prosper** and second, **that Gaius may be in health**. He prays for Gaius' **economic** well-being and **physical** well-being. These are John's petition on behalf of Gaius. Isn't that what we desire for those we love and care about? We wish those we love, especially for our own children their well-being and their best.

1. Economic Well-being

3 John 2 Beloved, I wish above all things **that thou mayest prosper** and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

The word "**prosper**" refers to being successful and prosperous financially or economically. In his letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul used this very word to refer to financial prosperity.

1 Corinthians 16:2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath **prospered** him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Financial or material prosperity is desirable. There is nothing wrong to desire for our children to succeed in temporal affairs. There is nothing wrong to wish for our children to succeed in the business of life. Isn't that what we want as we send our children to school and provide them education. We want them to excel. We want them to do well in their school. And when they graduate, we pray that they will get a good job, so that when they get married, they will be able to provide for their family.

There is a false conception that says, money is evil and that to be rich is sinful. Contrary to common conception, money is not evil. There is nothing sinful about money. There is nothing sinful about being wealthy. Listen to what the Bible says about money ...

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

It is not money that is evil, it is the love for money that is the root of all kinds of evil.

2. Physical Well-being

3 John 2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and **be in health** (good health), even as thy soul prospereth.

Like John, parents desire that their children be in good health. Not only do we desire material prosperity but also desire physical well-being for our children. Physical health is desirable. Healthy body is one the best gifts of God to man. Physical health is the result of good nutrition, exercise, cleanliness, proper rest, and the disciplined order of a balanced life. This is why we abstain from food or anything that is unhealthy.

1 Corinthians 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20: For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

The principle taught in these verses implies that we must abstain from drugs, alcohol, smoking, staying up late, greasy food, junk food, etc. Because to care for our body is our responsibility. God has given us a body and it is our responsibility to care for it.

Now, I am aware that [verse 2](#) has been used, misused, and abused by preachers who preach “**prosperity gospel**” also known as “**health and wealth gospel**.” They go around telling Christians that God not only wants our soul’s salvation, but He wants us to be always healthy and wealthy. And if you are not, it is because you do not have enough faith. These preachers build their whole ministry based on [verse 2](#), but they do not analyze what is exactly John was saying. They do not consider the context of this prayer carefully.

Understand that John’s prayer for Gaius is **in the light of the fact that Gaius is a man known for walking in truth**; that he has a reputation of being a spiritually minded, God-honoring man. **John can safely pray for a man like Gaius**, to prosper in all things and be healthy because in the words of John, **Gaius knows the truth, and walks in the truth**. He can pray for God to prosper Gaius financially and physically, because he knew that **Gaius is a man who would use his health and wealth for the glory of God and for the benefit of others**.

But **if a person is ungodly** and does not fear God, **it may not be a good idea to wish him material and physical prosperity**, because health and wealth may turn out to be bad for him and turn him farther away from God. We don't necessarily wish that they go bankrupt or become sick, but **our prayer is that they might find the truth and embrace the truth, and walk in the truth**.

But for a person whose soul is really prospering like Gaius, health and prosperity are good things. **We know that wealth and health are safe in his hand** and that he will use these gifts, not for selfish purposes and gains but for God and for others. Paul could wish this prosperity and health for Gaius, because he knows Gaius is prospering in the concerns of his soul. This brings us to the next point which is John’s celebration.

But before we consider John’s celebration, I need to point out that not all who love the truth and walk in the truth will prosper financially or will be physically healthy. Just look at **the apostles**, they were not wealthy. Look at **Job**, who had a testimony that he was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil, yet suffered lost and became ill. Look at **our Saviour**. Our Lord Himself said, [“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head”](#) (Luk 9:58).

Also, the fact that John prays for Gaius’ economic and physical well-being indicates that walking in the truth does not necessarily bring material prosperity and physical health. Just because Gaius is right with God, does not mean he is always going to be wealthy, and he is always going to be healthy.

Now, let’s look at John’s celebration

III – The Celebration

3 John 3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. 4: I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. 5: Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; 6: Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

Here we see John's celebration where he rejoices in the news that he has heard about Gaius. Some of the brethren had made several visits to John, and they spoke well of Gaius. Gaius did not just know the truth, did not just talk the truth, but also walked the truth and others saw the truth in his walk!

Hearing this report brought great joy to John. He writes and tells Gaius this, "3 John 3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth." Then he goes on to say, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

This is John's greatest joy in life—knowing his children in the faith are walking in the truth. I know as a pastor, as a parent, as a father, or as a mother, there is no greater joy than that. There is nothing that parents, godly parents would give than to know that their children are walking with the Lord. There is nothing more pleasing for a believing father and mother than to see that their children confessing their faith and living by faith. There is nothing more rewarding for a believing parent than to see that their children trusting, loving, and serving God in the truth.

Closing Exhortations

As we close...

Let me speak to parents among us this morning.

John the apostle of love says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Can you say with John that your greatest joy, in relation to your children, is to see them walk in truth? Oh, we want them to prosper materially and be in good health, which every father and mother would wish their children. But first and foremost, do you desire and find great joy when you hear and see them walk in truth?

But, if your children are to walk in truth, you must set a good example to them. If you want to hear and see your children to walk in truth, you yourself must walk in truth. No parent can say from their hearts, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth," unless he or she is also walking in truth. As parents we must also know, confess, believe, love, and live the truth.

"Do as I say, not what I do," will not work. Don't smoke; don't drink; read your Bible; pray every day; love God, be faithful in the house of God, be kind, watch your words, respect others including your siblings, forgive one another, will be mostly likely be obeyed if we ourselves are walking in truth. We must teach them by example, we must instruct them by leading the way.

Now, **let me speak to the children.**

Children, we desire and pray that you may prosper in life affairs and that you may be in good health, but our greatest desire and greatest joy is to hear and see you walk in truth. That you live in the truth; that you live according to the truth.

Children, do you love your parents? Do you want them to rejoice?

3 John 3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. 4: I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Walk in truth!

Proverb 19:27 Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.

Proverb 23:23 Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

We are bombarded with the messages like, *“there is no absolute truth; you are free to choose whatever makes you happy.”* This is why you must to know the truth. Confess and believe the truth. Love the truth. Walk and live in truth. And as you walk in the truth, not only will you give your parents great joy, but you too will have joy and peace in your life. There is no joy to the one who walk in sin.

Isaiah 48:22 There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.

Proverb 13:15 Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.

But most importantly, as you walk in truth, not only will you cause your parents to rejoice, and not only will you experience joy and peace in your life, **but also you will cause the Heavenly Father great joy.** I believe the apostle John in verse 4, is also revealing what our Heavenly Father feels when He hears and sees His children walk in truth. Our Heavenly Father's desire and greatest joy is for His children, not primarily to prosper materially, nor primarily to be in good-health, but that they would walk in the truth.

Oh, walk in truth, young and old, for Jesus' sake. Do it! Because there is no greater joy. But understand, that no one can walk in truth unless he knows the Truth.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Do you want to walk in truth? Are you tired of walking in darkness? Then come to the Truth. Come to Jesus! Come to Him in repentance and faith. Call Him who is not only the Truth but also, the Way and the Life! He is the way back to the Heavenly Father. He is Father's provision

for salvation and forgiveness. Jesus Christ is God's remedy to our great problem of sin. Come to Him. Trust Him alone for your salvation who is the way, the truth, and the life!

AMEN!