

The Parents' Greatest Joy

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Text: *3 John*

I - Introduction

3 John is the shortest letter in the New Testament. It was written by the Apostle John to Gaius, one of the leaders of the assembly. It is a very personal letter.

A well-known verse specially among parents and grandparents is found in verse four ...

4: I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

John speaks as a pastor and an elder. He also speaks of himself like he were a father. He is not the physical father of those of whom he was writing—he was their spiritual father. He views them as his spiritual children. He cares for them and loves them.

3 John 1:1 The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth (truly and sincerely).

It is clear that the apostle John cared for and loved this Gaius! He called him “the well-beloved” in his greeting, and in the course of this short Epistle, three times, he addresses him “beloved”. (3, 5, 11) “Beloved” means much loved.

Although, John is not speaking of his physical biological children but spiritual children, **we can apply the truths found in these verses to our own physical children.**

II - John's great desire for his children

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

True love desires the best for others, especially for our own children. Here in this verse, John expresses his desire for Gaius and for his spiritual children.

1. Material prosperity

2: Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper (succeed in all temporal affairs) *and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*

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.

2. Physical well-being

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.

That's 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.

3. Spiritual prosperity

John's desire for Gaius and for his spiritual children is that they may prosper in every way and be in good health physically just as they are spiritually. He regarded these things as of great importance. They are important for obvious reasons. Wealth and health are wonderful power and gifts; and in the hands of a wise man or woman they are great gifts both to himself and to others.

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

"Above all things" does not imply that John wishes Gaius' bodily health above that of his soul, but as the first object to be desired next after spiritual health.

"Above all things"—Greek, "concerning all things"

He could wish this prosperity and health for Gaius, because he knows Gaius is prospering in the concerns of his soul.

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

When we wish for our friends' and children's prosperity and health, the limit "**even as thy soul prospereth**" is necessary for their own good. The rule and measure of this wish is according to the prosperity of his soul.

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 he go bankrupt or become sick but our prayer is that they might find the truth and embrace the truth.

But for a person whose soul is really prospering, 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.

III - John's greatest joy in his children

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.

John desires that his spiritual children prosper in life affairs and that they may be in good health, but his greatest desire and greatest joy is to hear and see them walk in truth.

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.

It gave John great joy when some of the traveling believers who came back and testified about Gaius' faithfulness to the truth, and how he continues to walk in it.

4: **I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.**

Can we say with John that our greatest joy, in relation to our 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 we desire and find great joy when we hear and see them walk in truth?

1. What is it to walk in truth?

To walk in truth is to live in truth. Live according to the truth. and it starts by knowing the truth. What is 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.

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

To walk in truth starts by knowing the truth, confessing and believing the truth, loving truth and living according to the truth.

2. How is this accomplished?

a. By instruction

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2: Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; 3: That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. 4: And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but **bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.**

If our children are to walk in truth, there must be instructions. There must be exposure to the truth. Do whatever you can to expose them to the word of truth. That is why it is important to take them with you to Sunday School, to church services, to have family or personal devotion.

Proverb 1:8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

Proverb 4:1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

Let your children know that your desire and goal is that they walk in truth. That is what John is doing ...

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.

I want you to know that I want you to prosper in the affairs of this life, that you be in good health, but what would give me the greatest joy is that you walk in truth, that you love Jesus, the Bible, church, souls, serving God and others, etc. Not self-centered, but living for God and for others.

b. By Example

If our children are to walk in truth we must set a good example to them. If we want to hear and see our children to walk in truth, we ourselves must walk in truth.

No parents can say from their hearts, *"We have no greater joy than to hear that our children walk in truth"* unless they are, themselves, 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 everyday; love 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.

Christian brethren, let us aim both to appropriate and to exemplify Christian truth before our children.

c. By prayer

Instructions and good example are not enough. There must be prayer. Abraham prayed for Ishmael. Job prayed for his children. Naomi prayed for Samuel.

If our children are to walk in truth, we must realize that our instructions and our examples are not enough, they must be prayed for. In prayer we acknowledge that if our children are to prosper spiritually they need a power and an influence greater than themselves, which is God and His grace. We must acknowledge and understand the power of God's word and the power of God's grace.

IV - Closing Thoughts

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

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. That is why we have to know the truth. Confess and believe the truth. Love the truth. Walk and live in truth.

Children, as you walk in 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.

Children, 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 in 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 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!