

3 John 1:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. John expresses a prayer-wish for Gaius's comprehensive wellbeing. The Greek verb *euchomai* (εὐχομαι, "I wish/pray") introduces a heartfelt desire, while "beloved" (*agapētos*, ἀγαπητός) repeats the term of affection from verse 1, creating a warm, pastoral tone.

"That thou mayest prosper" (Greek *euodousthai*, εὐοδοῦσθαι) means to have a successful journey or favorable circumstances—comprehensive flourishing in life's affairs. "Be in health" (*hugiainein*, ὑγιαίνειν) refers to physical wellness. Significantly, John links these material/physical blessings to spiritual reality: "even as thy soul prospereth" (*kathōs euodoutai sou hē psychē*, καθὼς εὐοδοῦται σου ἡ ψυχή). The comparative particle "as" or "even as" establishes Gaius's spiritual health as both the pattern and foundation for desired physical/material wellbeing.

This verse reveals crucial biblical balance concerning prosperity. John clearly desires Gaius's physical health and material success—not as ends in themselves, but proportionate to spiritual health. The priority is unmistakable: soul prosperity comes first and provides the proper context for other blessings. This counters both ascetic rejection of material goods and prosperity gospel distortions that prioritize wealth and health. Biblical prosperity theology recognizes that God cares about our whole person (body, soul, and circumstances) but maintains proper priorities: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Historical Context

In the Greco-Roman world of the first century, health and prosperity were often attributed to divine favor, while sickness and poverty were seen as signs of divine disfavor or moral failing. Pagan religion focused heavily on securing material blessings through proper rituals and sacrifices. Against this background, Christianity introduced a radically different perspective: suffering could have redemptive purpose (Romans 5:3-5), and spiritual riches far exceeded material wealth (Philippians 3:7-8).

The early church included believers across the economic spectrum—from wealthy patrons like Lydia and Philemon to slaves and poor laborers. Letters like James addressed tensions between rich and poor in congregations (James 2:1-7). John's balanced wish for Gaius reflects biblical teaching that material provision is good (God supplies our needs) but secondary to spiritual health. The Christian should be content in all circumstances (Philippians 4:11-12) while working diligently and stewarding resources faithfully.

Gaius evidently demonstrated spiritual maturity through his hospitality and truth-commitment. John's prayer that his material circumstances would match his spiritual condition suggests that sometimes God blesses spiritual faithfulness with material provision—not as mechanical cause-and-effect, but as gracious gift. The apostles' own experience included both supernatural provision (Philippians 4:19) and significant hardship (2 Corinthians 11:23-28), demonstrating that God's care transcends material circumstances.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How would you honestly assess whether your soul is 'prospering'—growing in godliness, love, and truth?
2. Do you maintain biblical balance between pursuing spiritual growth and caring for physical/material wellbeing?
3. In what ways might you need to reorder priorities to seek first God's kingdom rather than material prosperity?

Interlinear Text

Ἀγαπητέ,	περὶ	πάντων	εὕχομαί	σε	εὐοδοῦταί	καὶ
Beloved	above	all things	I wish	that thou	mayest prosper	and
G27	G4012	G3956	G2172	G4571	G2137	G2532
ὑγιαίνειν	καθὼς	εὐοδοῦταί	σου	ἡ	ψυχὴ	
be in health	even as	mayest prosper	thy	G3588	soul	
G5198	G2531	G2137	G4675		G5590	

Additional Cross-References

2 Peter 3:18 (Parallel theme): But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:8 (Love): And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

2 Thessalonians 1:3 (Love): We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

Philippians 2:4 (Parallel theme): Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Revelation 2:9 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

James 5:12 (Parallel theme): But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

Philippians 2:27 (Parallel theme): For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 (Love): But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

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