

III John

How's Your Health?

For years the World Health Organization has published estimates of overall length of life based on mortality data for the nations of the world.

A few years ago the WHO began to calculate what they call Disability Adjusted Life Expectancy (DALE). DALE summarizes the expected number of years to be lived in what we'd call "full health." To calculate DALE, the years of ill-health are weighted according to severity and subtracted from the expected overall life expectancy to give the equivalent years of healthy life.

The top ten countries in terms of DALE are Japan, Australia, France, Sweden, Spain, Italy, Greece, Switzerland, Monaco, and Andorra.

Amazingly, with all of our emphasis on health issues the US came in 24th on the list.

Christopher Murray, Director of WHO's Global Program on Evidence for Health Policy. "The position of the United States is one of the major surprises of the new rating system. Basically, you die earlier and spend more time disabled if you're an American rather than a member of most other advanced countries."

Here we are with what's supposed to be the most advanced health care system in the world but we're pretty far down the list. 70 years is the years of healthy life a baby born in the US can expect.

That's not as good as 23 other countries in the world but it's a whole lot better than Sierra Leone where it's only 26 years.

We all want good health. We all want to be prosperous. We all want to enjoy life.

But, here's the question. Is it possible to thrive where ever we live? Can we prosper and be in health no matter what our situation in life may be?

Rather than looking at our DALE I'd like us to look this morning at our PALE. That's our prosperity adjusted life expectancy.

Open your Bibles this morning to the little epistle of 3rd John. It's way towards the back on **pg 1086**

Third John is a letter written by the Apostle John from the city of Ephesus around 90 AD. At this point John is the last remaining Apostle.

Tradition has it that Matthew was killed with a sword. Mark was dragged to death. Luke was hanged. Peter was crucified upside down. James the less was thrown from a tower. Bartholomew was flayed alive. Andrew was bound to a cross, and left to die. Thomas was speared to death. Jude was killed with arrows. Matthias was first stoned and then beheaded. Paul was beheaded.

By 90 AD the only original Apostle still alive was John who was now about 85 years old.

What we have in third John is a personal letter from this faithful apostle to a man named Gaius. It's so personal that in a sense this is like opening somebody else's mail.

it's opening somebody else's mail, but see, it's God who's doing the opening for us. it's God who inspired this letter from John, so that means that it's truths are timeless, practical, and full of life.

And God is the one who ultimately purposed that John's short letter should be part of scripture.

Let's look at this letter this morning as we do first of all we'll see:

I. The Prosperity That Really Counts Is The Prosperity Of our Soul

Read vs 1-4

There's a couple of different men in the NT who go by the name Gaius. Gaius was a very popular name at the time. In fact, Julius Caesar's first name was actually Gaius.

We can't know for sure who this Gaius was but he was apparently a leader in a local congregation. He was also apparently someone who became a believer through John's teaching because John calls him one of "my children" in verse 4.

So here's faithful John writing to faithful Gaius. Both of them found their fulfillment and their passion in serving God.

So John begins with a prayer for this man who meant so much to him. And the prayer is that he would prosper in all things just like he's already prospering in his soul.

It could be that Gaius was having some health issues. It could be that this was just an overall prayer that God would take care of Gaius.

Whichever it was, look at the reference point. John doesn't say, "Gaius, you're such a successful guy. I pray that you're soul would be as prosperous as the rest of your life is."

He flips that right around. He goes right for the most important component of life and says, "I pray that the rest of your life could be as prosperous as your soul is."

See, the prosperity that really counts is the prosperity of our soul.

But that's so hard for us to see. Our money, our health, what we own, what we can feel, that tends to dominate our perspective. That's where we see success.

When Sandy and I were in Florida last April we got to stay down on the Gulf coast on a beautiful little island called Anna Maria Island. It was quiet. It was low key. They didn't even have fast food places. Can you imagine a spot in the US with no MacDonalds!

We really loved it there.

And one day we saw these new oceanfront condos they were building so we went in and looked. They were 3 bedroom condos starting \$1.3 million at that point.

So were looking around and there's a couple talking to the real estate sales person. And the guy says, "We live over towards Lakeland and we'd just like a place we can easily get to on the weekends. So we're interested in one of these."

Now I don't know those people. For all I know they could be dynamic Christians who share their faith and serve God and give big bucks to Kingdom work.

But I know this, anybody who can buy a condo like that to use once in a while on weekends is financially prosperous. But if they don't know and serve the living God, they're dirt poor where it really counts.

Some people go through their whole life and never seem to have a physical problem. They're never sick. No surgery. They're just in good health all the time.

But once again, if that's it, If all they've got is a healthy body and not a healthy soul, they're not healthy at all.

Do you have a prosperous soul?

Joshua 1:8 gives us the key to true prosperity. *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."*

Have you ever watched any of those infomercials on TV? It seems that there's always some guy who has made millions of dollars investing in real estate or the stock market who is so thrilled with his wealth that he just wants to share his secrets with all of us. Of course he wants to charge us \$299.95 (plus \$15.95 shipping and handling). Its always though, presented as the easy way to get rich.

God says, "Here's prosperity and health that's unaffected by interest rates, world events, hurricanes, terrorists, or housing bubbles."

Take my truth. Take my Bible and learn it then do it. Then you'll have real prosperity and success. God says meditate on my Word.

Meditating on the Scriptures will help us evaluate our motives when it comes to success and prosperity. We learn to ask ourselves the right questions out of the word of God.

Like: Is this all about God, or is it all about me? am I really relying on God, or am I trusting my own resources? Am I serving the glory of God? If I can answer those questions with a yes, then my business, my activity, my relationships will be successful in God's eyes, no matter what people think and no matter what the physical, material outcome is.

In fact, sometimes obedience to God's word leads to suffering. The promise is that if we obey God's ways we will have prosperous souls. We'll be able to deal with life and we'll find that God himself will meet our needs.

You know the reason we often don't obey God is because we really don't believe he will give us what we need to survive. Obedience comes out of trust, believing that God will provide for our every need in Christ Jesus.

Here is how Psalm 1 describes the man who is blessed: *"His delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers"* (Psalm 1:23).

The prosperity that really counts is the prosperity of our soul and that prosperity has to be grounded in truth.

That's why John makes such a big deal about truth. If you really want to be satisfied and prosperous in life then you need to make sure you're walking in truth.

Gaius was a guy who didn't just talk about his faith. He lived it out. So John is able to write: *"I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth."*

The elderly John gets a report back about Gaius that he's practicing what he preaches.

This letter is going to go on and talk about receiving people into your home. The guys making the report stayed with Gaius. They got to see him as he really was.

We can all put up a good front when we walk out the door but when you're in somebody's home pretty soon you get to see them as they really are.

If we were to ask the people that live with you what you're like at home, what would we hear? Would we rejoice because you're walking in the truth?

- I. *The Prosperity That Really Counts Is The Prosperity Of our Soul*
- II. *The Prosperity That Really Counts Is Lived Out In A Practical Way*

Read vs 5-8

Even though we can't do a positive ID on Gaius, I have an idea who he might be.

In Acts 19 the Apostle Paul and two fellow missionaries are in the middle of a big riot. Paul had preached a message about worshipping God instead of idols and the local idol makers got the crowd worked up.

They didn't want to loose any business. Acts 19:29 *"So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's travel companions."*

What if that's the same Gaius John is writing to? It would make a lot of sense because Gaius would have learned so valuable lessons out on the road.

Along with learning to trust God as a first century missionary, Gaius would have learned how important hospitality was.

Think about it. How did early missionaries find places to stay when they went to strange towns?

You couldn't exactly check in at the Holiday Inn! You scrounged around until you found somebody willing to take you in for a few nights.

So I wonder if Gaius, having spent a few anxious nights with Paul, wondering where they would find a bed, but then receiving hospitality from other believers - I wonder if because Gaius received that kind of generous care, he's now ready to offer the same to others?

John's saying, "Gaius, you're doing a great job."

Gaius not only welcomed them in, he not only treated them as though they were God's representatives, he sped them on their way. He took them to the airport, made sure they had enough money, fed them - whatever was necessary, he did for them.

This guy Gaius was living and walking in the truth God had given to him through the apostles and the written Word. John says, "Continue to help those who are missionaries" When you do you become fellow-workers with the truth."

Think about that, When we participate with missionaries by giving them support we are fellow-workers with them. We're in the same ministry they are in.

In the first century that meant feeding and housing them as they traveled. For us it means giving financially, praying, writing letters of encouragement, sending emails.

When we do, we become fellow workers. We partner with our missionary family to get the job done of going into all the world and preaching the gospel.

Want to have a prosperous, healthy soul? Live out your Christian faith in a practical way.

- I. *The Prosperity That Really Counts Is The Prosperity Of Our Soul*
- II. *The Prosperity That Really Counts Is Lived Out In A Practical Way*
- III. *The Prosperity That Really Counts Mimics That Which Is Good*

Often times we tend to romanticize the early church. We think, oh if we could only get back to how it really was in the New Testament times. Back when the church was pure and free. What we need to really do is back up a little bit.

The church of Jesus Christ from the first century down to our day has been made up of nothing but broken, fallen people. The church is and always has been and always will be a hospital for sinners. It's always been riddled with hypocrisy and deceit, conceit and poor leadership because it's always going to be made up of fallible people.

Read vs 9-10

How would you like to have your name in the Bible? That would be pretty neat, huh?

What if your name was in the Bible except that the only thing it said about you was that you were a real jerk? That wouldn't be so glamorous.

That's the case with this man Diotrephes. He was a leader in the early church and that's about all we know about him. This is the only place that he is mentioned in Scripture; but look at the epitaph that is left about this man's life. He really messed things up.

Here's a man with an empty soul.

Have you ever seen those commercials where the blond guy is always saying "No" to people who call him trying to redeem their credit card points. He has about 150 ways of saying "No."

Well, he's like the credit card version of Diotrephes.

Diotrephes was a nay-sayer and he said no to just about everything. He said no to three crucial, critical, cutting edge things in the life of the church.

1.) See verse 9. He said no to whatever it was that the apostle John had already written to that congregation. In other words, he says no to apostolic writings and apostolic authority.

What's our apostolic authority in the church today? It's the Bible. The inspired, infallible word of God. God has given us Scripture so that we might know who He is, that we might know who we are, and what it means to live as totally devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

We're to say yes to the authority of Scripture. When we say no, we unhook ourselves from God's authority.

Talk about a quick path to an empty soul. There's nothing so empty as the life of a person who says, "I don't need God."

2.) The second thing that Diotrephes says no to (this is in verse ten) is the ministry of John and others. In fact, John says that Diotrephes is going around and maliciously slandering them.

Watch out for slander and gossip.

Pr 16:28 *"A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends."* Pr 26:20 *"Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down."*

Three times the New Testament gives this command, "put away slander..."

Eph 4:31 *"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you..."*

Gossip not only robs us of our spiritual health, it robs a church. One thing we keep coming back to here is this: If you have a problem with anyone here, whether its a person sitting next to you in a church service, or it's me, go and talk about it with them.

Don't go to your friends. Don't complain to people who don't even have anything to do with the situation. Go to the person.

Human nature wants to avoid confrontation. God says, "Go to the person."

And if you hear anyone else gossiping or slandering someone here, don't listen to them.

Tell them it's got to stop and encourage them to handle their complaints in a biblical way.

3.) The third thing that Diotrephes says no to, and you find again in verse 10. He says no to missions. John says He refuses to welcome the brothers and even puts them out of the church.

These are the traveling missionaries. A person who doesn't care about missions, who isn't interested in sharing their faith or helping others who are sharing their faith is totally wrapped up in themselves, and that's the ultimate empty life.

Right now we give over \$11,000 a month to missions around the world. We go to the rescue mission and prison to share Christ. We have training starting this month to help equip believers to share their faith.

We're excited about the opportunity to get out God's message of forgiveness and peace that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. A prosperous soul has a passion to see others come to the Savior.

Now look what John says should be our life pattern. **Read vs 11**

The word translated "imitate" is the Greek term *mimeomai*. It's where we get our English word "mimic." It's usually translated "follow."

John is saying don't mimic Diotrephes. He's a bad pattern. Imitate a good guy.

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 4:16 he said this, "*I urge you, imitate me.*" He used this same word.

We kind of react negatively to that, don't we? It almost sounds blasphemous for a Christian to tell other people to mimic them.

Well here's the key. I Corinthians 11:1, Paul wrote, "*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*"

He wasn't saying, "Oh, I'm the epitome of excellence. I got this whole living for Jesus thing figured out. I never make a mistake. I'm so smart."

He was just putting himself out as a tangible human illustration. Kind of like a target. He was calling some immature Christians there in Corinth to imitate him to the extent that he imitated Jesus.

John is saying, "Watch out who you use as an example. Make sure you're following someone who's doing it right."

We're all influenced to some degree by other people and we all have an influence.

Can you say, with legitimacy, to the people who are watching you, “Be imitators of me?”

Here’s a thought provoking question. What kind of world would it be if every person who claimed to be a Christian lived just like you?

If they had the same level of commitment and the same level of spirituality?

Read vs 12

How do you know who to learn from and to look to as an example? Here’s the third person who’s specifically named in John’s letter, Demetrius. Demetrius is another one of those guys that’s just mentioned once in the Bible.

All we know about him is that John says all of us here in Ephesus know him and when he shows up there you can trust him because we trust him. He’s a good guy to mimic.

But notice what else John says. Not only does he have our witness, or our testimony to his character. He’s got the witness of the truth itself. John was talking about the Bible.

In other words Demetrius was a man who lived up to the commands and standards of the Bible. Not that he was perfect, but he was genuinely committed to living out the truth.

III. *The Prosperity That Really Counts Mimics That Which Is Good*

IV. *The Prosperity That Really Counts Cares About Relationships*

Read 13-14

We find ourselves in the vortex of one of the most mind- boggling shifts ever to occur in all of human history.

The shift from the industrial age to the informational age where information is power. Where satellites and fiber optics and lasers and laptops are able to connect you and me literally with people all over the globe at the touch of a button.

I love the convenience of technology. It nice to be able to instantly fire off a email to one of our missionaries around the globe and know that it got there almost instantly.

John was involved in the high-tech media of his day too. In verse thirteen we see that he’s writing to Gaius on parchment using pen and ink, which was the state-of-the-art

high-tech media of that day as opposed to clay tablets or smoke signals or pictographs or oral messengers. And John says to Gaius "I have a lot of information to give you, but pen and ink can only go so far - I've got to see you face to face."

That is the way God did it with you and me. He didn't fire off an e-mail. He didn't text message us. He gave us a book and yet even that isn't the core of our faith.

The heartbeat of Christianity is the fact that God came, face-to-face, up close and personal, in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, so that you and I could know God personally and know what it means to live eternally.

Isn't that amazing? Relationships are so important to God that He came personally to restore our broken relationship with Him.

It was our sin that broke the relationship. It was the death of Jesus Christ that paid sin's price. And it was the resurrection of Jesus Christ that restored that relationship for all who will trust Christ as Savior.

Jesus said, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."* John 10:11 & 28

II Corinthians 5:18 *"Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ..."*

A relationship was broken. It took the cross of Christ, but God did what it took to restore that relationship.

What's your PALE this morning? What's your prosperity adjusted life expectancy?

Are you just kind of floating through life? Taking it as it comes? Missing out on the prosperous soul that God wants you to experience?

God's best for now and eternity starts with a restored relationship. It starts with a personal relationship. It starts by receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.