

Simply Christ
Gospel Newsletter
Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

June 16, 2022

I Would Above All Things

Almost every personal letter I have ever read began with a greeting and well-wishes from the sender. Many times, words similar to this are used, “Dear (name), I hope this letter finds you in good health and everything is well.” The apostle John wrote such a letter to a man named Gaius. This was not an open letter to the churches such as most of the New Testament epistles are. Neither was it a pastoral letter of instruction, such as the letters to Timothy or Titus. It was a personal letter sent from John commending Gaius for his charity and informing him of John’s plan to visit.

As John begins his personal letter to Gaius, he makes the following statement. *“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”* III John 1:2. This expression of John’s “well-wishes” for Gaius are very natural and common to us all. Indeed, most of us would desire something very similar if we were writing to a friend or even a stranger. I trust, however, that few of us would expect our personal well-wishes to be received as the will of God.

For decades I have heard ministers present John's personal "well-wishes" for Gaius as God's greatest will for every believer. While some are sincere, many of these ministers have used this passage purely for deception and personal gain. I heard Jim Bakker confess publicly that this verse of scripture was the most effective tool he had in soliciting great sums of money from the followers of his PTL Network in the 1980's. There are vast numbers of people who want to believe that monetary prosperity is God's great will for their life. For them, the misuse of this passage spiritualizes their own carnal desires.

There are many things in God's purpose for you which are more important than natural prosperity. The Apostle Paul continually prayed for the saints that they would see and seek the "*unsearchable riches of Christ*" Ephesians 3:8 which are "*spiritual blessings*" stored in heavenly places for us all. Ephesians 1:3. I Peter 1:4. Compared to these riches, all the wealth of this world is mere slop and rubbish.

The enticement of natural wealth is recorded as one of the greatest snares set before the people of God. Paul warned the believers of this, saying, "*...they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 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.*" I Timothy 6:9-10. This "love of money" gets such a hold on people that Jesus said, "*...it is easier for a camel to go through*

a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Luke 18:25. Why would anyone who believes the words of Jesus think that God's greatest will for a person is money?

I know a brother in Christ who is also a very successful and wealthy businessman. Everything I know about this man says he is a godly and giving person. Yet, a few years ago, I heard one of the senior ministers in this man's circle of fellowship declare that this man's "anointing" was to make money to support the work of God. I knew immediately that I was hearing words which were meant to "protect the goose that lays the golden eggs." I was offended both for the gospel's sake as well as for this man's soul and calling. Whatever this man's anointing is, it is not to make money. He may have an ability to make money, but making money is most likely his biggest hindrance from discovering God's divine will for his life.

The Apostle Paul exhorts every believer to *"...present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, ...that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* Romans 12:1-2. God "wills" that every believer be a partaker of a spiritual ministry. Yet, we will never discover this "will of God" if we do not keep our bodies on his altar of sacrifice. It only as each believer presents their body for God to work in by his Spirit, that the fulness of Christ can be manifested in the church. Satan's uses many tools in his effort is to keep each of us out of this divine purpose. Jesus forewarned us of what would be most effective in making us fruitful. He said it is

“...the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things...” Mark 4:19.

Does God bless and provide for his people? Absolutely! But if you think that earthly prosperity is God's greatest will for you, you have either been blinded by covetousness, or deceived by a covetous minister. I exhort you to set you heart upon the true and eternal riches. As the Apostle Paul exhorts us, *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”* Colossians 3:1-3.