

A Prayer for 2017
3 John 2-4

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Text Introduction: A lot of people today will have a New Year's lunch of black eyed peas and cabbage or greens. Though origins of these traditions are varied, the common reason is tied to good luck and prosperity. One tradition is that the Union troops left the black eyed peas in their victory march South believing the crops only for animal consumption. Folks in the South considered this to be good luck that they had such good food to eat after the war.

Well, I have better news for you this morning. I want us to look at a prayer in 3 John and seek to make it our prayer this morning.

Text: Dear friend, I pray that you may prosper in every way and be in good health physically just as you are spiritually. ³ For I was very glad when some brothers came and testified to your faithfulness to the truth—how you are walking in the truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

Introduction: Much has been written about the author of 1, 2, and 3 John. In the text there is no mention of an author in 1 John. The author of 2 and 3 John is simply mentioned as “the elder.” The early church attributed these letters as coming from John. In that this is what the early church believed, we would be foolish to say otherwise today. They were much closer to the source and thus would have been more aware of the authorship of the letters. The similarity of vocabulary and content leads me to believe that the same John who wrote the Gospel and the Revelation is the author of these three letters.

Second and Third John are two of the shortest books of the Bible. Some might mistakenly think that the small size of these books indicates that the message is secondary in importance. Perhaps, the opposite of this is true. Think about it! If a building is on fire, you tend to be economic with your words. “Fire!” is all you have time to say. Though, we do not have enough information from the letters themselves to comment on the purpose, we might suggest that the warnings of these books were so important to the life of the early church that the author wrote in as few words as possible.

The recipient of 3 John is Gaius, but we are not sure who Gaius is. Perhaps he is the leader of the church that receives this letter. The letter is a specifically personal letter. Nevertheless, as Scripture, we look for its timeless message to us.

John had a concern for the church to remain in the “truth” in both 2 and 3 John. Also John had a concern for the church to love one another. These themes are also important to the Gospel of John and 1 John. The church today needs to continue to hear the call of John to love each other and to stay close to the truth. These themes of love and truth set the stage for our brief examination of the first verses of this letter this morning.

A Good Prayer

The Bible gives us several good examples of the way to pray for one another. I am reminded of Paul's prayerful appeals especially in Ephesians and Colossians. But, as we begin this New Year, here is a good prayer for us to pray for one another. In fact, I am going to invite you to come in just a moment and let someone pray over you. Here's how we will pray.

- That you will prosper in every way.

The abuse of the so-called "prosperity preachers" have perhaps made us timid to pray for God's favor over our lives. But here is how I understand the difference in what they do and what we seek to do today as guided by this Scripture. Rather than asking God to make us prosperous, I understand that all that we have comes from God. I need God's blessing over my life. I need God's favor over my life. Not because I deserve His blessing, but because I am doomed without His favor.

- That you will physically be well.

We have so many in our fellowship that need God's hand of healing. I am not ashamed to ask God to help us be well. Again, this shows our dependence upon Him.

- That you will prosper spiritually.

But, here is what I want for all of us in 2017. We pray today for all of us to walk in the truth—to be faithful to the truth this year. We pray for this year to be a year of spiritual growth. To be prosperous in all things and even be physically well, but in spiritual decline is to waste 2017.

So, we get a great question.

A Great Question

Hear what John is praying. He prays that Gaius' prosperity and physical health will be in proportion to his spiritual health. What if the same is prayed for you? Are you willing to accept that people pray that your well-being in all things including your health will be in proportion to your spiritual health? In this proportional equation we have two things we really can't control totally in proportion to the one thing that we can control. Is it that simple? No! There are lots of things we cannot understand, but here's the prayer: **I pray that you may prosper in every way and be in good health, just as your soul prospers?**

So What?

Are you walking in the truth?