

# I JOHN 3

## Hope, a Warning & Truth

*bestowed by God into the life of the believer through John*



### Three Key Verses:

2 Beloved, I desire that in all things thou shouldst prosper and be in health, even as thy soul

11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.

12 Demetrius has witness borne to him by all, and by the truth itself; and we also bear witness, and

### Keys to Understanding

Key point covered in this lesson:

1. Prosperity starts with your soul condition
2. Prosperity is not making God a magic geni
3. Warnings against disbelief and disorder
4. Walk in the spirit and truth!

*-Pastor Ken Freeman-*



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STUDY NOTES

v. 1 John is "the elder" again.

v. 2 This is John's personal wish for Gaius. Some people misquote it as God's general will for all His children.

v. 5-8 Itinerant prophets went from church to church to minister to the body of believers. The apostles had written a book of advice for the churches on how to know the true prophets from the false ones. Gaius had been sharing the hospitality of his home with the itinerant prophets. This was especially important in those days, because most inns were dirty and the innkeepers were often dishonest.

v. 9-10 Diotrephes didn't read John's letter to the church, because he didn't want to be under anyone else. Also, he wouldn't give any help to the itinerant prophets.

1.

Sermon on 3 John 1:2

I. VS. HAS BROUGHT HOPE TO MANY. A. immediately gone out to seek prosperity. 1. This is not what scripture promises or even implies. B. This much is true. 1. We are God's children. a. God wants us to have the best. b. God wants us to prosper. C. Why then are we not all wealthy? 1. As God's children, he will not give us anything that is not good for us. a. I will not give m...

2.

Sermon on 3 John 1:11

"FOLLOWING AFTER GOOD" I. THE STORY OF TWO MEN. A. Diotrephes, a man who loved preeminence and had set himself against the apostle John. 1. Mark tells us of an interesting event in the life of Jesus. MAR 10:35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus, saying, Master, would you do us a favor? MAR 10:36 And he said unto them, What do you want that I should do ...

## ABOUT PROSPERITY

In its American incarnation, the prosperity Gospel probably began with the theological speculations of the evangelist Oral Roberts. Roberts encouraged his followers to "expect miracles" and to look forward with confidence to the ways in which God would reward them, materially and financially, for their trust in his providence.

One of the most prominent prosperity gossellers on the scene today is Joel Osteen, the pastor of the largest church in America, best-selling author, and a former student at Oral Roberts University. He tells his millions of readers and listeners that they should not settle for mediocre lives; instead they should trust in the Lord's ability to give them the house that they desire, the job that they deserve, and children that will make them proud. A typical piece of Osteenian advice: "friend, you have to start believing that good things are coming your way and they will!" Other advocates of this position today include the very popular televangelists Joyce Meyer and T.D. Jakes.

To give the prosperity gossellers their due, there is some biblical warrant for their position. The book of Deuteronomy consistently promises Israel that, if it remains faithful to God's commands, it will receive numerous benefits in this world. The psalmist too assures us, "delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." And Jesus himself counsels: "seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things (food, shelter, clothing, etc.) will be added unto you."

And there is no doubt that the Bible consistently urges people to trust in the providence of God at all times. Jesus' reminder that the birds, who neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns but who are nevertheless fed by their heavenly Father, is a

summation of the Scriptural confidence in God's care for those who have faith in him.

However, we must be attentive to the very subtle way that the Bible itself nuances and specifies these claims. The great counterpoise to the book of Deuteronomy is the book of Job, which tells the story of a thoroughly righteous man who, in one fell swoop, suffers the loss of all of his material prosperity. Job's friends, operating out of a standard Deuteronomistic (or prosperity Gospel) point of view, argue that he must have grievously offended God, but Job – and God himself – protest against this simplistic interpretation.

The deepest reason for Job's suffering, we learn, is lost in the infinite abyss of God's permissive will and is by no means easily correlatable to Job's virtue or lack thereof. And Jesus himself, the very archetype of the faithful Israelite, experiences not earthly prosperity, but a life of simplicity and death on a brutal instrument of torture. If Joel Osteen and Oral Roberts were right, we would expect Jesus to have been the richest man in Nazareth and a darling of Jerusalem high society.

**Deuteronomy is indeed right when it says that "prosperity" will follow from obedience to God's will, but the prosperity in question is spiritual flourishing, and not necessarily worldly success.**

The resolution of this issue turns on a distinction between a conventional understanding and a divine understanding of the successful life. Deuteronomy is indeed right when it says that "prosperity" will follow from obedience to God's will, but the prosperity in question is spiritual flourishing, and not necessarily worldly success.

Obeying the divine commands does indeed lead to the right ordering of the self, and therefore to an

increase in joy, even if that very obedience leads, in worldly terms, to abject suffering or failure. St. Thomas More followed the voice of his conscience and this led to the loss of his home, his family, his considerable fortune, his high political status, and eventually his life. But he died, spiritually speaking, a successful man, a saint. St. Thomas Aquinas endeavored to answer a question that many of us ask: why do the wicked often prosper and the righteous suffer? Thomas turned the question on its head by introducing the wider context of God's purposes.

Perhaps, he suggested, the good person who is deprived of material goods is actually being rewarded, since that deprivation opens him more and more to the spiritual dimension; and perhaps the wicked person who has every worldly benefit is actually being punished, since those material preoccupations close him to the only good that finally matters.

So embrace the prosperity Gospel, as long as you construe prosperity along properly Gospel lines. Following God's will, abandoning yourself to the divine providence, will indeed give you treasure in heaven, but don't expect it necessarily to give you treasure on earth.

### KNOWING THE TRUTH OF GODS WORD.....

John 14:26: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." If we want to know God's will and desire to perform it, then the Holy Spirit will ensure that we understand it. The Holy Spirit searches and reveals the deep things of God and we thereby have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:10-16). Conversely, if we seek our own will in any way then we will not understand God's will. The Holy Spirit gives truth of understanding – He is the Spirit of truth (Jn 15:26, 16:13)!

Have you ever noticed how different people can look at the same verse of scripture and come up with very different interpretations of the meaning? A person's perspective may be biased based upon various reasons such as denominational/religious doctrine (doctrines of men), the way they were brought up or taught (traditions of men), pre-conceived notions, or perhaps a cherished lifestyle. In other words, scripture tends to be examined in light of the individual's desired outcome or prior knowledge (2 Cor 2:17, 4:2). These things interfere with God's will and are idols in your heart. If the desired meaning is not clearly apparent or is in doubt, then justification is sought. Offensive scriptures are downplayed and desired ones are emphasized. The Word becomes tailored to meet an end. These look at God's Word through the eyes of the flesh. We must examine God's Word through the Spirit.

The flesh desires that which is contrary to the Spirit (Gal 5:17, Rm 8:4-5). The flesh will not desire to deny itself or make sacrifices. If the truth is not approached with a pure heart and right motives then it is of

no use to know it. If the truth says to deny yourself and take up the cross, yet you are not willing, then the truth is of no value to you. Many handle God's Word as a buffet of suggestions to be picked and chosen from, given a changing appetite. They do what is right in their own eyes (Deut 12:8).

Men find all sorts of ways to justify their errors or desired beliefs. They will take God's Word and say this doesn't apply because it is in the Old Testament; or this does not apply because it was only meant for the Jews; or this was only for the early church or during apostolic times; or this is only symbolic; and on and on. God's Word is eternal and never changing (Js 1:17). Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." What God said in the Old Testament absolutely continues to apply within the context it was said (Mt 13:52). God has been very clear and consistent throughout the Bible that man is to love, obey and serve Him with a whole heart – to cleave to Him. Anything short of total surrender to the will of God and a life of faith is rebellion and sin. Nothing has changed including the fact that man manipulates to have his will prevail in keeping with his fallen nature. Those who love not the truth of God's Word and use it for selfish ends have judged God's Word as unworthy in favor of their own or another's.

What is the correct way to examine God's Word to accurately understand Christ's doctrine (teaching)? How can we know the correct context and application of the scriptures? John 7:16-17, Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know (understand) of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The fundamental condition for obtaining spiritual knowledge (truth) is a genuine heart-desire to carry out the revealed will of God.

Proverbs 28:5, "Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things." God will give understanding (Lk 24:45, Mt 13:11) to those who will do His will (desire to know and perform His will), they will understand and thus know His doctrine – This God promises! In order to know and apply God's will, we must totally put our will aside, you cannot have both (who will be Lord?). When we put our will (or idols) aside (doctrines, traditions, likes, dislikes, etc.), then our heart is ready to receive His will. If we truly want to know God's will, then we will DO IT (this is a must, Js 1:22) when given the truth, because our heart genuinely seeks to please Him (Ps 25:5, 27:11). As we do God's will our eyes will be opened to the understanding of His Word. Jesus said: John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." His will must become our will. This always results in self-sacrifice on your part (denying the flesh). Christ's love was sacrificial and we must reciprocate (it's a relationship).

If you love not the truth and will not die to self to conform to God's will (Christ's image, Rm 8:29) then: 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Many claim salvation through the blood of Christ, but they received not the love of the truth. So they have blindness of heart (Eph 4:18-19). To see the truth, we must first turn from our iniquities (Dan 9:13).

### TORTOR VEL CONSEQUAT NIBH RISUS VITAE PEDE

To be self-serving and holding onto the things of men is to reject God's truth in favor of your own or another man's, usually to satisfy the flesh (carnal nature). Notice the verse (Jn 7:16-17) said doctrine (singular) and not doctrines (plural). There are not many teachings or many paths as some might have you believe. Many want to see God as their own image of the way they think He should be. They create their own golden calf and make sacrifices to it! The Holy Spirit will bear witness and teach those who will embrace truth (John 14:26). God sends those who love not the truth a strong delusion such that they believe their own error.

God will confirm our own idols back to us if we love not the truth. Ezekiel 14:3-5, "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols." Do you see the magnitude of these verses? When we approach God with idols in our hearts (favorite doctrines, beliefs, notions, traditions, justifications, wants) or for any reason other than to know the truth (even if it disagrees with our entire understanding) and to live within that truth, then God just confirms our own error back to us according to the multitude of our idols (2 Thess 2:11). God validates what we want to hear because we reject His truth. Our own error becomes a huge stumblingblock that

we now suppose God endorses. This becomes the strong delusion that is believed and accepted as truth. God doesn't force us to hear the truth, and if we're not seeking to follow it there is no benefit anyway. This happened to Ahab and Jehoshaphat in 1 Kings Chapter 22 (also 2 Chr 18:19-22). These men wanted an affirmative answer so: 1 Kings 22:23, "Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee." The kings received the answer they wanted to hear (2 Chr 18:11), but it was to the undoing of Ahab (wrong path).

God doesn't tear down the idols that are in your heart, they are there because you want them to be. You have set them up of your own free will and you defend them. The result is: John 12:40, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." God will not force you against your will. God's truth is eternal and will remain whether you choose to believe it or not. If you seek God's truth to perform it, then you will receive it as you obey. If you seek confirmation of your own idolatry, you will receive such confirmation to your own demise. The religious, who seek God through the flesh, have never understood this. God responds to us in like manner: Psalms 18:25-27, "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward. For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks."

There is only one solution (continuing from the verses above): Ezekiel 14:6, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves

from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations." We have to repent and then start seeking the truth – we must love the truth, it sanctifies (Jn 17:19). Psalm 119:167, "My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly" AND Psalms 119:174, "I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight." We must apply the truth and live within it. Psalms 119:133, "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

Many religious men seek God to confirm their own idolatry (doctrines and traditions) and God answers them with what they want to hear according to the multitude of their idolatry. Do we not see this demonstrated in the multitudes of religious denominations today? They all differ, yet they are all sure they are hearing from God. Failure to embrace truth becomes a mighty stumblingblock. co Many religious institutions have a mixture of truth and error and this is confusion. Israel mixed their worship of God with Paganism and idolatry – so do the religious of today (Jer 7:7-10, 18). Jeremiah 7:19, "Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?" Anything apart from the truth is confusion. Confusion is instability and not a firm foundation.

When we embrace God's will, He reciprocates: John 14:21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." AND 1 John 3:22, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

### TO OBEY, WE MUST SERVE IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

As with any relationship, love is mutual (two sided) and there is union and communion with each other. 1 John 4:19, "We love him, because he first loved us." As we sincerely love and obey Christ, God gives us intimacy with Himself within proportion to our effort. Prayers get answered and because we are doing His will they are asked with right intent (not asked amiss, Jn 4:3). Oh man, do you see God as your own image of Him? God will not be boxed in by your own religious interpretation of Him. God will not be confined by doctrines of men. God is not answerable to men nor does He serve man. He is the great "I AM" and you cannot even comprehend such. Submit, have fellowship and be led.

To correctly obey God we must serve in Spirit and in truth. God defines His very Word as truth. Psalms 119:160, "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." We read this Word and apply it to our lives as led by the Spirit. The Bible says that we are to be "doers" of the Word and not hearers only (Jn 1:22). Hearers are not justified before God; doers are justified before God (Rm 2:13). When we become doers of God's Word in seeking His will and not ours, then God will make sure we are "understanders" of His Word and purposes (Ps 119:12, 169). That means that you cannot just sit in religious services and hear the Word and agree with it. You must be actively applying the Word to your life daily – living it! This becomes a "Living Faith." However, the elders, chief priest and scribes knew the Word of God and also applied it to their lives but fell short. This is why we must also live in the Spirit. The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Corinthians 3:6, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the

letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." Simply following a list of do's and don'ts will fall short of God's desire. God will hold you to your list and you'll be lacking (Gal 3:12). We must be taught and led of the Spirit how to correctly live out God's Word with correct motives (attitudes) from the heart out of love. Romans 7:6, "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Does this mean that God is more lax in our obedience to Him? No! It means that: we cannot fulfill the law on our own (with our abilities and motives); and we must have the Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us too voluntarily (out of love) uphold the intent of the law – our heart must change! To simply follow the law with no real love and devotion to God misses the point. Many become servants to the law rather than servants to Christ (He is Lord). The law points out our sin, failings and inabilities (Rm 3:20 & 7:7). Galatians 3:24, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." When we see our great need and submit to Jesus, He gives us the ability through our faith to live correctly for Him. Romans 8:4, "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." We are definitely being led in paths of righteousness for His namesake. Galatians 5:18, "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." The law is not made for the righteous, for they are a law unto themselves with hearts toward God and pure motives, the law is for the disobedient and rebellious (1 Tm 1:9, Rm 2:14-15). Those who love God are willing to follow God's commands because of their love for Him. They do not have to be forced to do such.

John 6:63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth

nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." If we attempt to understand God's Word apart from the Spirit we will fail to understand the truth. The flesh profits nothing (Jn 6:57). The flesh wants its dominance and will interpret God's Word in that disposition. The flesh wants to live in darkness yet profess to be in the light. The Spirit works on us to completely change us - our attitudes and desires. The flesh does not want to be changed it's a hindrance, a stumbling block and will keep us from truly coming to Christ. The flesh will see God's love, forgiveness, blessings and grace, but will not see self denial, sacrifice, obedience, forsaking worldliness and crucifixion of self. The flesh does not want to forsake anything, it wants to accumulate. Since the beginning, men living in the flesh have interpreted God's Word into all manner of erroneous doctrines. Men can be led to follow many a doctrine when the flesh is soothed and pacified and emotions are enticed. We may profess, but will we follow? Jesus said: Luke 9:23, "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Jesus also said whosoever does not bear his cross and forsake all that he hath and come after cannot be Christ's disciple (Lk 14:27 & 14:33). This is not a message for the flesh and is rarely preached in context. Only when we allow the Spirit to quicken will we see the truth and have life. The Holy Spirit regenerates! When we die to ourselves and seek God's will, we change into something beautiful like a seed planted in the ground or a butterfly emerging from a cocoon.

*excerpt from chapter 6 of Jesus said  
Come, Follow Me! by David Neal [bold  
emphasis added]*

STUDY NOTES

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I pray as we go through this study of the Holy Spirit that you, my friend, will grow closer to the Lord and experience the fullness of the Spirit of God dwelling in your heart of hearts (Your Pneuma or spirit-man or woman) May the

Lord bathe you this week with a fresh anointing from above.

This week, let me hear from you at 903-926-2607. I count it a real privilege to pray with and for those God has given to this ministry.

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