

## My Greatest Wish for You

When I say “wish” in this context, I am expressing a strong and earnest desire.

Wishing wells are still popular for those who don't mind throwing away their money. The idea is that if one makes a wish and then drops a coin into the well, that particular wish will come true.

Who among us hasn't had at least one birthday where you were told that if you make a wish and then blow out all the candles on the cake with one puff, your wish will come true?

Speaking about wishes reminds me of the couple who was celebrating their 35th wedding anniversary and their 60th birthdays at the same time.

During the celebration, a fairy godmother appears and says that because they had been such a loving couple all those years, **she will give them one wish each.**

The wife says she wants to travel around the world. The fairy waves her wand and presto! The woman has a wad of tickets in her hand.

Next, it is the husband's turn. He pauses for a moment, and then says shyly "Well, I'd like to have a wife 30 years younger than me."

The fairy picks up her wand and presto! He's 90.

Then there was the old preacher who was dying and told his wife he'd like to have **one last wish come true.** “What's that?” she asked. He said, “I want to have my doctor and my lawyer, both church members, come to our home and sit at my bedside”. The men came immediately and when they arrived, they were ushered up to his bedroom. As they entered the room, the preacher held out his hands and motioned for them to sit, one on each side of his bed. The preacher grasped their hands, sighed contentedly, smiled and stared at the ceiling.

For a time, no one said anything. Both the doctor and lawyer were touched and flattered that the preacher would ask them to be with him during his final moments. They were also puzzled - the preacher had never given them any indication that he particularly liked either of them. They both remembered his many long, uncomfortable sermons about greed, covetousness and materialistic behavior that made them squirm in their seats.

Finally, the doctor said, "Preacher, why did you ask us to come?" The old preacher mustered up his strength, then said weakly, "Jesus died between two thieves; and that's how I want to go."

Children, especially, love to make wishes. There is a not for profit organization known as **Make-A-Wish Foundation® International**. It was established to grant wishes to children around the world who are living with life-threatening illnesses. There will be 15 children at the Summer Olympic Games this month because **their one true wish, above all else**, was to be a part of those events.

An elder named John wrote a short letter to a much loved friend named Gaius and started out by saying (3 Jn 2)

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

I want to speak to you on this subject: MY GREATEST WISH FOR YOU. To be truthful, I picked up on the apostle John's greatest wish for his beloved friend and I want to express the same wish for you who are my beloved saints.

John wished for Gaius to prosper. Strong's Bible Concordance tells us that the Greek word for prosper basically means "to succeed in reaching a goal". It would apply here to any plan or purpose that this beloved friend might be considering. It would include success in business, happiness in marital relations, or prosperity in any of the engagements and transactions in which a Christian might lawfully engage.

It shows, by the way, that it is right to wish that our friends might have success in their work and in their life plans.

“And”, John went on to say, “I wish for you to be in health”. The implication is sound health, or good health. And he added that this desire for Gaius’ prosperity and health might be “**even as**”, or “in the same degree” that his soul was prospering. The elder was apparently familiar with this brother’s spiritual life: that Gaius was living an exemplary Christian life; that he was growing in grace and advancing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. So John prays that in all **other** respects he might be prospered as much as he was in **that**.

It is not very common that a man is more prospered in his spiritual interests than he is in his other interests, or that we can, in our wishes for the welfare of our friends, make the prosperity of the soul the standard of our wishes in regard to other things. It proves something of a person’s high state of godliness when we can, as the expression of our greatest wish for the welfare of our friends, express the hope that they may be in all other respects as much prospered as they are in their spiritual concerns.

As your pastor, I try to bring my wishes into proper alignment so they will result in your good. I think most preachers have that desire deep-rooted in them by the Lord Jesus.

Paul often expressed the selfless way he felt about those to whom he ministered. This seems to be especially true regarding his relationship to the saints in Corinth. Let me take a minute to show you **his** attitude, even as he reminded them in his second epistle.

In 2 Cor 4, the apostle has been reminding the church of a few of the hardships he had suffered over his years of ministry. Then he gave this reason in verse 15 for not ‘throwing in the towel’ and quitting the ministry: *For all things are for **your** sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.* Addressing the same group of saints, he wrote this in chapter 12...

2 Cor 12:13-19

*13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. [The context indicates that Paul admitted that he had wronged the saints of Corinth by not taking tithes from them for his support].*

*14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not **yours**, but **you**: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.*

*15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent **for you**; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.*

*16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.*

*17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?*

*18 I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?*

*19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.*

He continued in the same vein in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter.

2 Cor 13:7-9

*7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we [the preachers] should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.*

*8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.*

*9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.*

Likewise, in writing to the saints at Philippi, Paul testified in chapter 4:12-19:

*12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

*13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

*14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate [fellowship, or share] with my affliction.*

*15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated [shared] with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.*

*16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.*

*17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.*

*18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.*

*19 But my God shall supply all **your need** according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

I can sincerely say that my greatest wish for each one of you is for you to prosper and to be in health. And so, because I wish you prosperity and good health, I will do all I can to watch for your souls. You see, since my wish for you is to be based upon the condition of your soul, I want to see your soul prosper and be in health.

The first man, Adam, became a living soul after the LORD God breathed into him the breath (spirit) of life. Before that, he was just the shell of a man – a lifeless body without the spirit.

Sin is the worst disease of man's soul. It weakens, makes thin, ravages and eventually destroys that part of man's being that was once strong, fat, flourishing and abounding in spiritual health. Sin will bar you from God, mar your peace, blight your prospects, and make your soul empty and hungry, but when your sin is pardoned, you are reconciled to God. You are satisfied with God's love. You are satisfied with promises that can never be broken, with covenants that can never be violated, with oaths that stand fast like mountains, and with the words of God that are great as the fathomless sea. You are satisfied with your God.

As a result of such a satisfaction, you will be as well satisfied at one time as at another, so long as your soul is right. You shall be satisfied in times of drought. In the large and many times of distress the saint with the prospering soul is still satisfied.

I have a good reason for wanting to see your soul prosper, and to see you succeed in everything you lay your hands to do, and to know that you are enjoying good physical health.

First, like verses 3 and 4 of the book of 3 John bear out, it will bring me great joy. When I see that your life is clean and pure and that you are living by the standards of the Gospel, it makes me very happy. I could have no greater joy than to hear such things about my beloved saints.

Second, if I can see you prosper and be in health, I know it will give you a good reputation. 3 John 5-6 says, *Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:*

If you want your soul to prosper, give generously, even as Gaius did. Prov 11:25 tells us: *The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.*

You do well, when you give generously to the support of preachers who visit our church. Those who haven't experienced the gospel of grace have little sense of its value; therefore they will contribute little or nothing for the furtherance of the gospel. Those that are saved by it and faithful in it and true to it, will earnestly desire, and pray for, and contribute to the spread of the gospel throughout the world.

And so I want you to know that you are doing a good work for God when you take care of the traveling evangelists, missionaries, pastors, teachers, etc., who are passing through, even though they are strangers to you. They sometimes tell other congregations of your friendship and your loving deeds. You do well to send them on their way in a manner that pleases God. These people are traveling for the Lord and most of them have no other source of income. Therefore, we ourselves should support them so that we may become partners with them for the truth.

Let me give you a bit of advice. When a saint personally offers a traveling preacher a gift of money, it puts that person in an embarrassing position. He or she doesn't want to offend anyone by not accepting a love

offering; yet they know that by doing so their relationship with the pastor might be compromised.

Guest speakers generally respond in one of 3 ways when someone slips them an offering: 1) they may ask you to put the money in the offering plate (which is the best way), 2) accept the money and tell me about it afterwards (for which I respect their honesty, believing that it proves we are God's children when we do what is right). In that case I normally take the money and give it to our church secretary and instruct her to add that amount to the church check for that person), or, 3) even though this very seldom happens, a preacher might simply pocket the money without saying anything to me (of which I may or may not be aware, but if I find out, the person is not invited back, due to his lack of ethics).

I see to it, by the way, that every traveling guest speaker receives a generous offering by way of a church check. We give him or her all that is given in the offerings, unless the money is designated for something else. In most cases, we give the speaker more than is received in the offering.

*3 Jn 3-4 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

**If I am going to see my greatest wish for you fulfilled, I must teach/preach sound doctrine,** because sound doctrine is that kind of preaching and teaching that promotes spiritual health. The best evidence that you have truth is for others to see you walking in truth – living it out on a daily basis.

By the help of the Holy Ghost, I want to put the word of God down deep in your heart. Your part is to receive that engrafted word with meekness, meditate on it, and obey it.

Josh 1:7-8

*7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.*

*8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for **then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.***

Ps 63:5-6

*5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:*

*6 When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.*

**The holy scriptures tell us of other methods we can use to cause our souls to prosper.**

Prov 13:4 *The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.*

You need more than a desire if you want something in life. You can't be lazy and expect the world to give you a silver spoon. You need to diligently apply yourself. Not only that, but it sure helps to have the Lord with you, like he was with Joseph.

Gen 39:2-5

*2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and **he was a prosperous man**; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.*

*3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that **the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.***

*4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.*

*5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.*

Gen 39:20-23

*20 And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.*

*21 **But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.***

*22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.*

*23 The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, **and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.***

Look with me at Isa 58:10-11 to see a pathway outlined for us to follow if we want our souls to prosper. Here's a portrait of people moving from extreme adversity to renewed prosperity, simply by avoiding or laying aside some sins and then performing some ordinary duties.

There may be some besetting sins in your life. If so, you need to get rid of such evils as:

- (1) Oppression "*If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke,*"
- (2) Scorn and contempt. "*The putting forth of the finger*" – a gesture of derision.
- (3) "*And speaking vanity*" -- evil speaking generally.

The duties:

- (1) "*And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry,*" -- i.e. give, serve, minister, according as men about you have need, and according as you have God-given ability and opportunity.
- (2) "*And satisfy the afflicted soul*" -- i.e. visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction -- comfort those that mourn -- endeavor according to your power to wipe away the tears from the eyes of all the sorrowful.

The results: ***Then shall***

- 1) *thy light rise in obscurity, and*
- 2) *thy darkness be as the noonday: And*
- 3) *the LORD shall guide thee continually, and*
- 4) *satisfy thy soul in drought, and*
- 5) *make fat thy bones: and*
- 6) *thou shalt be like a watered garden, and*
- 7) *like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*

There is such a thing as soul-prosperity, and it's the greatest blessing on this side of heaven. It starts when a person is regenerated – born again, from above – by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He is immediately invested with an inward fund of spiritual life, and this stock increases, and spiritual treasures keep advancing, so long as he continues to walk in the truth.

Yes, my greatest wish is for your greatest blessings from the Lord God: that you will enjoy good success in life, good health, have truth on the inside and walk in it, and demonstrate the love of God by giving. Here is the key: all these blessings will come in the same measure that your soul prospers!