

### 3 John 1

#### *Possessing A Wealthy and Healthy Soul*

A story was once told of a Norwegian farmer. He stood on the porch of his fine old home gazing out over his broad acres. Never had he feasted his eyes on scenery that appeared so beautiful to him as his own land looked on this fair summer's day. "All this is mine!" he exclaimed.

As he stood gloating over his land, a servant appeared with his riding horse. He jumped into the saddle and galloped away.

Up the lane a little distance old Hans, the farm hand, was working. Hans had just unpacked his lunch. He removed his hat, and with folded hands, was returning thanks to the Giver of all good gifts when he heard his employer's voice: "Hans, how are you today?"

"Oh, is it you, sir?" responded the old man, looking up. "I did not hear you coming. I have grown somewhat deaf lately and my sight is failing too."

"But you look very happy, Hans."

"Happy? Yes, indeed, I am happy! I have many reasons to be. My heavenly Father gives me raiment and daily bread. I have a roof over my head, and a good bed to sleep in. That is more than my precious Savior had while He sojourned here below. I was just thanking God for all His mercies when you appeared."

The landlord glanced at Hans' meager lunch - a few slices of bread and a piece of fried pork. "And that is the kind of food you are thanking God for! I would feel quite deprived if that were all I had for dinner."

"Would you?" asked Hans wonderingly. "But perhaps you do not know what I have that adds sweetness to everything God gives me. It is the inward presence of Christ my Savior! May I tell you a dream I had last night, sir?"

"Of course, Hans; tell your dream; I'd like to hear it."

"As I was falling asleep my mind was taken up with the happy land above and the many mansions prepared for those who truly love the Lord. Suddenly I felt myself transferred to the heavenly portals. They were wide open, so I could look into the blessed city. Oh, sir, the glory and beauty I saw no tongue could describe! Of course it was just a dream; but there was one thing I particularly want to tell you.

The landlord began to look uneasy, but Hans, not noticing, continued: "I heard a voice saying, 'The richest man in the valley will die tonight.' Then I woke up.

"Sir, those solemn words were spoken so plainly, I have not since been able to forget them. I feel I ought to tell you. Perhaps it is a warning."

The landlord's face turned pale, but he tried to hide the fears that rushed in upon him. "Nonsense!" he cried. "You may believe in dreams, but I do not. Good-by."

He galloped away in great haste. Old Hans, looking after him, prayed, "O Lord, have mercy on his soul, if he is to die so soon."

A couple of hours later the farmer arrived home. Hurrying into the parlor, he threw himself down on the sofa, feeling quite exhausted.

"What a fool I am for letting the silly talk of an ignorant old man disturb me! The richest man in the valley! Of course that is myself. But the idea of my dying tonight! I never have been so well in my life. At least, this morning I felt fine; but right now I do have a peculiar headache, and my heart does not seem to beat normally. Perhaps I should send for the doctor."

Toward the evening the doctor came. The farmer was somewhat feverish on account of his agitation but was at a loss to explain his disability.

The doctor lingered for several hours, endeavoring to drive away the farmer's gloomy thoughts. It was nearing ten o'clock when he decided to leave. Just then the doorbell rang.

"Who can be calling at this time of night?" the farmer inquired anxiously.

"Sorry to disturb you, sir. Just came to tell you that old Hans died suddenly this evening, and to ask if you will please make arrangements for the funeral."

So the old man's dream had come true! It was not the possessor of broad and fertile acres, but his poor servant who was "the richest man in the valley." His ransomed soul had gone "sweeping through the gates, washed in the blood of the Lamb."

We read in 3 John of a man by the name of Gaius who was rich toward God as Hans was.

The name Gaius appears five times in the New Testament.

In 3 John verse four he is referred to as one of the elder's spiritual children. Whether this means he was converted by the elder, or simply that he accepted the elder's leadership, is uncertain. Gaius is called beloved, a frequent form of address for fellow Christians in the New Testament Epistles.

However, since Gaius was a very common name in the Roman Empire, New Testament scholars simply don't know if the Gaius in 3 John: 1 is the Gaius in Acts 9: 10, 20: 4, 1 Corinthians 1: 4, or Romans 16: 20.

Whoever Gaius was, the Apostle John commends him for his high character and extreme usefulness in the church. Gaius is described as having a prosperous soul.

Matthew Henry writes, “Soul prosperity is the greatest blessing on this side of heaven.”

A rich and healthy soul will do much good in the kingdom of God. Therefore, the title of my message for today is, **Possessing A Wealthy and Healthy Soul.**

Why did Gaius possess a wealthy and healthy soul? What made him different from other people? There are three observations I would like to make from the text.

**1. Gaius possessed a wealthy and healthy soul because the truth was in him.**

**We read in verse 3, “For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee....”**

The truth of faith and love which is in you.

Faith is received from Christ then exercised toward Christ.

We read in Ephesians 2:8, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

It is the gift of God. Salvation by grace is his gift. It is not of merit; it is wholly by favor.

How did this truth get into the heart of Gaius? Who put it there?

Those who possess a rich and healthy soul are regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit and transformed by the grace of Jesus Christ. They now understand spiritual truths that before were mysterious to them.

God alone can open the mind so as fully to comprehend the truth of Christ in the Scriptures. He only can overcome our prejudices, open our hearts, and dispose us to receive the engrafted word with meekness, and with the simplicity of a child.

The design of God's opening the understanding is that we may be acquainted with the Scriptures. It is not that we may be made wise above what is written, but that we may submit ourselves wholly to the Word of God.

Believers walk in the truth because the truth is in them. Before we were saved we walked according to the course of this, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

Unregenerate men in the act of ordering their behavior in the sphere of trespasses and sins are dominated or controlled by the "course of this world". They are continually in the state of being "under" the dominion or power of the world system and the evil prince, Satan.

Before salvation, the poor sinner is bankrupt. He is blinded by his own wickedness and living in darkness. A sinner is a sick and a dying creature.

But once the gospel of Christ powerfully shines forth and enters the dark soul of the sinner then truth dispels folly, the sinner is awakened, and God and sinner are gloriously reconciled together.

The truth of Christ dwells in every believer, and therefore, they adhere steadfastly to the truth, and they live in accordance with it. This leads to my second point.

## **2. Gaius possessed a wealthy and healthy soul because he *exercised it in the truth* (READ vv 1-4).**

Since the truth resides in all believers, then it will be manifested in our walk with the Lord.

John is teaching that the soul of man maintains spiritual fitness by exercising or walking in the truth. Our stamina is longer when we exercise. Our strength is greater when we exercise. Our minds are sharper when we exercise.

But stop exercising and the results are terrible. Spiritual fatigue sets in. We faint faster. We grow weaker. Our minds duller. Our hearts colder.

When most people think of exercise they have a negative connotation. They associate it with pain.

Most people fail at physical exercise because they typically try exercising for a few days, but they begin to feel bad, so they give it up.

We can look at our spiritual exercises in the same way. What happens when we put off prayer? When we don't read our Bibles? Our walk with the Lord suffers.

In what ways has the world choked you with its pleasures and distractions? How can you live in this world without letting it corrupt your soul?

We are deceiving ourselves if we think that our souls are strong and healthy enough to neglect the place of prayer, to keep our Bibles closed, and to miss the means of grace. Who are we kidding?

The spiritual fitness of a Christian depends entirely on how that Christian utilizes the means of grace. Show me a Christian that is flourishing, who shines brightly for Christ and who demonstrates in his life that he's vibrant in his walk with the Lord.

There is a vitality about him that shows that he not only believes in Christ, but he knows Christ and walks with Christ and loves to serve Christ. He abides in Christ and keeps close communion with Christ.

Show me that kind of Christian and I'll show you a Christian who spends time in prayer and time in the word of God. He discovers and rediscovers constantly that the word of God is a living word.

He doesn't simply learn lessons from God's word but God himself speaks to him in the learning of those lessons.

Gaius possessed a rich and healthy soul because he was walking in the truth. Are you walking in the truth?

### **3. Gaius possessed a wealthy and healthy soul and this was evident to others. (Read vv 5-8)**

In verse five we read, “*Beloved, thou doest faithfully.*”

In the previous verses John had commended Gaius for his attachment to truth, and his walk with the Lord.

He now speaks more particularly of his acts of generous hospitality, and says that he had fully, in that respect, done his duty as a Christian.

We read in verse 5, “*Whatsoever thou doest.*” In all your dealings with them, and in all your conduct towards them was worth commendation. In the small things and in the big things the spirit of hospitality came forth from Gaius.

The word *hospitality* derives from the Latin *hospes*, which is formed from *hostis*, which originally meant "to have power." The meaning of "host" can be literally read as "lord of strangers." Hospitals are places that take care of you. That's what hospitality is.

We read in Verses 6-7 how Gaius kept an open house for traveling preachers and poor saints. One of the greatest honors we can have is to entertain a servant of the Lord. The Lord Jesus equates these acts of kindness as done to himself.

We read in Matthew 25:34-40, “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Read verse 8. *We therefore ought to receive such.*

Albert Barnes writes, “All of us ought hospitably to entertain and aid such persons. The work in which they are engaged is one of pure benevolence. They have no selfish aims and ends in it. They do not even look for the supplies of their wants among the people to whom they go to minister; and we ought, therefore, to aid them in their work, and to contribute to their support.

The apostle doubtless meant to urge this duty particularly on Gaius; but in order to show that he recognized this obligation himself, he uses the term "we," and speaks of it as a duty binding on all Christians."

Just imagine the times of prayer Gaius must of had in his home with other believers. The stories he heard from traveling saints. Although the dangers of housing Christians were great, Gaius did what he could by providing Christians a place to stay in his home, and by giving them warm food to eat.

John includes Gaius as an helper in the gospel ministry. We read in verse 8, "*That we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.*"

All Christians cannot go forth to preach the gospel, but all may contribute something to the support of those who do; and in this case they would have a joint participation in the work of spreading the truth. Are you a fellow helper in the gospel?

Gaius possessed a rich and healthy soul and this was evident to others.

In conclusion, Gaius possessed a wealthy and healthy soul because the truth was in him, and he walked in the truth. Gaius was a fellow helper in the gospel ministry with the Apostle John. He had a great impact on people around him. Do you possess a wealthy and healthy soul?

May the Lord use us and bless us as he did his faithful servant Gaius with a wealthy and healthy soul. Let us pray.