

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. Romans 12:2

For centuries the Church has stood solidly against worldly entertainment, recognizing it for what it was: a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience, a scheme to divert attention from moral accountability. For this she got herself abused roundly by the ungodly. But of late she has become tired of the abuse, and has given up the struggle. She appears to have decided that if she cannot conquer the great god 'Entertainment' she may as well join forces with him and make what use she can of his powers.

The average church member lives a life so worldly and careless, that it is difficult to distinguish him from the unconverted man! A. W. Tozer

"The world has absorbed the Church, and the church is content that it should be so!" Horatius Bonar

THE BAPTIST CATECHISM

AS PRINTED BY THE CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION IN 1813

(Presented here as originally published – this does not constitute a full endorsement of the Riverside Baptist Church)

38. Q. What is sanctification?

A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace (2 Thess. 2:13), whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God (Eph. 4:23, 24), and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness (Rom. 6:4,6; 8:1).

39. Q. What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?

A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience (Rom. 5:1, 2, 5), joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5, 17), increase of grace (Pr. 4:18), and perseverance therein to the end (1 John 5:13; 1 Pet. 1:5).

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Sunday Evening 6:00 PM

Prayer and Bible Study Wednesday Evening 6:30 PM

WCWV 92.9 FM – 8:00 AM Sunday Morning

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST REPORT

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

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SOUL PROSPERITY

The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. 3 John 1:1-2

We are often moved to prayer and well-wishing on hearing of the illness or affliction of a dear brother or sister in Christ. Many think that such may have been the case with John and Gaius. John's love for Gaius is expressed often in this brief letter and the form of love expressed is that used by our Lord. The motivation of John in writing to Gaius seems to have been the content of reports from certain brethren concerning his faithfulness and love to others. The fact that John expressed the desire for his good health may indicate they had reported the same to John. In any event, the concern for the health of his beloved Gaius was real and more especially the health of his soul. It is both interesting and inspiring that he should bring bodily health to such a high standard of comparison. In so doing John establishes a connection between body and soul. He is not elevating bodily health to a higher degree than that of the soul. It is rather that above all other concerns of this present world good health was a desirable blessing.

It is certain that one's physical condition may affect the spiritual outlook and that soul affliction may be reflected in the physical countenance. Our Lord declared to His disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." And, it was faithfully expressed 750 years earlier: *As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: Isaiah 52:14.* It would seem that the desire of John was that the divinely given prosperity of the soul

might rise above any physical hindrance and that the prosperity of the soul be continued and be reflected in his health.

It is this thought of the soul prospering that captivates our attention in this verse. That the soul might be less than prosperous is suggested by the Psalmist in declaring of Israel in the wilderness that, *And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul. Psalms 106:15.* The evidence to John of the prosperity of the soul of Gaius was the witness to his acts of charity (love) before the church. He had acted faithfully toward both the brethren and to strangers. That prosperity of his soul was in evidence to all to whom such benefits came. It was of the prosperity that Gaius experienced that others received.

We are then moved to ask after the things that result in "soul prosperity." The most obvious answer to such a question is given in the verse following this one. *For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. 3 John 1:3.* The key word there is truth and the effect is realized in that it was in Him. We will then state the obvious. Christ declared Himself to be the "Truth" and so it is Christ in the soul that is the reason of its prosperity and gives to it the ability to receive the fruits of that prosperity. It is further declared that Gaius "walked in truth." And so, we may conclude that the fruit of the Spirit was evident in him in all its aspects. John Gill wrote that the soul, "may be

said to prosper, when having a spiritual appetite for the Gospel, the sincere milk of the word, it feeds upon it, is nourished by it, and grows thereby; when it is in the lively exercise of faith, hope, and love; when spiritual knowledge is increased, or it grows in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus; when the inward man is renewed day by day with fresh strength; and when it enjoys communion with God, has the light of his countenance, and the joys of his salvation; and when it is fruitful in every good work." With thoughts such as this in view we may well understand the recovery of David from spiritual depression in saying: *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. Psalms 42:5.*

It is such prosperity that causes the soul to be both the source of love and praise and to be capable of great sensitivity where the things of the Lord are concerned. Of Mary we read: *And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, Luke 1:46.* But it was also said to her: *(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Luke 2:35.*

It is the soul that is of such great value to the Lord and to a man. It is the object of salvation: *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. James 1:21.* And we further read: *Or what shall*

a man give in exchange for his soul? Mark 8:37. So it is that the soul prospers when it lays hold on Christ and finds its full identity in Him alone. *It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. Song of Songs 3:4.*

The following quote from Alexander MacLaren is indeed precious. "And even when, as is often the case, the devout and inwardly prosperous soul is compassed about with sorrows that never can be stanch'd, with griefs through which anything but an immortal life would bleed itself away; or with poverty and want and anxiety arising from causes which no personal devotion can ever touch or affect-even then if the soul prospers it has the power, the magic power, of converting poison into food, and sorrow into a means of growth; and they whose spirits are joined to Jesus Christ, and whose souls ever move in harmony with Him-and therefore are prosperous souls-will find that there is nothing in this world that is really adverse to them. For 'all things work together for good to them that love God,' since he who loves God thinks nothing bad that helps him to love Him better; and since he who loves God finds occasion for loving and trusting Him more in every variety and vicissitude of earthly fortune." Amen. *bhs*

Glory Is the Goal

John Piper

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:2)

Seeing the glory of God is our ultimate hope. "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2). God will "present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy" (Jude 24).

He will "make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory" (Romans 9:23). "He calls you into his own kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12). "Our blessed hope [is] the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Jesus, in all his person and work, is the incarnation and ultimate revelation of the glory of God. "He is the radiance of

the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Hebrews 1:3). "Father, I desire that they . . . may be with me where I am, to see my glory" (John 17:24).

"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed" (1 Peter 5:1). "The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

"We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7). "This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (2 Corinthians 4:17). "Those whom he justified he also glorified" (Romans 8:30).

Seeing and sharing in God's glory is our ultimate hope through the gospel of Christ.

Hope that is really known and treasured has a huge and decisive effect on our present values and choices and actions. Get to know the glory of God. Study the glory of God, the glory of Christ, the glory of the world that reveals the glory of God, the glory of the gospel that reveals the glory of Christ.

Treasure the glory of God above all things.

Study your soul. Know the glory you are seduced by, and know why you treasure glories that are not God's glory.

Study your own soul to know how to make the glories of the world collapse like Dagon (1 Samuel 5:4) in the pitiful pieces on the floor of the world's temples.



GOD'S REJOICING AND LAUGHTER

One of the gravest subjects in God's Word is His laughter. It is to be sharply distinguished from His rejoicing.

God rejoices over His people (Zephaniah 3:17): "The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing" (cp. Isaiah 62:4f; 65:19). If you believe God's gospel and trust in His Son Jesus Christ for salvation, God has loved and saved and quieted you, and rejoices over you with gladness and singing.

But God laughs at others.

God laughs at those who oppose Him and His Anointed (Psalm 2:1-5): "Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.' He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure." Jehovah's Anointed is His eternal Son, Jesus the Christ, whom Jehovah has anointed to be King of the earth (vv.6-9). Thankfully, those who repent of their opposition to Jesus Christ are forgiven (vv.10-12; cp. Acts 2:32-41).

God laughs at those who persecute His people (Psalm 37:12f): "The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that his day is coming" (see Psalm 59:1-8).

God will laugh at those who reject His gospel (Proverbs 1:20-33): Jesus Christ, the Divine Wisdom, tells us, "... Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, because you disdained all my counsel, and would have none of my rebuke, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, when your terror comes like a storm, and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies. For the turning away of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil."

Will God laugh at you because you oppose Jesus Christ, persecute His people, or reject His gospel?

Or will God rejoice over you because you believe His gospel, embrace Jesus Christ, and count yourself among His people? – Daniel E. Parks