

GOD

Living Prosperously

III John

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

In this familiar verse we see God's desire for us to "prosper and be in health". If God's desire for us is prosperity and health, then it must be available. How can we claim the promises of God, trusting in Him that we can manifest prosperity and health in our lives?

We'll consider what it means to prosper, or to live prosperously. First, we'll look at this verse in more detail; then we'll explore other verses that will help us to understand what true prosperity is. We'll consider several Biblical believers that prospered to discover why they prospered. Then we'll consider the great principle of giving and receiving and will see how as we apply this principle in our lives, we put our trust in God and He will come through, making our lives prosperous.

III John 2 begins with "Beloved, I wish above all things..." That tells us that our prosperity and health are high on God's priority list for us. The word "wish" can be understood as "pray", making it stronger than just wishful thinking. The word "above" is from the Greek word *peri*, which is usually translated "concerning". So, with everything considered, the number one prayer with believing for us is that we prosper and be in health.

The words "be in health" are all from the one Greek word *hugainō*, which is only translated this way in this one verse. Elsewhere, it is usually translated "to be sound" or "to be whole". For example, this word *hugainō* is the word for "sound" in "sound doctrine" in places like I Timothy 1:10, II Timothy 4:3, and Titus 1:9 and 2:1. It's translated "whole" in places like Luke 5:31 ("...They that are whole need not a physician: but they that are sick"). From these other usages of the Greek word *hugainō* we see that II John 2 is not just talking about physical health, but about wholeness in every category of life, with nothing lacking.

The word we're most concerned with in this verse, however, is "prosper", which is translated from the Greek word *euodoumai*. This word is the only word translated "prosper" in the New Testament, and it is only used four times. It's used twice in III John 2 (both "prosper" and "prospereth"). In II Corinthians 16:2, which deals with the setting aside of free-will giving, it is translated "prospered" ("...let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him..."). In Romans 1:10, the fourth usage of this word *euodoumai*, this one Greek word is translated into the words "might have a prosperous journey". Romans 1:10 reads "...if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you", but a more accurate rendering considering this Greek word would be: "...if by any means now at length I might prosper by the will of God to come unto you", indicating that to Paul, his desired visit to the believers in Rome would be prosperous.

Let's look at III John 2 again:

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

Notice the last part of this verse: "even as thy soul prospereth". The words "even as" are from the Greek word *kathos*, which even though it is usually translated simply as "as" can be better understood as "according as" or "just as" in the sense that something happened "as it was written" or "as he said". So, our prosperity and health are to be "according as our soul prospers". Just like our "soul prospers", we are to have prosperity and health or wholeness.

The word "soul" is from the Greek word *psuchē*, which is most often translated "soul" or "life" and refers to our entire being, every aspect of our life. It's also the same word translated "heartily" in Colossians 3:23: "And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." Whatever we do, we should do it with everything we are.

So, for III John 2, we see that as our entire being prospers, we are to prosper and be in health, totally sound in every aspect of our life. This prospering is obviously not just in the financial category. God wants us to prosper and to be fully sound in every aspect of our lives. Of course, living prosperously financially can be a part of this prospering, but living prosperously involves so much more. As we'll see, as we make God's Word our own and apply its principles, trusting in God to keep His promises, we can expect to live prosperously in every aspect of our lives.

Throughout the Bible we come across records of believers who prospered. By considering some of them, we can discover what they did in their lives that allowed them to prosper. We won't look at all of these, but here are just a few examples:

According to Genesis 39:2 and 3, while Joseph was in Egypt, "the Lord was with Joseph" and "the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." The word translated "prosper" in verse 3 is the Hebrew word *tseleach*, meaning "to (cause to) go on prosperously". It was "the hand of the Lord" (Jehovah, God in relation to His creation) that caused Joseph to prosper in all that he did. If you were to read the record of Joseph you'd see that no matter what the circumstances he faced, Joseph still kept his trust in God to take care of him, and he did indeed prosper.

Another example is Joshua:

Joshua

- 1:8 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.

The word "prosperous" in this verse is also from the Hebrew word *tseleach*. As Joshua kept God's Word in his heart and mind, not only meditating upon God's Word but living it, his way would be prosperous.

The verse right before, Joshua 1:7, contains a different Hebrew word that is translated “prosper”:

1:7 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.

In this verse the word translated “prosper” is the Hebrew word *sakal*, more literally meaning “to act wisely” or “to understand”. As Joshua observed and carried out God’s Word, he would be able to act wisely as he led the children of Israel into the Promised Land. This was one of the ways in which he would be able to prosper.

The word *sakal* is also translated “prosper” in Deuteronomy 29:9, where Moses was addressing the children of Israel: “Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.”

Another man who prospered was Solomon. I Chronicles 22:11-13 tells us that as Solomon lived according to God’s Word, God would cause him to prosper (*tseleach*). Not only would Solomon prosper in the material realm, but according to I Kings 2:3, as Solomon walked according to God’s Word, he would prosper (*sakal* – act wisely) in all that he did.

II Chronicles 31:21 tells us that the Judean king Hezekiah prospered (*tseleach*) as he sought God with all his heart. Chapter 32, verse 30 tells us that Hezekiah “prospered in all his works”. We see more about how Hezekiah prospered in II Kings Chapter 18:

II Kings

18:5 He (Hezekiah) trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings o Judah, nor *any* that were before him.

18:6 For he clave to the Lord, *and* departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses.

18:7a And the Lord was with him; *and* he prospered withersoever he went forth...

The word “prospered” in verse 7 is from *sakal*, to cause to act wisely. Verse 5 tells us that Hezekiah trusted in God. The word “trusted” is from *batach*, to lean on or to be confident in. Hezekiah trusted in, leaned on or relied upon, God, living God’s Word the best he could, and God came through. Hezekiah not only prospered in the material realm, but he prospered by acting wisely in his everyday life.

II Chronicles 26:5 concerns the Judean king Uzziah and how he prospered:

II Chronicles

26:5 And he (Uzziah) sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.

Here we see some additional information: Uzziah prospered “as long as he sought the Lord (*Jehovah*)”. When Uzziah did live according to God’s Word by seeking God in relation to

that which He created, it was God, as the creator of the heavens and the earth (*Elohim*) who made Uzziah to prosper.

These are some of the major records of individuals in the Old Testament who prospered. In all of these, we see that their prosperity depended on just one thing: seeking God while they endeavored to live life according to His Word. We can see this neatly summed up in Psalm 1, verses 1 through 3:

Psalms

- 1:1 Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the council of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
- 1:2 But his delight *is* in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.
- 1:3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper (*tseleach*).

So, having prosperity in our life, in everything we do, is simple: we just keep God's Word in our hearts and minds and live it. As we do, we trust in God that His promises are true, and He will come through. God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, is the one who will cause us to prosper.

Psalms

- 118:24 This *is* the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.
- 118:25 Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.

As we walk in fellowship with our heavenly Father we can rejoice and be glad each and every day, trusting God that He will give us prosperity.

We've seen that God wants us to prosper and that in order for us to prosper in our lives we need to live according to God's Word. We trust in Him that He is the source of our prosperity, not only in the material realm but in every aspect of our lives.

One of the ways that we show our trust in God to make us prosperous is by our operation of the great principle of giving and receiving. As we give, we can expect to receive, but we will receive back abundantly more than we give.

Proverbs

- 11:24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty.
- 11:25 The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

In this verse, "scattereth" literally refers to the scattering of grain: as the seeds are sown, they will develop into new plants that will each produce numerous new seeds. This is a figurative reference to giving: as we give, we can expect to receive back much more than we give. This is in contrast to selfishly holding onto all that we have, which would be trusting in our

own riches rather than trusting in God by operating the principle of giving and receiving. We see this in verse 28:

11:28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall; but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

We see another agricultural analogy of the same principle of giving and receiving in Ecclesiastes Chapter 11:

Ecclesiastes

11:1 Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

At first glance this verse doesn't seem to make sense: if you throw a piece of bread onto water, you might expect to end up with soggy bread, or just feed the ducks. But, the word "bread" is an example of the Figure of Speech *metonymy* – the use of one noun for another to emphasize an important concept. In this case, one noun is used to represent the product made from another material. To make bread, you start with grain. As grain is sown, being cast into an irrigated field, in time it will grow back up as a bumper crop, providing a lot of new grain, which can be used to make a lot of bread. This verse again tells us that as we give, like sowing a few handfuls of grain, we can expect to receive, not just a few handfuls, but much more than we originally gave. In short, "giving multiplies receiving".

Proverbs

3:1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

3:2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

3:3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

3:4 So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

3:5 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

3:7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil.

3:8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy ones.

3:9 Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase;

3:10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

God wants us to keep His Word in our hearts and minds and to trust in Him. As we see from these verses, there are many benefits: longer life, peace, physical health, and, as we operate the principle of giving and receiving, prosperity that will be far beyond what we give.

We see the benefits of operating the principle of giving and receiving further expressed in Malachi Chapter 3:

Malachi

3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it*.

3:11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

This was written to the believers in Old Testament times, before the Day of Pentecost. Those people were servants of God who were under the Old Testament Law; but look at all the blessings that they could expect as they gave the tithe that the Old Testament law required.

Today, in this Grace Administration, we born-again believers are God's children, not servants under the law. If God was able to do so much for His servants in Old Testament times, how much more can He do for us, His children?

II Corinthians

9:6 But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

The principle of giving and receiving still applies to us today. Verse 7 tells us that, unlike in Old Testament times when the Israelites were under the law of the tithe, today we are not restricted to give any specific proportion, no minimum or maximum, to reap God's blessings. Instead, each is to give "according as he purposeth in his heart" – it's your personal decision how much or how little you give. Even so, as we see in verse 6, the more we do give, the more we will receive back. Also, you are not to "give grudgingly, or of necessity". You're not to give because you're told you have to, or with the attitude that you really don't want to give. Romans 12:8 says: "...he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity (liberally)..." – we give with no strings attached, knowing that as we trust in God, He's the one who will bless us back and cause us to prosper.

Verse 7 concludes with "for God loveth a cheerful giver." As you give, your attitude is important: practice having the "attitude of gratitude." It's interesting to note that the word "cheerful" is from the Greek word *hilaros*, from which we get the word "hilarious".

Notice that these verses also do not specify what we are to give. Giving and receiving does not only apply to money, but to anything that we purpose in our hearts to give. Giving of our abundance applies not only to the financial realm but to the material – giving of belongings that we may not need that will benefit others, and even giving of our time and talents. As we give, whatever we give, we can trust that God will bless us back mightily, not just financially but in all aspects of our lives.

9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

As we believingly give of our abundance, God is able and willing to make all grace, God's unmerited divine favor, abound toward us, with the result that we will have "all sufficiency in all (in every way) so that we "may abound to every good work."

Notice the repeated use of the word “all” (including the word “every” which is from the same Greek word): this is the Figure of Speech *polyptoton*, a repetition, God’s way of emphasizing each of the benefits we can expect to receive as we give: all grace, all sufficiency in all, abounding to all good works. Nothing is left out.

That word “sufficiency” in verse 8 is from the Greek word *autarkeia*, which is used in only one other verse, I Timothy 6:6. In that verse, the word is translated contentment: “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” We benefit most when we live with godliness, keeping God’s Word in our minds and hearts, with the sufficiency that God provides us. The reason we can be “content” is that with God’s sufficiency, we lack nothing. All of our needs are supplied. Philippians 4:19 tells us: “...my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” The word “supply” here is the Greek word *pleroō*, meaning to fill to capacity: we have all we need and don’t need anything more.

In II Corinthians Chapter 3 we see a different Greek word that has been translated “sufficiency.”

3:4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;

In verse 5, both the word “sufficient” and the word “sufficiency” are from forms of the Greek word *hikanōs*, meaning “competent”. When we put our trust in God, we aren’t going to rely on our own competency (or ability), but our competency is from God. We trust God, believingly operating His principles, including the principle of giving and receiving, and He makes us competent. We again lack nothing: we have everything we need to be victorious in the face of any situation or circumstance or need that may come up. No matter what, we can trust in God to prosper.

We have seen that as we keep God’s Word in our hearts and minds and operate His principles, we can trust in Him that He will cause us to prosper. And, our living prosperously involves so much more than just finances: it applies to every aspect of our lives.

Let’s conclude by looking at a few more verses that will give us a greater picture of what living prosperously as we trust in God means to us.

Psalms

37:3 Trust in the Lord, and do good; *so* shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

37:4 Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

37:5 Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring *it* to pass.

Matthew

6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

John

10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

Ephesians

3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

I Timothy

6:17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches (*the uncertainty of riches*), but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

From these verses we see that as we keep God's Word and His promises in our minds and hearts, God will give us the desires of our hearts, and He will fill all our needs so we never need to be anxious or unduly concerned. And not only that, but we can live a life that is more abundant, even experiencing how God can take care of us exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, giving us all things richly to enjoy.

So, we see that living prosperously is so much more than finances: living prosperously can be our day to day lifestyle. All we need to do is trust in God as we keep His Word in our hearts and lives.

- Dr. Rick Batt