

# A Spiritual Health Exam

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at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.  
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## 3 John 1:1-4

*THE ELDER, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: 2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. 3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

Have you noticed how health is in the news lately? A presidential candidate passes out and everyone wants to see the medical records of both candidates. Both of them want to convince us that they are robust enough to tackle the rigorous demands of the presidency.

However, the presidential candidates are not the only ones concerned about their health. Health care spending in America has risen to 3.4 trillion dollars a year. Americans are obsessed with physical fitness. Nothing seems as important as your health when you don't have it. As a society we are constantly reminded how we should live to maximize well-being. Nutrition and exercise have become billion dollar industries because people have become health-conscious.

In this brief epistle, the Apostle John shows an interest in the health of his friend, Gaius. He says, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."

Before, we look at John's concern for Gaius's health, let me take a few moments to discuss the reason for the letter from John to his friend.

John wrote to Gaius to introduce him to a Gospel worker he was sending, his name was Demetrius. This was a common practice; traveling Gospel workers were given letters of commendation by people who could vouch for them. Gaius was very good to house and feed these itinerant preachers. John compliments him for doing so in the past in verses 5-6,

*Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God. (NIV)*

But John has another reason to write these 14 verses and that is because there was another man who was not so kind. His name was Diotrephes. He was an elder of a small house church who was domineering and dictatorial. He would not receive these traveling evangelists, perhaps out of jealousy; in fact, he would not even receive the Apostle John. The apostle writes in verse 9, "I wrote

to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.” Diotrephes had expelled from the church anyone who received these guests preachers.

*Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.” (3 John 10)*

John does not want Gaius to be fearful of Diotrephes and to warn all, especially the renegade pastor, that John was coming soon to deal with this arrogant man. And so he encourages Gaius in verse 11, “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.”

So, we have here in Diotrephes a person whose soul was not prospering, who was soul-sick. In Gaius we have a soul who is very healthy.

## **I. The Health of the Soul**

What is spiritual wellbeing? What does John mean here?

### **A. What John Did Not Mean.**

This is often used as the foundation, if not as the cornerstone, of the prosperity gospel. Teachers take this verse and maintain that God wants you to be as prosperous financially as your soul prospers. In fact, you ought to be. That’s their teaching.

A person who is not financially prosperous or who is not well physically is someone who is spiritually sick, whose faith is not prospering. These teachers are advocating this verse with the point that God wants you to increase your financial worth to the degree that your spiritual worth increases. You ought to have enough faith to be financially well off as well as physically.

*“Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.”  
(3 John 2)*

I remember the beginning of this movement in the early ‘70s. I remember it well because the church where I grew up was infiltrated with one of these false brethren. I remember the co-sponsors of that teaching, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, they were the pioneers and the apostles of this false gospel. I remember what division it caused in our local church.

I remember several years ago hearing about a Chinese sister who had been told about what was being taught here, this prosperity gospel, and she laughed and said, “That could never happen in China.” Sadly today, it is. My friend Paul Washer called me the other day and was speaking about how the Chinese church has been infiltrated with this false teaching. People are saying that if you

have enough faith you ought to be prospering financially and physically. If you're not, the problem is you're not obeying God and you're not advancing as you ought to.

Beloved, there is no other verse to substantiate this prosperity gospel interpretation. If this were the case, then Jesus and the apostles must have been the least spiritual men the church has ever had for often they were in dire extremities both financially and physically. It's said of our Lord that He owned nothing. He had no place to lay His head. The only thing He had, the clothes on His back, was taken from Him and He died in absolute abject poverty.

Isn't Jesus supposed to be our model? Didn't He warn us time and again not to place our hope in physical, material things on this earth? "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." Jesus was explicitly clear that the prosperity gospel was not His Gospel and it ought not to be ours either.

John is not meaning that you ought to be financially prosperous and always well, although he prays this for Gaius. You can't escape that is what he's praying for, but he doesn't mean that there's something wrong with Gaius if he's not financially doing well. He's not saying that if the bottom line on his balance sheet isn't doing well that there's something spiritually wrong with him.

Nor does John mean that spirituality guarantees good health.

"If you just walk with the Lord closely, you'll always be well." That's not what he's saying.

While it is scientifically reported from research that prayer and meditation have positive effects on healing and the human body, John is not, in the least, suggesting that spirituality always produces health or wealth.

It is also true that those who are true Christians live a more healthier life or longer life simply based upon a more healthily lifestyle. Friends, you are going to live a healthier life, on average, than a person who participates in alcohol and drugs because these things take a terrible toll on the body.

John is doing the same thing you do when you write a letter or an email. He is beginning by way of a salutation that says, "I hope my letter or email finds you doing well." Or, "I hope this email finds you prospering." It's nothing more or less than this. He's not saying it flippantly, he's really praying for these things.

## **B. The Health of the Soul Was Above and Beyond the Concern for the Body.**

While he does ask that Gaius have everything he needed, John's major concern was not that because he never mentions it again. The rest of the verses are completely focused on spiritual wellbeing.

*“Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.”*

The Bible says, “The little that the righteous has is better than the riches of many wicked.” The focus is not on how much you have or the state of your body and mind, the focus is always on the soul. What is the soul? It’s your person. It’s the very thing that can be attributed to who you are. It’s your personhood, your being; it comprises you. It’s what will survive beyond the life of this body. The Bible says that is the concern.

Jesus said it this way, “Don’t be afraid of those who can kill the body, but fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell.”

The body is not the major objective. The Bible says if He tarries long enough we’re all going to go the same way, the way of the grave. You can’t keep these bodies living perpetually, no matter what modern medical advances are discovered. Eventually the body dies and cannot keep itself going. What then are you going to do? If the focus has been on the body only and not upon the soul, what will your state be? How will you weather the judgment of God?

As we look at this verse I was immediately taken back by how nontypical this statement is. It’s nontypical of most Christians today that their souls are doing better than their bodies or their bank accounts.

Notice that with me.

*“I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.”*

Today, if John were writing to the average Christian, he would pray that the Christian may prosper in his or her soul, just as their health and finances prospers, wouldn’t he? If he were to pray about you, how would he have stated it? Would he say, “I pray your body and finances would be on the same level as your soul” or would he say, “I pray your soul would be on the same level as your finances and health”?

What would happen to your financial worth and resources if you gave it the same attention you give to your soul’s health? How would you be doing financially?

Yet John can say of Gaius, I hope your finances catch up with your soul. I pray your health is just as good as your soul is. Could he say that of you?

What would happen to your body’s health if you gave it the same priority you give to your soul’s health?

Many today are preventative in their health care. I try to be. I try to eat a healthy diet, I try to be preventative in my health routine. What would life be like if we were that preventative with our soul’s wellbeing?

The least symptom, a cough, or ache, or pain, and we run to the doctor, clinic, or pharmacy ready and willing to attack the ailment with fierceness. We cannot abide by the least problem physically speaking and we're alarmed, "Oh, I'm having some problem here, I need to nip this in the bud, I can't let this go or it could turn into something worse." So off we go to Walgreens, CVS, or the doctor and we take the first thing that will help us.

How many of you know WebMD well? Doctors hate those websites because they're finding that more people are self-diagnosing because they go to the computer or Internet and check out WebMD because we're so concerned about our physical wellbeing. We will not tolerate our bodies not working at their optimum. Do you do that with your soul?

You say, "Oh, no, because I don't have to be. I'm already saved. Jesus possesses my soul, that's His care and responsibility." Is it? "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves of filthiness of the flesh and spirit." Yes, even the spirit needs to be cleansed and that's your responsibility—"perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." "Exercise yourself unto godliness, for bodily exercise profits little, but godliness is profitable for all things."

The command of Scripture is that you are to take care of the temple of your body, but more importantly, and with more enthusiasm, not less, you're to care for your own soul.

How are you doing with the responsibility of caring for your spiritual health?

Are you as diligent when it comes to these things as you are about your financial bank statement?

How many of you are thoroughly dutiful and diligent to be a good employee, aspire to promotions, pay raises, you want to do your absolute best so you can advance and get ahead, and financially prosper? Are you paying as much attention to your soul and its relationships with its Creator as you are your work?

You, who say you are workaholics, do you give the same vigilance to your soul as you do your business and your to-do lists?

These are the questions. This is the heartbeat of what we're looking at here. You cannot hope that you financially prosper and your body be as well as your soul, for most of us our souls are absolutely sick because we've given attention to these other things more than our own spiritual condition.

We do whatever we can to keep the body going. We give little attention to the heart.

I remember my dear friend, Brother Coleman Rash, who passed away in 1998. He told me many times, watching brothers and sisters die of cancer, that if he ever contracted cancer he would never go the chemotherapy way because he saw what it did to them. At that time, it was thought

that the chemotherapy was often worse than the cancer. When he and I were sitting in Doctor Winkler's office, the oncologist here in town, Doctor Winkler said, "Coleman, you have a severe, advanced-forming lung cancer. If you do nothing you'll live about another six months. If you take treatment it will extend your life about a year."

I thought I knew exactly what would come out of his mouth because of what he had previously told me, but I was amazed when he surrendered and yielded to chemotherapy. Why did he do that? Because there's something in us that wants to keep the body as long as we possibly can. We don't want to be "unclothed from this natural tent," as Paul called it. But I ask you, are you as caring and concerned about the part that will endure death and survive it and stand before God? Are you as concerned about this as you are your physical life?

What's the definition of a healthy soul? It's important that we know what we're talking about.

## **II. The Definition of a Healthy Soul**

What is a healthy soul? How do we define it? John defines it as the truth. We're not surprised, are we?

### **A. The Truth Was in Gaius.**

***"For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth." (3 John 3)***

How do you define spiritual health? In Gaius, whose soul prospered, it was because the truth was in him.

If you are to spiritually be well today, you are going to have to take a daily regimen of the Word of God. You're going to have to create a daily discipline of ingesting, imbibing God's prescription, which is the Holy Scriptures.

The truth here is the Word of God. Jesus prayed for us, "Sanctify them, Father, in Your truth, Thy Word is truth."

Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 that the Lord, who is the Head, the Bridegroom, is washing His bride, cleansing her with the washing of the Word.

It is the Word of God that is our daily need. You need the Bible and you need to be ingesting it. You cannot have the truth in you until you first know what the truth says. You've got to be in the Scriptures, friends. I know even Christians find it difficult to read the Scriptures and we often don't do it because we find it so "difficult," but there is no other way. I cannot give you another option. There is only one way. In order to get the Word of God in you, you've first got to study it and meditate upon it.

You've got to learn it and understand it and you can't do that without opening your Bible and spending time daily in it. You cannot live by what you receive here. There's just no way. It's impossible. If you try to survive on sermon after sermon, week after week, Sunday to Sunday, you will shrivel. God did not design the preaching to be your steady diet; it's supplemental. It's what Karen and I try to do. We try to eat healthy and exercise regularly, but on top of that we take vitamins—supplements—to help the body.

What you are receiving here, right now, is a vitamin. It's a spiritual supplement that is to be an addition to the Word you are digesting daily. How many of you want to start eating physically one day a week? See how well that works? Your soul, like the body, has to have nourishment. God made it that way. Don't try to develop some new technique that will trick the soul into going days upon days, weeks upon weeks, without studying the Word of God for yourself. It will not work.

This is why so many Christians, some of us, are spiritually sick and weak and are not prospering in our souls. It's because you're counting on some book at LifeWay, some Bible study you bought or even some good devotional. As good as *Morning and Evening* by Charles Spurgeon and *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers are, they are not sufficient.

Notice, the Bible never tells you to read the Bible. I can't find one Scripture that tells me to read the Bible, but I can find numerous verses that tell me to study it. Even more than study it, we are to meditate upon it, think about it, muse, let it fill the mind with curiosity. I should turn it in my mind and view it from every perspective with God's help.

*“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”*

I'm telling you, you would grow and your spirit would be transformed by daily ingestion. What I mean by this is internalizing it. Making it yours. Studying and reading through a passage until God shows up and there's a reality to that truth. That's what the Bible commands. The Bible commands this kind of pursuing the Word.

How many of you know what Joshua 1:8 says? It ought to be a verse you memorize.

*“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”*

There it is. That's God's prescription. We are to think upon it, memorize it, hide it in your heart, and then what you do will be blessed because you have the wisdom from above. You'll be operating with a wisdom that far exceeds the wisdom of this world.

This doesn't mean you'll be a financial guru or you're going to be competing with Warren Buffet and be on *Forbes* list of the top 50 wealthiest people. No, it simply means that you will be suc-

successful in God's will for your life. What list would you prefer to be on than that one? God says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, you were faithful in the execution of My purpose and plan for your life." The only way that can happen is by getting the Word in you. You've got to get the Word into you.

You've got to stop listening to preachers and start picking up your Bible more. Some of you like to get on the internet and download sermons from preachers, some of you even dare to download some of mine and listen to it a second time. I would encourage you to do far less of that and do more mediating of the Scriptures and let God speak to you. He's a far better preacher than I am. He can take that truth and make it yours.

I love it when people call me up and say, "Pastor, God showed me this in the Scriptures!" Three weeks ago I preached on this, but they saw it for the first time because the Spirit of God gave them understanding and they'll never forget it. It's theirs.

An internalization of the Word of God is the blessed life. What does Psalm 1 say? "...his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he doth meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water that brings forth fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper."

Listen to our Lord.

*"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." (John 15:7)*

How many of you feel like your prayer life stinks? This is the prescription: the Word of God. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you..." this is huge because of verse four.

*"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me." (John 15:4)*

Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you," but in verse seven He doesn't say it that way. He says, "Abide in Me, and My words abide in you." Jesus in you is governed by how much of His Word is in you. Let me explain. It doesn't mean you have more or less of Jesus depending on how much you know of the Scriptures, that's not what He's saying. He's saying the Spirit of the Living Christ cannot have His influence and way with you apart from the Word. He exercises and manifests His presence in you through the truth that's guiding you moment by moment.

The way to activate the Jesus in you is through the truth, the Word of God, and hide it in your heart.

David said, "Your Word I have hidden in my heart that I may not sin against you."



Gaius was prospering because he was putting in himself the Word. There is no magic formula. Beloved, please learn from my mistakes. For years and years I looked for the secret; I was looking for somebody somewhere through the centuries who perhaps had written down the key to experiencing the power of God in his or her life. I have read and read, researched and sought, and you know what I've discovered? Any book on the power of the Christian life or the successful Christian life tells me the same thing. For example, take Moody's book, *The Secret Power*. I read the book and guess what? There's no secret—he just tells me what Jesus said! The reason it's called a secret is because so few people do it! So few of us do it because we're more concerned about finding the key to financial prosperity or physical wellbeing than we are our own soul.

## **B. Gaius Practiced the Truth.**

He wasn't a hearer of the Word only but a doer.

*“For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, **just as you walk in the truth.**” (3 John 3)*

*“Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.” (3 John 11)*

Once again, the Bible seems to attach behavior, actions, to spirituality. Even salvation. We are not saved by our works; we are saved by grace. But the grace that saves us is not opposed to effort but produces effort. The grace that saves us is only opposed to earning but never to effort. If the grace of God that saves you is in you, and it will be, then you will walk in good works that have been prepared beforehand that you should walk in them.

You practice it. You don't just know it.

## **C. Specifically, Gaius Practiced the Truth by Loving Others.**

He took care of these traveling evangelists, strangers. He didn't even know them but he would welcome them into his home, feed them, house them, and then send them on their way, maybe even with a little offering to get them down the road.

Often, people who are always talking about truth use doctrine as a club to beat into submission those who don't agree with them. I've been guilty of that. I've used truth like a weapon. I know how to use my weapon. I'm proficiently trained in the use of the Word of God. I've given my whole life to it, even before I was saved. I grew up learning to read on a King James Bible. I know how to use the Word of God and I can argue the Scriptures. But friends, that's not what God gave the Word of God to be. It's not a weapon. It's not a club.

But, on the other hand, those who emphasize love are soft on the truth; they compromise by ignoring sin, not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings because that is how they define love. But since

God is the God of truth and love, spiritually prosperous people will be characterized by both truth and love.

They will not just use the truth to subjugate people to their own will. They won't manipulate people with the Bible to get them to do what they want them to do. They will simply, in love, give them the truth because that's what God wants for them.

#### **D. Conversely, the Spiritually Sick Soul Does Not Love People or the Truth.**

Diotrephes is the example. Diotrephes loved the preeminence. He wanted people to submit to him and serve him. Those are the spiritually sick ones. Do you demand people honor you, respect you, and do what you think is best for their lives? Friends, be careful. That is the prescription of spiritual sickness.

Before we conclude this message, I would like for us to spend the rest of our time doing an examination of our souls. Let's turn this room into a big examination room.

### **III. Examination of the Soul**

It is my hope to be at all times a physician of the soul. That is what I believe a pastor is to primarily be—a physician of the soul. So you've walked into my exam room and, like any physician of the body, I want to ask you some diagnostic questions. Are you ready? You can consider this examination a yearly/annual checkup or you as the process of diagnosis of a current spiritual illness. You say, "I know that I'm spiritually sick and I've come that I might receive God's prescription for health."

#### **How would you describe your walk with God this year?**

Be honest with yourself. God already knows the answer so telling you to be honest with God is in vain because He already knows. I'm asking you to ask yourself. You may not know because you never want to think about it. How would you describe your walk with God this year? Is it advancing? Have you moved onto new realms? Have you seen the love of God for you that has lifted you beyond the status quo or what you were experiencing last year? How would you rate your walk with Jesus since January?

#### **In your devotional life, what's one thing you've recently discovered?**

Can you give me one thing that you've recently discovered as a result of being with God in the Word and in prayer? Dear friend, if you can't, that is probably an indication that we're probably not doing as well as we ought to. Why do I say that? Because we ought to be having vital relationship with Jesus, conversation, He communicating with you and you communicating with Him. He communicates primarily through the Word. Have you been reading something in Scripture and all of the sudden something comes out to you?

You knew the verse but now you see the power and reality like you've never seen? That's what I'm talking about.

When's the last time that happened to you and what was it that you saw? If you're not experiencing that, then your whole approach to the Scriptures is inadequate if not inaccurate. We do not read the Scriptures to be reading them, in order to gain information. That's not the reason you pick up this book on a daily basis. It's not just to gain new information so you can say you're a theologian.

Nor do we read the Scriptures to do our religious obligation. You can listen to this message and a soul-sick person is going to say, "Okay, tomorrow morning, I'm going to wake up and get disciplined. I've got to read the Bible at least 30 minutes every day." That's not what I said. You didn't hear that from me.

You don't read the Bible because you've got to read the Bible, if you're doing it because you have to, then you're in a sick condition and you need immediate attention. This is serious. This is triage. This is like heart attack serious. If prayer is because you must satisfy God to get His blessings and not His curses, then you are in serious intensive care. You are in a serious intensive care situation.

We read the Scriptures in order to experience God, to hear from Him. We read the Scriptures in order to ingest it into us and then think about it throughout the day, and in thinking about it, the Spirit will show up. Listen to me, I promise if you do this the Spirit of God will eventually show up and will teach you what that means and it will have power in your life.

### **Do you feel like you are in control of your finances or God is in control?**

This will really get our pulse quickly. The simple way of discerning this is by answering this question—who makes the financial decisions, you or God?

### **Do you truly enjoy and benefit from public prayer meetings?**

Some of you are feeling sick right now. Well, no, it's just that this question exposed the illness that was already on the inside. The soul-sick person will not enjoy a public prayer meeting because they're not in the right fellowship with Jesus or the brothers and sisters.

A prayer meeting ought to be something we thoroughly enjoy. Yes, sometimes it's very hard work, but, when talking about prayer and prayer meetings, why are the bulk of them always dealing with the physical or financial needs? Have you stopped to ask yourself that question or even considered it as a question? Did you notice that most public prayer meetings in most churches deal with the physical needs more than the spiritual needs?

One of the pastors from the pastors' fellowship called me the other day and said he was discovering that their Wednesday night prayer meeting dealt mainly and mostly with people who are sick. He said, "We don't pray about the spiritual condition of the church or one another or even lost souls, it's always sick people." I was thankful he was seeing that. That's a condition that tells me, as a physician of the soul, there is a lack of health in that church.

Recently, I had a pastor ask if I would be willing to meet with him so they could learn how to turn their Wednesday night meetings into prayer meetings. They don't even have a prayer meeting at the church. None whatsoever. The church never meets to publicly pray together.

Do you enjoy the public prayer meeting and do you see it as a necessity for your own spiritual wellbeing?

### **Do you show patience in your relationships with family and friends?**

I don't think I need to exercise patience, do I? Either you do or you don't. You can't be halfway patient. Either they drive you crazy and your blood pressure immediately rises or you forbear them in the love of Jesus Christ. Do you react easily when people push your buttons? That gives you an indication of the soul's health. If you do react quickly, you're not in good spiritual health.

### **Do you share your faith in Christ with non-believers or are you afraid to do so?**

### **Where do you feel you would most like to grow as a Christian?**

If you don't know, that tells me something. Someone who is spiritually well, they always have something in mind that they're believing God for. Listen, this is going to shock you, a spiritually well person spends most of their time praying not for others but for themselves. I know that's just the opposite of what you probably think, but why is that true? That person understands what we sang earlier, "I need Thee every hour." They know that apart from Jesus they can do nothing. They have to spend the bulk of their time getting their soul happy in Jesus before they can pray for you. There is no effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man until he is righteous, that is he knows he is walking with God in perfect fellowship.

I was reading Alexander Whyte's classic book on prayer *Teach us to Pray*. He said he spent an hour and a half in prayer, trying to find God one morning. So he got his walking staff and got his coat and went out into the brisk winter air for a walk. He began to pray, "Lord, where are You? I need You. I need You." And all of the sudden a verse came to his mind and with that verse came the presence of God and in a few moments he had prayed through and come to complete rest.

He said the two hours it took him to find the presence of God and enjoy it, was worth it. It didn't seem like a waste or a great exertion of his time and effort. It was the reward for it.

**Where do you feel like you want to most grow as a Christian?**

**Do you really feel the needs of others are as important than your needs?**

**How is your thought life? Have you viewed anything pornographic in the last six months?**

What are you setting before your eyes?

**How would you describe your level of passion for Christ?**

On a scale of 1-10, where is your passion for Jesus?

Here's my last question.

**After answering these questions are you feeling pride or condemnation or gratitude to God?**

If you're feeling pride right now, you're very sick. If you could answer these and feel good about yourself, friend, your soul is sick. You shouldn't feel any pride. I don't care how well you're spiritually doing right now, you ought not to feel pride. Pride is the very personification of what sin is—to live independently of God. Pride at this moment should be the farthest thing from us. If you're doing spiritually well right now, you ought to be feeling gratitude to God. He has helped you! He has been your good Shepherd, you shall not want. He is leading you beside still waters and it is He who restores your soul. If your soul is doing well, it's because of the Lord.

If you're feeling condemnation then, again, your soul is sick. You've answered every one of those questions from a non-Gospel perspective and you feel guilt instead of gratitude that there is a sacrifice to cover sins. Not only that, but the same power that put Him on the cross is the power that raised Him from the dead and lives within you and is able to keep you.

You ought to feel gratitude to God that there is a Gospel today and no condemnation.

Beloved, as I conclude, you're not going to escape this world alive unless Jesus comes back soon. Not only are you not going to escape this world alive but you will probably leave with your body working less proficient than it does today. It stands to reason, doesn't it?

*“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16)*

The body is perishing and vitamins and good exercise regimens and healthy food will not keep

it from perishing. I look at these young people and it's sad what you're thinking right now, "I'm young, I'm in the prime of my life, I'm doing well." But you're dying as you're sitting here in front of me. The cells are not regenerating to the degree of perfection it used to.

We hear of people dying all the time in infancy, in adolescence, in teenage years, in the 20s, as well as the 70s, 80s, and every age in between. The outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. Everyday my inward man is getting stronger because I'm taking my medicine.

For some of you, you wouldn't live without the pharmacy you carry around. Right? I was talking to someone the other day and they said, "I'm taking more prescriptions than I know and I'm afraid I'm not taking them all because I have to take so many." There are several of you on blood pressure medication in this room. It keeps your blood pressure in check and you have to take it daily. Friend, your soul needs daily attention.

If you give it that attention, you can say with the Apostle Paul,

*"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Corinthians 5:1)*

Jesus you will see and you're going to see Him very soon. What would He say of your spiritual condition at that hour? You say, "But I'm there. I made it." Be careful. Jesus requires more from you than getting there. He does that. You don't. You don't get yourself into the kingdom. He got you into the kingdom. The question is, what did you do with the soul He gave you?

I pray we can all one day say that we prospered in all things, just as our souls prospered. Amen.