

LENEXA EDIFIER

"and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

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All Things Work Together For Good

IS THAT REALLY WHAT IT MEANS?

William Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

In **3 John 1:2**, we read: *...I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.*

This simple greeting from John to Gaius has been the heart of a movement known as the health and wealth gospel. Prosperity preachers make much more of it than he intended, twisting his words to give undue focus on carnal things rather than spiritual.

One "name it and claim it" speaker has affirmed, *"God created every one of us to be successful. Before the foundation of the world, He laid out an exact plan for our lives. And in this plan He has moments of favor that will come across our paths. These moments are not ordinary. They are destiny-altering moments."* (1)

The same writer tells us, *"It's God's will for you to live in prosperity instead of poverty."* (2)

I'm not suggesting God wants us to fail or starve to death or anything like that, but long life, good health, and financial abundance are not promised to believers as these false teachers suggest. The message of the Bible is about the forgiveness of sins and the hope of heaven, not physical health and wealth.

Among the verses hijacked to support this prosperity doctrine is **Romans 8:28**. It reads: *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

It is a great promise! No matter how bad things look, if we love God, if we are the called, if we are focused on His purpose for our lives, then He will work everything out in our favour. But what does Paul mean by this? What does he mean by "good"? Some seem to think it means all our desires, preferences, pleasures, comforts, and wants will be showered upon us. As appealing as that may sound to some, it is a misuse and abuse of what Paul wrote.

We need to look at the context of **Romans 8:28**. We're going to go larger than the usual 15 verses we have emphasized in our series. In fact, we're going to look at the entire chapter.

v 1-13 - our walk

Those who are in Christ must walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh. We are called to live according to the law of the Spirit, the gospel, not according to the carnal desires that we might have. The health and wealth gospel is about fleshly desires. Its appeal is to the carnal mind. Notice: *...the carnal mind is enmity against God...* (8:7)

v 14-17 - relationship

Those who walk according to the Spirit are led by the Spirit (**v 14**), and are adopted as children of God. As we follow His word and focus on the spiritual, not the carnal, His Spirit is able to bear witness with our spirit that we belong to Him.

Surely if we are children of God, who is Creator of all things, He'll bless us with whatever our hearts desire, right? We are heirs of God (**v 17**), yet the focus is not on physical things that will perish, but on eternity. We will be glorified with Christ AFTER we have suffered with Him. Prosperity preachers don't talk about suffering - it's not a popular message.

v 18-30 - while we wait

In this life, we are going to suffer. Paul wrote: *...all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.* (2 Timothy 3:12) The glory that awaits us is so great that the sufferings of this life for the Lord will seem as nothing (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Paul gives a beautiful description in this section of our text of the anticipation of God's people being received into heaven. Not only do we eagerly await it, but the whole creation is pictured as waiting for us to realize the hope of God's people - heaven. It is not about the good things in this life, but *"the adoption, the redemption of our body"* in eternity.

v 31-39 - victory in Jesus

The "name it and claim it" folks are focused on physical blessings. As a child of God, I should be swimming in prosperity, right? Look at the types of things Paul said would come to the children of God: *...tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword...* (8:35).

If we serve Christ faithfully, some people will be against us (**v 31**), they will accuse us (**v 33**), and condemn us (**v 34**). How does this play out in life? Many

in the first century were put to death for their service to Christ. How exactly does that fit into the health and wealth doctrine?

The Lord will work all things out for our good; not our physical good, but our spiritual good. The context of **Romans 8:28** calls for spiritual living, a willingness to suffer for the faith, and in the end, victory with our Lord in heaven (**v 17, 37**).

(1) Joel Osteen, *It's Your Time*

(2) Joel Osteen, *Your Best Life Now*

When the Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary



Blogger and author Kent Nerburn relates this touching and unforgettable story that he claims actually occurred when he was driving a cab for a living in Minneapolis.

I was responding to a call from a small brick fourplex in a quiet part of town. I assumed I was being sent to pick up some partiers, or someone who had just had a fight with a lover, or someone going off to an early shift at some factory for the industrial part of town. When I arrived at the address, the building was dark except for a single light in a ground-floor window. Under these circumstances, many drivers would just honk once or twice, wait a short minute, then drive away. Too many bad possibilities awaited a driver who went up to a darkened building at 2:30 in the morning.

But I had seen too many people trapped in a life of poverty who depended on the cab as their only means of transportation.

Unless a situation had a real whiff of danger, I always went to the door to find the passenger. It might, I reasoned, be someone who needs my assistance. Would I not want a driver to do the same if my mother or father had called for a cab?

So I walked to the door and knocked.

“Just a minute,” answered a frail and elderly voice. I could hear the sound of something being dragged across the floor.

After a long pause, the door opened. A small woman somewhere in her 80s stood before me. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like you might see in a costume shop or a Goodwill store or in a 1940s movie. By her side was a small nylon suitcase. The sound had been her dragging it across the floor.

The apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets. There were no clocks on the walls, no knickknacks or utensils on the counters. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware.

“Would you carry my bag out to the car?” she said. “I’d like a few moments alone. Then, if you could come back and help me? I’m not very strong.”

I took the suitcase to the cab, then returned to assist the woman. She took my arm, and we walked slowly toward the curb. She kept thanking me for my kindness.

“It’s nothing,” I told her. “I just try to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother treated.”

“Oh, you’re such a good boy,” she said. Her praise and appreciation were almost embarrassing.

When we got in the cab, she gave me an address, then asked, “Could you drive through downtown?”

“It’s not the shortest way,” I answered.

“Oh, I don’t mind,” she said. “I’m in no hurry. I’m on my way to a hospice.”

I looked in the rearview mirror. Her eyes were glistening.

“I don’t have any family left,” she continued. “The doctor says I should go there. He says I don’t have very long.”

I quietly reached over and shut off the meter. “What route would you like me to go?” I asked.

For the next two hours we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator. We drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived

when they had first been married. She had me pull up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl. Sometimes she would have me slow in front of a particular building or corner and would sit staring into the darkness, saying nothing.

As the first hint of sun was creasing the horizon, she suddenly said, "I'm tired. Let's go now."

We drove in silence to the address she had given me. It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico. Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as we pulled up. Without waiting for me, they opened the door and began assisting the woman. They were solicitous and intent, watching her every move. They must have been expecting her; perhaps she had phoned them right before we left.

I opened the trunk and took the small suitcase up to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair.

"How much do I owe you?" she asked, reaching into her purse.

"Nothing," I said.

"You have to make a living," she answered.

"There are other passengers," I responded.

Almost without thinking, I bent and gave her a hug. She held on to me tightly.

"You gave an old woman a little moment of joy," she said. "Thank you."

There was nothing more to say.

I squeezed her hand once, then walked out into the dim morning light. Behind me, I could hear the door shut. It was the sound of the closing of a life.

I did not pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly, lost in thought. For the remainder of that day, I could hardly talk.

What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient to end his shift? What if I had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away? What if I had been in a foul mood and had refused to engage the woman in conversation?

Whether this really happened to Nerburn or not, I don't know. But I know that life brings us opportunities that on the surface seem so ordinary, but may become something extraordinary.

Too often we look for some great and grandiose occasion to make a difference. To do something special. To touch the life of another person in an unforgettable fashion. However, it may be the great opportunities come disguised as something ordinary.

Heeding the Biblical injunction to "*do good*" (Gal. 6:10) and following our Master's example "*who went about doing good*" (Ax. 10:38), will produce the occasion for serendipitous experiences and memorable moments.

Ken Weliever, The Preacherman

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God's Promise to the Faithful

Bearing in mind the context of Scripture overall and the context then of each passage we read and study will determine just how successful we will be in following Christ. God promises to sustain us with the necessities of life, but not prosperity. He has promised to be with us in all aspects of life and never forsake us. These promises are to the faithful who place Him first in their lives. "*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*" (Matthew 6:33) "*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"*" (Hebrews 13:5-6) God promises this to grant us freedom from anxiety in this world. "*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*" (Matthew 6:34)

Psa. 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

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Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship
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1,2,3 JOHN - BILL MILLER

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS:

EXODUS TO SINAI - JIM STAUFFER

SUNDAY SERMON: **RECEIVING PEACE FROM GOD**

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10