

3 John

2 John says "reject false teachers;" 3 John says "receive true teachers;" 1 John shows you how to tell the difference.

OUTLINE: We should equip ourselves for God's work in these last days. How?

I. BY WALKING IN THE TRUTH (1-4)

1. The Bond of the Truth (1)
2. The Blessing of the Truth (2)
3. The Behavior of the Truth (3,4)

II. BY WELCOMING THOSE WHO BRING THE TRUTH (5-8)

1. Recognition of Hospitality (5)
2. Reward for Hospitality (6)
3. Recipients of Hospitality (7,8)

III. BY WITHSTANDING THOSE WHO REJECT THE TRUTH (9-15)

1. Conduct of the Unfaithful (9,10)
2. Caution to the Faithful (11)
3. Contrast to the Unfaithful (12)
4. Closing Greetings (12-15)

We met three church members in this third letter of John.

Gaius - Practicing church member; Diotrophes - Proud church member; Demetrius - Praiseworthy church member
TRUTH made the difference - where in this do you find yourself?

COMMENTARY:

1) Again the aged Apostle John refers to himself as the "elder." He writes to someone he calls "beloved" (agapetos), and he declares his love for this individual. The sphere of that love is "in the truth." These two shared a common bond associated with the revealed Word of God. Such relationships are special, often transcending family love. Verse 4 may hint that John was the spiritual father of Gaius.

2) John prayed for this man, and his prayer is very telling. How many of us would be able to get out of bed and walk if our physical health matched our spiritual condition? The word "health" here gives us our expression "hygiene." John had high esteem for Gaius as a believer for sure. The expressions "do well" and "does well" come from a word that means a pleasant or prosperous path or journey. How blessed to have someone pray such for us!

3) Word has a way of getting around - sometimes bad news traveling faster than good. But here John received news of his friend, Gaius, being faithful to the truth. This is certainly an admirable quality, and it is one we should seek to emulate. Abandoning the truth is catastrophic; sticking by the truth brings reward to us and joy to God.

4) As a Christian since 1961, and a minister of the Word for most of that time, I concur with John's expression of joy at knowing that people he has helped bring to Christ continue to serve Him. Jesus said He chose us to go and bring forth lasting fruit. How tragic are those who turn away from their profession of faith in Christ.

5) It appears here that John commends Gaius for his hospitality to traveling Christians, perhaps itinerant preachers - men who traveled from place to place teaching God's Word. These were not old friends of Gaius, but people whom he had never met. They must have had some letters of reference from John that commended them.

6) This parallels certain teachings of Paul and Peter, both of whom commended hospitality. Traveling Christians gave a good report about the hospitality shown them by Gaius, and John here encourages him in that. On a recent preaching trip a pastor and his wife showed me great hospitality in their church and in their home - it was such a blessing!

7), 8) Traveling teachers, evangelists, missionaries, all moved about without any promise of regular support such as many are provided today. They did this on faith and for the sake of advancing the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They would be of great help to the local churches along the way, and it was appropriate that in turn the churches assist them in their material needs. The hospitality of local Christians was viewed by John as participation in their ministries. So today, we can share in the work of others by showing hospitality to them.

9), 10) Sad that a church who has a solid member like Gaius must also be home to a Diotrephes. He is a blight on the church, being a self-promoting, domineering type of fellow. His actions were malicious and intended to strengthen his *position in the church*. He (1) resisted John's authority and tried to undermine him with gossip, (2) tried to prevent these teachers from sharing with the church, and (3) threatened those who would receive them with excommunication. John would surely deal with the deeds of Diotrephes, by letter now, in person if he could get there on a visit. Unruly church members, even leaders, should not be given a free pass today.

11) In other places John has taught that evil actions come from evil hearts, good, from good. He advances the idea here that those good actions flow from a relationship with God, and that evil actions are by men who don't know God. We are to imitate the good men (like Gaius), and shun the evil ones (such as the leader, Diotrephes).

12) Having spoken against Diotrephes, John now commends one Demetrius as worthy of hospitality (and perhaps of imitating). He has a good testimony, his life and teaching match up to the Word, and John adds his reference. We must be careful and honest in recommending people to others in the matters of ministry. Such care is very important!

13) Quite like 2 John's conclusion, here the Apostle says he had many more things to communicate to him, but that he would rather share them in person than to write them.

14) There was apparently a visit planned soon to wherever Gaius lived, and John said they would have some person-to-person, face-to-face conversations then.

15) In the meantime, John wished his friend peace - can you hear an Israeli saying, "*Shalom?*" Or perhaps a Roman utters, "*Pax tibi.*" In Greek it is "*eirene soi.*" In any tongue, "peace" is a harmonized relationship, ideally, first with God, and then harmony with the circumstances of life.