

### Study of 3 John (December 4, 2016)

Reference: Willmington's Guide to the Bible, 1981, Dr H L Willmington

The Transformed Study Bible, 2009, Dr Warren W Wiersbe

Theme Verse: "For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth." (vs. 3)

#### Introduction

1. J Vernon McGee says: "This is a letter similar to John's second epistle, in that it is personal in character, and it carries the same theme of **truth**. However, this letter deals with principalities. In his second epistle, John says that truth is worth working for!"
2. In his second epistle John dealt with the problem of welcoming deceivers (which should not have been done); in this epistle, he discusses the error of not receiving believers (which should have been done).
3. It is the second shortest book in the entire Bible.
4. This epistle gives an excellent (though brief) glimpse of church life at the close of the first century.

#### Book Overview

The battle for truth and against apostasy is fought not only in the home (2 John) but especially in the local church, and that is where 3 John comes in. This little letter gives us a glimpse into an early assembly, its people, and its problems. As you read this brief letter, you find yourself saying, "Times have not changed very much!" We have similar people and problems today!

One of the key thoughts in this letter is the witness of believers (verses 3, 6, 12). The idea John had in mind is the importance not only of words that we say but the lives that we live. Each Christian is a **witness**, either a good one or a bad one. We are either helping the truth (vs. 8) or hindering it.

This letter was addressed to **Gaius**, one of the leaders of the assembly. But John also discussed two other men in these verses – **Diotrephes** and **Demetrius**. Wherever we find people, we find problems – and the potential for solving problems. Each of us must honestly face the question, "Am I a part of the problem or a part of the answer?"

How important it is to "walkest in the truth" (vs. 3) and hold to the truth in love (Eph. 4:15)! To claim to love the truth and yet hate brothers and sisters in Christ is to confess ignorance of what the Christian life is all about.

When God's people love Him, the truth, and one another, then the Spirit of God can work in that assembly to glorify Jesus Christ. But when any member of that assembly, including the pastor, becomes proud and tries to put himself or herself first, then the Spirit is grieved and He cannot bless. The church may outwardly appear successful, but inwardly it will lack the true unity of the Spirit that makes for a healthy fellowship.

#### "Be Transformed"

Even in this apostolic memo, we see clearly that Gaius was a man whose spiritual health was evident to all. Physical health is the result of nutrition, exercise, cleanliness, proper rest, and the disciplined order of a balanced life. Spiritual health is the result of similar factors. We must nourish ourselves with the Word, and then work out that nourishment of godly exercise (1 Timothy 4:6-7). We must keep ourselves clean (2 Cor. 7:1) and avoid the contamination and pollution that is in the world (Jas. 1:27; 2 Pet. 1:4). While exercise and service are important, we should also rest in the Lord and gain new strength through fellowship with Him (Matt. 11:28-30). A spiritually balanced life is a healthy and happy life, a life that honours God.

The transformed life is a transparent life. It is not primarily a life lived in private, avoiding the challenges and messiness of interacting with people. Since the heart of spiritual living is loving our neighbour, the practice must involve other people who will eventually let us know if our efforts are genuine and show progress or whether we are fooling ourselves. John complimented Gaius as someone who was displaying maturity in the thick of things!

#### I. The Prosperity of Gaius – the Exhorter (vs. 1-8).

There were at least three New Testament people by this name. One was from Corinth (Rom. 16:23), one from Macedonia (Acts 19:29), and one from Derbe (Acts 20:4-5). However, it is impossible to identify the Gaius here with one of these three. Whoever he was, John the apostle loved him dearly.

- A. John's prayer for Gaius: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (vs. 2). The Greek here translated "prosper" is *euodoumai*, meaning "to have a good journey".
- B. John's praise of Gaius (vs. 3-8)
  - a. Gaius had extended Christian hospitality to some travelling missionaries and Bible teachers.
  - b. They had reported that Gaius was living by the standards of the gospel and keeping his life clean and true.

#### II. The Pride of Diotrephes – the Egotist (vs. 9-11).

J Vernon McGee writes: "The missionaries of the early church were itinerants. They went from place to place. Since the local inn was a wretched and dirty place, and there were no Holiday Inns or Howard Johnson Motels, these missionaries were entertained in the homes of believers. Gaius opened his home, for which John congratulates him. Diotrephes opposed this practice, and John censures him for it. His "hang up" was that he loved to have recognition and attention, and be the centre of attraction. He had to rule or ruin. There is generally one like him in every church who wants to control the church and the preacher. He was guilty on five charges:

- (1) Must occupy the leading place
- (2) Actually refused to receive John
- (3) Made malicious statement against the apostles
- (4) Refused to entertain the missionaries (he apparently wanted to do the teaching)
- (5) Excommunicated those who did entertain the missionaries (he tried to be the first Pope). He was Diotrephes, the Dictator!

#### III. The Praise of Demetrius – the Example (vs. 12-14).

"Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true."

Conclusion: Faithfulness is expected of every disciple of Jesus Christ. Believe the truth and practice the truth daily! The heart of true discipleship is loving GOD! "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." (Jn. 14:31) The New Living Translation (NLT) translates this verse as: "But I will do what the Father requires of me, so that the world will know that I love the Father. Come, let's be going." Our Lord Jesus told the disciples, "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Lk. 18:8) It is clear from the Apostle John's letter that our faith in God must be operationalised by our ministering to the believers – servants of God, in particular. As the writer of Hebrews put it: "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unaware." (Heb. 13:1-2)