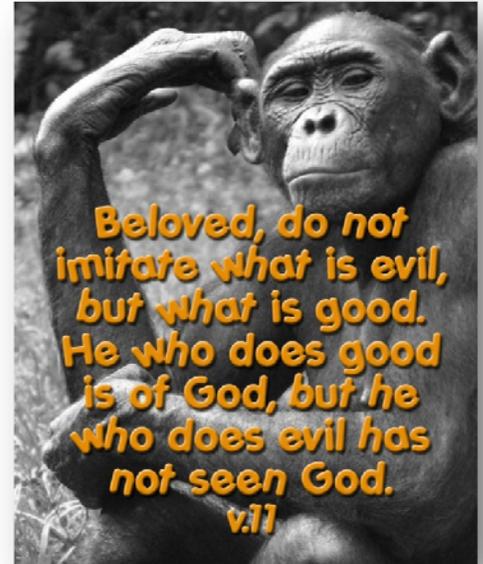


64- 3 John: Service in the Truth –Examples of Good and Bad

- Once again John references himself by virtue of his age and experience, as **“the elder.”** The construction of this letter matches others from John, so we have no reason to believe that anyone other than John wrote this.
- This is a **personal letter to a man John loved, whose name was Gaius.** Though it is written to just one man, it addresses issues that affect an entire local church body, then and now.
- 3 John is a very short note, like a memo, which **details the actions and hearts of three different men:** Gaius, whom John loves dearly and whose life mirrors the Truth; Diotrephes, an apparent member of a church body, but one who wants all the glory and needs to be “the number one” guy at the expense of others; and Demetrius, who is recognized as a good witness, an example to follow.
- In this letter, like his others, John’s **focus is on living and loving one another “in the truth.”** That would be the Truth of Jesus, and Truth of God’s Word. Gaius is a man who stood for and lived the truth.
- The overall purposes for this letter were: 1) to commend Gaius; 2) to encourage the ongoing support for Christian workers; 3) to chastise Diotrephes and warn him of coming rebuke; 4) to commend and instruct Demetrius; 5) to inform Gaius of John’s coming visit, and intention to deal with Diotrephes.



Highlights

Salutation v1	The “elder” to Gaius, who is beloved by John
Prayer for Gaius v2-4	John prays for good health for Gaius, thrilled that Gaius’ soul prospers, hears great reports about him
Gaius praised v5-8	John praises Gaius’ faithful service to fellow workers of truth, we have obligation to do so
Diotrephes rebuked v9-10	John condemns Diotrephes’ behavior against John and his associates, and his need to “be the boss” or be the big man. When he comes, John will confront him.
Demetrius is good example V11-12	Don’t imitate evil (Diotrephes); Demetrius is held up as an example of who to imitate, as he has a good testimony, and bear witness to the truth
Coming soon and signoff v13-14	John has plenty to write, but will discuss in person when he comes shortly. He sends peace, and greetings from friends.

- Even in the short space of this letter (*the shortest of the New Testament in the original Greek*), we are **told quite a lot about Gaius.** There is some discussion that due to the prayer for Gaius’ physical health, he may have been suffering some physical sickness, but nonetheless he was spiritually healthy. He obviously fed upon the Word and exercised it in his life. He also had a good witness, and others gave testimony about him. He had a practical and helpful ministry to others in the truth of God’s Word. He was hospitable and an encourager. He assisted others in ministry.
- John encourages Gaius and other believers to **show hospitality toward both known believers and strangers, and provide them care and encouragement, for the truth’s sake.** These bringers of the Gospel went out to the world without visible support and without a formal mission. This work was strictly for the Lord, and dependent on the Lord for all their needs. Diotrephes apparently did not love or welcome these strangers (missionaries), but fellow believers.
- John mentions that these missionaries **took nothing from the Gentiles**, so it appears they are spreading the Gospel into all the nations, not just among the Jews. They also asked for nothing from those they ministered to. The scriptures indicate that God’s people are to support God’s workers.

- It seems that John wrote to the church body where Diotrephes was head, but because of his large ego he would not receive John or his words. **Instead of Jesus receiving the “pre-eminence,” Diotrephes hogged it.** Perhaps the *church body would listen*, because they wanted to receive these traveling missionaries but Diotrephes would not allow it, and John says when he comes there he will speak against Diotrephes.
- Like Gaius, we are actually **told quite a lot about Diotrephes**. He was operating out of pride. He would not receive John, the last living original disciple of Jesus. He apparently lied about John, and brought false charges maliciously. He rejected those who were associates of John. He disciplined (*blackmailed!*) those who disagreed with him. He was selfish and self-centered. Not behavior or a genuine man of God.
- John holds up **an example of someone NOT to model, and one who is a good model**. Diotrephes was someone who should NOT be modeled, but John mentions a man named **Demetrius who stands as a good role model**. He was worthy of “imitating” because he had a good witness from others. He also apparently had a good witness from the Word itself, as his life and actions mirrored the truth. This probably meant that Demetrius would not be in good standing with Diotrephes! We don’t know where Demetrius is from, and perhaps he is actually a member of Diotrephes’ church who conducts himself “in the truth” despite Diotrephes. Either way, he is commended.
- **If a stranger brings the truth, we are encouraged to receive him or her**, to show them hospitality and to meet their needs – not to be like Diotrephes who had to be the center of attention. John indicates that this is an obligation, not a matter of choice. It is an opportunity to share in the work of the truth that others do, but it is also a matter of obedience. It means sharing what we have to further the truth.
- John reminds us that **the battle for the truth is often fought first in the local church**. The human condition is the same as it was then, and these battles are still being fought in our churches, much of the time with the truth being the loser. Times have certainly not changed much. Our organized churches today are still fighting this battle for truth. It is the classic **“flesh vs spirit”** battle that has raged through all time, and in each of us. Who gets the glory? Jesus, or us?
- It is **not just pastors who insist on being “the boss.”** There are many people in local churches who get into positions that afford them some sense of power, which is then abused for personal reasons. These people forget that the word “minister” literally means “servant.” Some people who are members of churches for a long time seem to think they have “seniority” over others. The same human traits (*the “flesh”*) we see in everyone are also found in abundance in the church, in the place where we least expect them, but where they are sometimes even more prevalent. Even Jesus’ disciples quarreled over which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus had to deal with this issue more than once.
- **COMMENTARY: During my many years of ministry, I have seen the model for ministry change, and the church is suffering because of it. It appears that the “successful minister” today is more like a Madison Avenue tycoon than a submissive servant. In his hand he holds a wireless telephone, not a towel; in his heart is selfish ambition, not a love for lost souls and for God’s sheep.** (McGee)
- **A key word in this little letter is “witness”** which is confirmed by “testified” (report, bear record, etc.). It is a reminder that every Christian is a witness, whether good or bad. We are either helping and working for the truth, or against it. That is a sobering thought. In every local church body (either organized or informal) there are people, and where there are people, there will be problems. We should each ask ourselves, are we part of the problem, or part of the solution? This letter provides examples of both.
- Hopefully John did indeed travel to this local church and **confront Diotrephes**. John said he would deal with this issue personally. Perhaps Gaius and Demetrius accompanied him. And we can hope that Diotrephes received the truth, presented in love, and repented.
- **Divisions and distress within church bodies are heartbreaking**, difficult and discouraging. But because we are human, they will happen. John encourages Gaius, despite this difficulty, to be at peace, to rest in God’s peace. John closes by giving greetings from Gaius’ friends. Where would we be without our faithful believing friends? They are all gifts from God to encourage us, to bring us back into proper fellowship, and to set us straight when we have wandered away from the truth.
- In comparison, **2 John was written to a godly woman** (whoever she might have been) and her “children” (*either physical family or church family*) and **3 John is written to a godly man** and his church family. The woman of 2 John was warned about false teachers coming in from the outside, and here in 3 John, Gaius is warned about problems coming from the inside. Truth, knowing it and walking in it, are pivotal in both letters. The truth is the only thing that protects us from both of these problems from outside or inside the church body. The church, the Body of Christ, will always be a battleground where the enemy will seek to rob and destroy. We must always seek the Truth, seek Jesus, first.