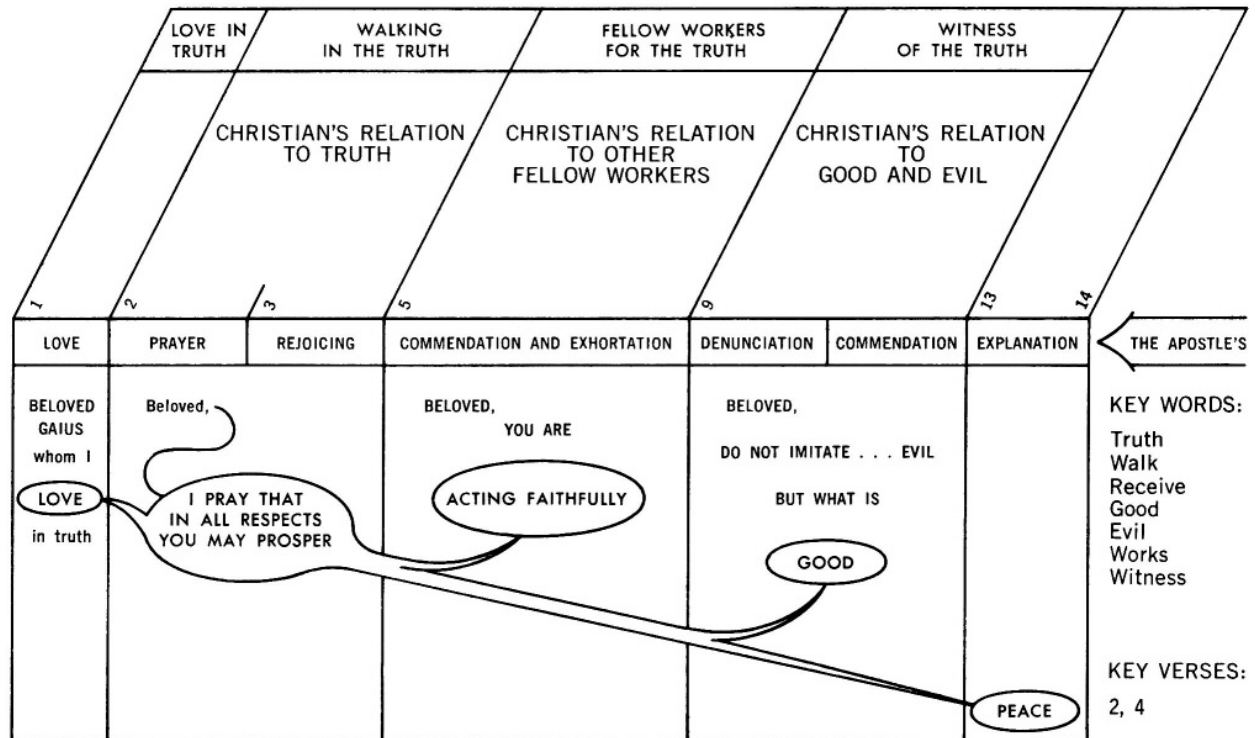


Week 12 – 3 John

Support and Opposition

“Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth..” (3 John 8.,ESV)

3 John Topic Structure



Overview

As with 2 John, 3 John focuses on the basic issue of hospitality but from the opposite perspective. While 2 John warns against showing hospitality to false teachers ([2 John 7–11](#)), 3 John encourages fellowship with Christian brothers and condemns the lack of hospitality shown to faithful ministers of the Word ([vv. 9-10](#)).

John wrote this letter to his generous and warmhearted friend, Gaius. This man was the model of a true Christian layman, dedicating his wealth and talents to the Lord. Everything he had belonged to Christ. Gaius was the picture of the man who had found Christ to be “the Way.” In his everyday life, he tried to show that gracious Way to others. Known for his hospitality, Gaius was a manifestation of Christian love. John urges Gaius to continue entertaining the traveling preachers despite the bitter opposition of an autocratic and blustering church official named Diotrephes.

John learned that a certain congregation, led by an individual named Diotrephes, refused hospitality (e.g., lodging and provision) to itinerant teachers, known and approved by John ([3 John 1:5–8](#)). Diotrephes went further. He excluded anyone from the assembly who dared challenge him ([3 John 1:10](#)). Diotrephes also verbally slandered the Apostle John with malicious accusations. Diotrephes allowed pride to replace love in his life, even rejecting the disciplining words of John. Everything that Gaius is, Diotrephes is not!

You can be a Gaius, helping in the Kingdom, or a Diotrephes, promoting or helping yourself.

➤ **3 John 1** – *“The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.”*

John refers to himself as “the elder.” The love John spoke of here is the unique love that believers have for those who are in Christ and are faithful to the truth ([Romans 12:10](#); [1 John 4:7, 12](#)). “Truth” is the author’s way of alluding to theological orthodoxy in the face of an opponent’s challenge ([1 John 3:18-19](#)).

➤ **3 John 2** – *“Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.”*

John acknowledges Gaius is doing well spiritually and is praying that his physical health would match his excellent spiritual condition.

Today we see so much that is the opposite of Gaius’ condition. There is more bodily vigor than spiritual health. We may deduce from this verse that sound physical health does not always accompany sound spiritual health. The Church is beset with many and varied dangers from without, but none are so damaging right now as the spiritually sick saints within.

We go to the gym to train our bodies, but too often we fail to go to the old rugged Cross to train our souls!

➤ **3 John 3** – *“For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.”*

Others saw the truth in his walk! Gaius did not just talk about the truth, but also walked in the truth. It is good to have the truth in us. It is better to manifest the truth in our lives.

One doesn’t stumble onto the path called “truth” and just as accidentally stay on it. It requires deliberate purpose and effort to understand the truth and to walk in it. A person with false concepts in these areas will live differently than the person with a biblical view on these important matters.

Do others see your walk in truth and testify to the supernatural power of God clearly manifested in your life?

➤ **3 John 4** – *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”*

Jesus ([John 13:33](#)) and Paul ([Galatians 4:19](#)), as well as John, referred to new Christians as “little children.” This is to highlight the fact that the audience were recently born-again Christians ([John 3:1-8](#)), still spiritually maturing in the faith. This term also shows the affection of a much older man toward his fellow Christians.

With Gaius, there was no dichotomy between creed and conduct, between profession and practice. It is a beautiful blessing to have others come and testify to how your spiritual children are walking spiritually. John would have rejoiced personally to see them walking in the truth.

The great grief of ministry is people who are indifferent or rebellious toward the Word of God. Who can measure the heartache of seeing those who professed to be saved?

“The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.” ([2 Peter 2:22](#), ESV)

➤ **3 John 5-6a** – *“Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church.”*

John commends Gaius for his regular practice of helping the spiritual brothers who were functioning as missionaries or itinerant ministers.

The writer of Hebrews further reminds us:

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." ([Hebrews 13:2](#)).

Whatever God gives us to do, we should do faithfully. Jesus said that when we see Him face-to-face, some will hear the words:

"Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much." ([Matthew 25:21](#)).

Solomon wrote:

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going." ([Ecclesiastes 9:10](#))

While we have nothing to do with how much or how little ability we've got, what is important is that we do the most with what we have!

"For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do." ([Hebrews 6:10](#))

Our part is to be faithful, doing the best with every bit and scrap.

➤ **3 John 6b** – *"You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God."*

The sending of missionaries involved providing for their journey. This would mean not just a pat on the back, a dollar in their pocket, and prayer for their prosperity, but supplying them with food and money to pay for their expenses, washing their clothes, and helping them travel as comfortably as possible. It would please the Lord to send them on their way in a way God would send them out.

➤ **3 John 7** – *"For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles."*

This description supports the premise alluded to earlier that these brethren were missionaries who went out to make *"the Name"* known.

"For the sake of the Name" almost certainly refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. John's previous use of this term ([1 John 2:12](#)), as well as Paul's use of this term ([Romans 1:4b-5](#)), supports this interpretation.

"The Name" speaks of everything that Christ is, including all His attributes. They went out not to make a name for themselves but to exalt *"the Name."* Jesus Christ is the only One worthy of honor and praise.

Why would missionaries (or itinerant ministers) have gone out? Considering the false teachers described in [2 John 1:7](#), it is very reasonable to propose that the mission of these men was to combat the false teaching the antichrists were attempting to implant and cultivate.

These "brothers" needed support because they did not accept any support from the Gentiles. No doubt they wanted to refrain from any appearance of selling the truth ([2 Corinthians 11:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:9](#)). Rather, they depended on other believers to send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God. It is a powerful testimony to non-Christians when God's people adequately support God's servants.

It makes Christianity look cheap and commercial when ministers, churches, and other religious organizations go about soliciting from unsaved people and various businesses. We should not actively seek money from unbelievers. Neither should we reject it if freely offered, unless, of course, there are strings attached. Anyone should not attempt to buy spiritual or other favors. Consider Simon's attempt to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit from Philip ([Acts 8:9-24](#)).

➤ **3 John 8** – *“Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.”*

John uses the pronoun "we." This includes himself in the charge to support the missionaries. [Galatians 6:6-10](#) clarifies that those who receive spiritual blessings from the minister of the Word ought to share with him in material blessings. The ministry of hospitality and support is not only an opportunity but also an obligation. [1 Corinthians 9:7-11](#) further explains this principle.

Why did Gaius help the saints?

- He loved them.
- He wanted to share in their ministries.
- He wanted to further the truth.

A man might not be a preacher, but they can help others to preach.

Christ will reward Gaius at the Judgment Seat of Heaven because:

"The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward." ([Matthew 10:41](#)).

Although rewards should not be our ultimate motivation, as we support those who preach and teach the Gospel and serve as missionaries to the lost, we are not only fellow workers in this short life but are fellow sharers in the bountiful reward in the next life.

➤ **3 John 9** – *"I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority."*

John had probably written to the church that Diotrephes led and requested support for the itinerant missionaries. Diotrephes rejected John and his request. John publicly rebukes **Diotrephes!**

Diotrephes' attitude is an example of Jesus' warning:

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven." ([Matthew 6:1](#), ESV)

Whenever a church has a resident dictator in its membership, there are bound to be problems. It grieves the Holy Spirit when one member must have their own way and prohibits the other members of the body from exercising their gifts. Spiritually minded people will not tolerate this kind of leadership for very long.

➤ **3 John 10** – *"So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church."*

In only two verses, we have the following statements made about Diotrephes:

- He loves to be first.
- He refuses to welcome the apostles into the church.
- He maliciously spreads gossip about men of God.
- He withholds hospitality from other believers.
- He requires others to follow his poor example.
- He excommunicates anyone who crosses him.

John states he is planning a visit to Gaius's church. When he comes, he will publicly rebuke Diotrephes for his actions. John would deal with the slander, the sectarianism, and the self-seeking. He would not sweep such things under the rug.

- **3 John 11** – *“Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.”*

Paul repeatedly spoke of followers of Christ as imitators.

“And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.” ([1 Thessalonians 1:6](#), ESV)

Imitation is bad when you imitate the wrong example! John presents an example of an evildoer and gives a command not to imitate his behavior. We don't realize we frequently lead others through our words and actions!

John distinguishes between genuine believers and those who profess belief but do not live it. Faith alone saves, but the faith that truly saves is not alone. One's works demonstrates a saving faith. ([James 2:14-26](#)).

In his Gospel, John wrote:

“For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.” ([John 3:20](#), ESV).

- **3 John 12** – *“Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.”*

From everyone” shows that Demetrius manifests a godly character not only to believers but also to unbelievers. What a powerful testimony to emulate!

In the Old Testament, one only needed two witnesses to verify a fact, but John goes beyond that. He provides three witnesses (*everyone, truth, and we*) that testify about the character of Demetrius.

Demetrius was so faithful that even the truth was a witness on his behalf.

- **3 John 13-14** – *“I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.”*

This is almost identical to the closing words of [2 John 1:12](#). Just as in that verse, John states he prefers a face-to-face meeting.

- **3 John 15** – *“Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name.”*

Diotrephes reproached and rejected John; however, John does not let that keep him from wishing peace to Gaius. John is giving us all an example of how to exhibit the supernatural fruit of peace amid testing times and unsettled seasons.

3 John Commentary – Precept Austin

<https://www.preceptaustin.org/3-john-commentary#1:1>