

## III John Lesson 01

### III John Chapter 1

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Memory verses for this week: *Eph 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; Eph 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

**Introduction:** Last week, as we finished up II John, we saw some scriptures that made it very clear that there are many false teachers in the world. And we need to know the truth of God's word and be able to identify those who are teaching false doctrine. This week we conclude our studies of John as we cover III John.

### I. Personal Greetings

*3 John 1:1 The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.*

*3 John 1:2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*

We see this letter was from the Apostle John to his good friend Gaius. He must have thought highly of the man as he calls him the 'well beloved' Gaius whom he loved in the truth. Perhaps from verse 2 Gaius had been ill. He says he hopes that he might prosper financially and that he might have good health. Many times we do not realize what a blessing our good health is to us until we are faced with a sudden illness. God help us to remember to thank the Lord for the blessings of good health each day.

Sometimes our souls (or spiritual man) do not grow during times when we prosper financially. We need to stay close to the Lord no matter what our financial position is in life. As the song by the McKameys said, "God is still God in valley as well as on the mountain top." God does not change, but our viewpoint of him and our faith wavers as we go through life. To truly be healthy spiritually is holiness; it is to be growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. The one thing we can have confidence in is that no matter how bad our finances are, God has promised to meet our needs. If God takes care of the birds, he will surely take care of us.

*Mat 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

*Mat 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*

*3 John 1:3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.*

*3 John 1:4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

John was very pleased with two things in verses 3 and 4. He says he was joyful when he heard from others that Gaius had the truth in him, and not only knew it, but walked in it. Any pastor wants to see his congregation grow in truth, and then apply those truths. Application of biblical truths and knowledge will lead us unto wisdom. It is one thing to know the truth, but a whole different thing to walk in the truth. It made John very happy to hear that those whom he had won to Christ were walking in the truth.

Adam Clarke in his commentary made a comment about Gaius that most likely was true.

**To hear that my children**—From this it has been inferred that Gaius was one of St. John's converts, and consequently not the Corinthian Gaius, who was converted, most probably, by St. Paul.

We have to remember that many had the same first name in the bible and we need to be sure we relate the proper man or woman to the one who is being referenced. Many think the Gospel of John and these books here in I, II, and III John were penned by John the Baptist. This was the apostle John. John the Baptist was beheaded several years prior to Christ's death.

## **II. A Proper Attitude Toward Missionaries**

*3 John 1:5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;*

*3 John 1:6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:*

John commends Gaius for his hospitality to certain missionaries. Some of these men to whom Gaius had ministered unto were strangers, but he had helped them along the way. These men had borne witness of Gaius' charity to the others in the church. My wife Denise and I have been so blessed by missionaries who have stayed with us in our home. Back when we lived in the large house out west of Iowa Park, it was so easy for us to have a whole missionary family come and stay. I mentioned Greg Smith last week who is a really good friend.

We met Missionary Greg Smith, one of the missionaries we support in Cancun, Mexico, by having him stay with us while he was on deputation several years ago. Greg is a faithful man, and has been through a lot in his cause for the Lord. He has had life threatened, been beaten, and suffered many things in his work there in Mexico. Yet he keeps on and rejoices that he is in the service of the Lord. I've told Greg that he is one of few men I know living today that remind me of the apostle Paul, due to his determination. In our text Gaius was a man who loved missionaries and those who loved the Lord. It was a great testimony of his dedication to following his Lord in all ways he could.

Matthew Henry said this about Gaius.

**Title:** Matthew Henry's Commentary on the New Testament

**Author:** Henry, Matthew

The report the apostle himself gives of him, introduced by an endearing appellation again: *Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers*, v. 5. 1. He was hospitable, good to the brethren, even

to strangers; it was enough to recommend them to Gaius's house that they belonged to Christ. Or he was good to *the brethren* of the same church with himself, and to those who came from far; all who were of the household of faith were welcome to him. 2. He seems to have been of a catholic spirit; he could overlook the petty differences among serious Christians, and be communicative to all who bore the image and did the work of Christ. And, 3. He was conscientious in what he did: "*Thou doest faithfully* (thou makest faithful work of) *whatsoever thou doest*; thou doest it as a faithful servant, and from the Lord Christ mayest thou expect the reward of the inheritance." Such faithful souls can hear their own praises without being puffed up; the commendation of what is good in us is designed, not for our pride, but for our encouragement to continue therein, and should be accordingly improved.

*3 John 1:7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.*

*3 John 1:8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.*

To be able to help missionaries is a good work that we know the Lord will bless, whether we do it individually as Gaius did it, or if we help as a church. Missionaries that go out do it because they love the Lord, and do it for His names sake. These had not taken anything from the Gentiles (this reference was to those who were unsaved). They had not looked to find help from those of the world, but rather to the saints of God. Their goal was to reach those who were lost, not seek support from the unsaved. As we know, the responsibility to reach the lost with the gospel was given to the New Testament churches.

In verse 8, John points out that those who know Christ, should welcome, entertain, and set forward these men worthily on their way. By helping them, we further the effort to carry out the Great Commission and we become fellow helpers of putting forth the truth.

Albert Barnes in his notes on the New Testament said this about helping missionaries.

**We therefore ought to receive such**—All of us ought hospitably to entertain and help such persons. The work in which they are engaged is one of pure benevolence. They have no selfish aims and ends in it. They do not even look for the supplies of their own needs among the people to whom they go to minister; and we ought, therefore, to help them in their work, and to contribute to their support. Doubtless, the apostle meant to urge this duty particularly upon Gaius; but, in order to show that he recognized the obligation himself, he uses the term "we," and speaks of it as a duty binding on all Christians.

**That we might be fellow-helpers to the truth**—All Christians cannot go forth to preach the gospel, but all may contribute something to the support of those who do; and in this case they would have a joint participation in the work of spreading the truth. The same reasoning which was applicable to that case, is also applicable now in regard to the duty of supporting those who go forth to preach the gospel to the destitute.

### **III. The Attitude and Actions of Diotrephes**

*3 John 1:9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among*

*them, receiveth us not.*

*3 John 1:10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.*

It appears that this church was under the domination of this man Diotrephes. He was one seeking vain glory, and wanted to have the preeminence in the church. We are not to place too much glory on man, but rather give the preeminence to the one to whom it is deserved, Jesus Christ.

*Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:*

*Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*

*Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

*Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that **in all things he might have the preeminence.***

*Col 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;*

*Col 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*

*Col 1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*

*Col 1:22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:*

*Col 1:23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;*

It says that Diotrephes did not receive these missionaries or apostles. He forced the church to reject the apostolic letter, parting against them with wicked words. And even this was not enough, he forbade any individual member of the church from receiving them. It appears that since Gaius had received them, Diotrephes had him excluded from the church. There is a proper procedure for excluding a member, but you are to follow the rules, and they certainly should have done something worthy of exclusion, and been un-repentant in their action.

We have record of how this should happen in Matthew Chapter 18.

*Mat 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

*Mat 18:16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*

*Mat 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to*

*hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.*

*Mat 18:18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

*Mat 18:19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

*3 John 1:11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.*

These things spoken about Diotrephes should be a warning to every child of God. The things he did were evil in the sight of God, and very displeasing. We as Christians should follow not after evil, but after good.

J. Vernon McGee said this about people like Diotrephes. He had over a page and a half on this topic, but I want to read you just a few of the paragraphs.

Diotrephes wanted to be the first exalted ruler of the church. Woe unto you if you attempted to oppose him. If he was a layman, I sure feel sorry for his pastor. I am of the opinion he tried to keep his pastor under his thumb in order that he could preside. He wanted to be the one to be heard. Diotrephes was a man who was self-opinionated. He was self-exalting instead of self-effacing. I am sure that he would have claimed to have been a self-made man instead of having let the Holy Spirit make him over. He was self-sufficient, and I think he was guilty of self-admiration also. He was self-willed, self-satisfied, and self-confident. He felt that he could do all the teaching and preaching and that he did not need these other men to come and minister.

As I am saying all of this, I wonder if you recognize this fellow. In many churches today, there are men like Diotrephes, men who want to run the church. I am no longer a pastor of a church, and I can say frankly what I think and what I know to be true. I'm not speaking of any theory whatsoever but of what I know from experience over the years. I have met men who, although they put up a very pious front, have tried to run the church. I have known men like that in churches I have served but, thank the Lord, I never had much trouble with them. Sometimes it is a little clique which will do anything in order to rule. I have watched such people wreck church after church—a little group or an individual like Diotrephes who loves to have the preeminence.

I am going to say something now that may be very harsh. There are many men who may mean well but who enjoy leading in the church. They enjoy being up before a group of people. For the most part, the ones I have met are almost Bible ignoramuses—they know very little about the Word of God. But they love to talk, and their talk has actually sometimes caused me to bow my head in shame as I was sitting there on the platform. Some of the things they say are totally unscriptural, totally beside the point, and dead as a doornail. Then they wonder why their church is losing members. They wonder why people are not coming. It is very evident why. There are many who ought to keep quiet in the church. Remember that Paul said, “Study to be quiet” (see 1 Thess. 4:11). Instead of trying to teach young people to talk, we ought to teach them to keep quiet because we have many older ones today who talk too much. My friend, we ought not to talk in church unless we have something to say, unless we have something from God to say.

#### **IV. A Good Report of All Men**

*3 John 1:12 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.*

It appears that John sent Demetrius with this letter to Gaius. Demetrius was someone who really loved the Lord, and he had a good report of all men and the apostles. If we are walking consistently for Christ, our report will be consistent, and it will be good.

*3 John 1:13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:*

*3 John 1:14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.*

Again John mentions his desire to speak face to face with those there in the church. He says that he trusts that he shall shortly see them. He closes wishing them peace. Each of us certainly need God's grace and peace each day of our lives.

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*Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

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