

A
Doctrinal and Devotional
Commentary
of the book of
Third John

By
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THIRD JOHN

01 - 'Introduction'

Third John is the shortest of all the New Testament epistles. As in the Second letter of John he identifies himself as the 'Elder'. His letter was written to a certain Gaius who is to be distinguished from the other Gaius known to Paul and written about in his epistles. It is believed that Second and Third John were written at about the same time (between 80 and 90 ad) although there is no information within these letters to point to a certain time frame. Third John encourages Christians to open their hearts and homes to Christians who are in need. It also admonishes the desire to rule harshly over the Body of Christ.

**THIRD JOHN
02 - 'Dear Gaius'
3 John 1:1-4**

¹ The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

² Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.³ For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, *that is*, how you are walking in truth.⁴ I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

(NASB)

Notice that in both his second and third epistles John begins with *'The elder'*. No name is mentioned which manifests that the title of *'the elder'* was sufficient for the receiver of the letter to automatically understand from whom this letter came. This tells me that both of these letters were written to people that personally knew John. Because of this we can also see that his first letter could be called a 'general epistle' like those of Peter, James, Jude, Hebrews and some of Paul's.

¹ The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

This letter was written to a man who is called *'beloved'* (AGAPETOS) meaning: dearly or well loved. We can see that John held this man in esteem and we will see why in verse three. I wonder how many men and women we can truthfully say that we esteem because of their walk with the Lord? If there are such people in our lives we should do as John did and let them know how we appreciate them. It would certainly encourage them for people who walk in the light are more often discouraged than encouraged to continue in their faith.

Who is this Gaius? We find that the name Gaius appears a few times in the New Testament. In the International standard Bible Encyclopedia we find the following information concerning men whose name was Gaius.

(1) The Gaius to whom 3 John is addressed. He is spoken of as "the beloved" (3John 1:1-2,5,11), "walking in the truth" (3John 1:3-4), and doing "a faithful work" "toward them that are brethren and strangers withal" (3John 1:5-6). He has been identified by some with the Gaius mentioned in the Apostolical Constitutions (VII, 46), as having been appointed bishop of Pergamum by John.

(2) Gaius of Macedonia, a "companion in travel" of Paul (Acts 19:29). He was one of those who were seized by Demetrius and the other silversmiths in the riot at Ephesus, during Paul's third missionary journey.

(3) *Gaius of Derbe, who was among those who accompanied Paul from Greece "as far as Asia," during his third missionary journey (Acts 20:4). In the corresponding list given in the "Contendings of Paul" (compare Budge, Contendings of the Twelve Apostles, II, 592), the name of this Gaius is given as "Gallius."*

(4) *Gaius, the host of Paul when he wrote the Epistle to the Roman, and who joined in sending his salutations (Rom. 16:23). As Paul wrote this epistle from Corinth, it is probable that this Gaius is identical with (5).*

(5) *Gaius, whom Paul baptized at Corinth (1Cor. 1:14).*

From the information that we have gathered it seems that there were more than one man who wore the name of Gaius: one or two who were present in the life of Paul and even participated in his third missionary trip and another who was present in the life of John. What we know of the Gaius in Third John is that he was loved by John *'whom I love in the truth'*. The word *'love'* (AGAPAO) means to love in a social or moral sense. In these times men rarely say that they *'love'* another man. On the other hand in certain cultures it is well accepted to say so. John *'loved'* Gaius not in an erotic sense but rather because of whom Gaius was – a true Disciple of Christ. Whether men or women all Christians should be able to say that they love their brethren in the Lord. Why? Because they are all brothers and sister in the faith. Do we have to know them personally or participate in their lives to be able to say that: *'I love those who belong to the Lord'*? No! All we need to know is that they belong to the same spiritual body as I do.

Notice that John loved Gaius *'in truth'*. Have you noticed how *'the truth'* is a major theme in all the writings of John? He used the word *'truth'* 21 times in his gospel, 8 times in First John, four times in Second John and finally another four times in Third John for a grand total of 37 times. I would like you to also notice that the number 37 is composed of a three and a seven. In his book entitled *'Number in Scripture'*, E.W. Bullenger writes that the number three stands for: *'that which is solid, real, substantial, complete and entire'* (p.107). The number seven on the other hand represents: *'It is seven, therefore, that stamps with perfection and completeness that in connection with which it is used'* (p. 168). If this is to be true (because it is a simple deduction and not a teaching) then *'the truth'* is solid and complete and it is perfect. On the other hand we know that God's truth: is to be followed (Ps. 25:5), the paths of the Lord are true (Ps. 25:10), God is the God of truth (Ps. 31:5), all of God's work is done in truth (Ps. 33:4) and finally Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). So John loves Gaius *'in truth'*, both because of God and by God's standards.

² Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.

Verse number two has been preached upon so many times with *intentional* wrong exegeses. We have seen that in First and Second John that there are false teachers among the brethren. Today some of them use this verse to teach that God wants you to be rich and be monetarily prosperous. They add this verse to any kind of phrase to prove that they are right. When I say that they '*intentionally*' do this is because this goes against the grain of what the entire Bible teaches as we will see later.

John begins with the word '*Beloved*'. This is John's tender way of calling Gaius. We have seen this also in verse one. Have you ever thought whom Gaius was the beloved of? Certainly of John but much more – he was the beloved of God himself! He was loved by God because his sins had been washed away by the blood of Christ!

Rev. 1:5

**and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,
(NKJV)**

Gaius was not the only '*beloved*' of God. All that come to Christ to receive forgiveness of their sins are also deeply loved by the Lord God Almighty. Are you one of those who are called '*beloved*'? Does God's hand rest upon you? Have you become God's child by adoption? This gift of grace is still given today to all who repent of their sins and cry out for salvation unto the Lord Jesus.

John had a special prayer for Gaius. This prayer seems to be unique in the New Testament. This prayer is for '*all respects*' (PAS) meaning: all, every, the whole. His prayer is for all the different aspects of Gaius' life. The first part is for his general well-being '*in all respects you may prosper*'. As I wrote before many use this to prove that God wants you to be rich and that it is only your lack of faith that stops you from becoming rich. This is what David Guzik wrote in his commentary on Third John:

b. I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers: John used this common phrase in his sending of best wishes and blessings to **Gaius**. Some have wrongly taken this as a guarantee of perpetual wealth and perfect health for the Christian.

i. Of course, we should *always* remember that God wants our best and plans only good for us. Often present material prosperity and physical health are part of that good He has for us - and this prosperity and health are absolutely promised as the *ultimate* destiny of all believers.

ii. Yet, for the present time, God may - according to His all-wise plan - use a lack of material prosperity and physical health to promote greater prosperity and health in the scale of eternity.

iii. Nevertheless, *some* live in poverty and disease simply because they do not seek God's best, follow God's principles, and walk in faith. As well, there are *some others* who say we should use God's general promises of blessing as a way to indulge a carnal desire for ease, comfort, and luxury.

In God's plan some have become very rich such as Abraham, Lot, David and Solomon (notice that two out of four really messed up their life because of money and riches). On the other hand some of God's people were very poor in the Old Testament (Ex. 22:25; 23:3) as well as in the New Testament (John 12:8; Rom. 15:26; Gal. 2:10). In any case it is God that makes his child to prosper. In all of this we must never forget that it is the hand of the Lord that makes a person prosper (Pr. 10:22). Our goal in life should not to become rich but rather:

Matthew 6:33

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

(NKJV)

John also writes '*and be in good health*'. This is a very common phrase that was to be found in the letters of John's day. As I pen a letter I often write 'I hope this letter finds you and your family in good health'. There is nothing more normal than to hope that friends '*prosper*' (EUODOO) meaning to succeed in reaching a goal. Knowing that Gaius is a spiritual man he hopes that he will reach his spiritual goals in life and also his earthly desired goals (which should be the same). John also hopes Gaius to '*be in good health*' (HUGIANO) meaning to have sound health. It is not anti-spiritual to be in good health or to have enough to live by. What is abnormal is when we make health and wealth a main priority. Ignoring that God's will for us is what we should be looking for and not imposing ours on Him. Let us never forget that the things of the flesh and the things of the spirit are at war (Gal. 5:17) and that the kingdom of God is not centered on the flesh (Rom. 14:17).

³ For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, *that is*, how you are walking in truth.

In verses three and four we will see the one thing that greatly rejoiced the heart of John in relation with other Christians. First we see the effect of these thing '*I was very glad*'. This gives the idea of being cheerful and joyful, a calm sense of joyfulness. It was an internal sense of happiness: something that would fill his mind and remained there. This was not a joyfulness which, like a present given, made us happy and soon later was forgotten. It was a deep rooted joy that was grounded in spiritual joy.

How did this joy come to him – ‘*when the brethren came and testified to your truth*’! Testified (MARTUREO) means to be a witness or to bear record. This was not ‘hear-say’, these were not ‘blown-up’ stories as we so often see today. These were facts that had been testified about. We can understand that some brethren had come to see John and spoke concerning Gaius and how he truly was living close to God. I wonder what people say of me? Are they witnessing that I am a light in a dark world? Are they testifying that I am walking on the narrow road? If I were called at the ‘court stand’ what would people declare concerning my Christian walk? Would I be another Gaius or someone to forget about? Let us never forget that Jesus said: ‘Follow me’ (Mat. 16:24).

(3)... how you are walking in truth.

This is what rejoiced the heart of John – the way that Gaius was walking in the world. Many things are said concerning our Christian walk. Here are a few from Paul:

- Walk in the steps of faith (Rom. 4:12)
- Walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4)
- Walk not in the flesh (Rom. 8:4)
- Walk properly (Rom. 13:13)
- Walk in the same spirit (2 Cor. 12:18)
- Walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:14)
- Walk worthy of your calling (Eph. 4:1)
- Walk no longer as Gentiles (Eph. 4:7)
- Walk in love (Eph. 5:2)
- Walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8)

Is our walk important? Does it really matter how I lead my life? Asking the question is answering it! If I am a child of God then I am called to walk in His light and not according to this world.

⁴I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

It was hearing this thing that brought joy to John. Actually he says that ‘*I have no greater joy than this*’. Does this mean that the joy he speaks about is even greater than the joy he has because of Christ – no! John is speaking of the joy that fellow humans can bring him. So, once again, what is this terrestrial joy that filled his heart? It was hearing of how his spiritual children were ‘*walking in the truth*’. The truth that John is mentioning is the truth of God. Are we bringing joy to the hearts of other Christians by our steadfast walk in the Lord? Gaius was and we are all called to do the same.

THIRD JOHN
1:5-8
03 - 'Act faithfully'

⁵ Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially *when they are* strangers; ⁶ and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.
(NASB)

In this section and in our next one (v.9,10) you will notice that John compares two men who call themselves Christian. On one hand there is Gaius and on the other is Diotrophes. One is to be applauded the other to be shunned. As for Gaius he is called '*beloved*' (AGAPETOS) which means dearly loved. In First and Third John the word '*beloved*' is used ten times! Paul uses this word only eight times in all of Romans. Peter uses this word eight times also in his epistles. But it is John that uses it the most in his short body of writings (six chapters). John truly loved Gaius, as a brother in Christ but also as a wonderful Disciple of Christ. Contrary to Diotrophes, Gaius was '*acting faithfully*'. These two words mean to abide in a trustworthy manner. In other words Gaius was the type of servant Jesus talked about:

Mat. 25:21

"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'
(NKJV)

Gaius was a '*good and faithful servant*'. This is so first of all because he acted faithfully (PISTOS) meaning: trustworthy. A person who acts faithfully can be counted on. He will do what is expected of him. Jesus told a story concerning how important it is to act faithfully:

Luke 12:35-38

(35)"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning;

(36)"and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.

(37)"Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.

(38)"And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

(NKJV)

Such a servant is specially blessed by the Master. Gaius was a man of integrity he knew what his master wanted of him and he did so – even when his master was not ‘present’. In what type of things was Gaius faithful? Contrary to many Christians, he was faithful *‘in whatever you accomplish for the brethren’*. I really like the word *‘whatever’*! You see Gaius did everything necessary or everything he should be doing as a Disciple of Christ. There are Christians who do things for the Lord – as long as it coincides with what they like. They will serve in the welcoming committee because they love to greet people. Others will have a kitchen ministry because they love to cook. Others are on the maintenance committee, restoration projects are never enough! But if you ask the maintenance man to do the dishes – he will find an excuse. Or the welcoming lady to make a salad for Pot-Luck she will find a pretext for not doing so. Let’s face it, we often only do what we really like in the church and for others. But Gaius did *well ‘in whatever you accomplished’*. May we all become good servants in whatever is asked of us!

Gaius was a good servant first of all *‘for the brethren’* (ADELPHOS) which means: a brother either literally or figuratively. His focus of caring and ministering was for his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. In other words he loved those who loved Christ. He was attentive to their needs. He never backed down from giving a hand or being there as a support. Do you remember the story of the ‘good Samaritan’ (Luke 10:30-37)? Both religious men turned away from helping the poor man while the Samaritan did all he could to come to his aid. More often than we should we also ‘turn our face’ or ‘shut our ears’ so not to accomplish what we know we should do for the brethren! Do you think Jesus would be pleased with us when we act this way? Gaius was there for them – are we? He did not only have a heart and outstretched hand for his fellow believers he also did this for another group of people.

(v.5)... and especially *when they are strangers*

It is one thing to be involved with the lives of those you know and regularly see but it's another to open your heart to those you don't really know. In John's day there were many traveling teachers and preachers and evangelists. They could also be called missionaries. They would arrive in your town and be at your church meeting, encouraging people in the Lord. They had no place to stay and no sustenance to live on. It was a custom to take good care of these traveling ministers, to bring them in your home, to feed them and even provide monetary help. Gaius also was known for helping out those who were '*strangers*' (EXNOS) meaning: foreign, alien or guest. At our church we receive missionaries and (as the pastor) I make certain that they are well taken care of after the service is finished. Once while we were having lunch with them they thanked us for the food. I said that 'Oh, it was nothing'. They insisted and said that it wasn't every church that took care of their needs! I was astonished to hear that some churches don't even provide food and fellowship for God's people that had come to encourage them! Do you care for the Christians that are foreign to you? Is your home open to welcome them for a meal or a night over? Do you let the church leadership know that you are more than willing to help out when they come? What about the new people that arrive? Are you welcoming to them? Do you make them feel at home? Lets all be like Gaius!

⁶ and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.

It is never good to boast about oneself (1 Cor. 4:7; 2 Cor. 12:6; James 4:6) or to glorify yourself! This is not what Gaius did on the contrary '*they have testified*'. The strangers that Gaius took care of were more than willing to '*testify*' (MARTUREO) meaning: to be a witness. Christians willingly witnessed to the love, care and grace that Gaius had for them. They were so welcomed by him that they 'gave a witness' about him to the entire church! We should not be looking for praise from others but a 'thank you for all you have done' can be well received. I wonder if churches recognize the work of certain Christians within the congregation. Not that we should place them on a pedestal but is it not a worthy cause to identify those who do well in what God asks them to do as with Gaius? These people testified of the '*love*' that Gaius manifested. Unfortunately I have seen many Christians of whom others testify quite the opposite of love concerning them; being grouchy, grumpy, impolite, hard-hearted, selfish, uncaring, cold or demanding is sometimes mentioned more than caring and loving.

John says that it is a good thing *'to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God'*. There are ways of doing things as a church and as an individual. The saying: *'what would Jesus do'* fits exactly in this setting. All Christians should do things *'in a manner worthy of God'*. There are things that we should be doing that is worthy of God:

- Receive people from other churches in a worthy manner (Rom. 16:1,2)
- Walk in a way that is worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1)
- Our conduct is to be worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:27)
- Walk worthy of God's calling (1 Thes. 2:12)

We can easily forget that our entire life should be worthy (have worth) in the eyes of the Lord God. In other words our life should be pleasing to God. If we have His Spirit we all should have the mind of Christ (Rom. 8:9).

⁷ For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

The people that Gaius took care of are described in verse seven – *'they went out'* (EXERCHOMAI) meaning: come forth, proceed or go. These were people that went away from their homes to go elsewhere carrying the message from God. We can see a picture of this in the book of Acts:

Acts 1:8

**"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
(NKJV)**

People such as Timothy, Titus, Phoebe, Apollo, Priscilla and Aquila all represented the Lord God and went here and there to spread the 'Good News'. Now it is written that these brothers and sisters were *'accepting nothing from the Gentiles'*. The word *'accepting'* (LAMBANO) means: to take. They did not take monies or supplies from the Gentiles (non-believers) but relied only upon the provision if the Lord through his children. I don't believe that we ever see in the New Testament people of God asking for help from the non-believers. I believe that Christians should provide for God's work and God's workers. I can not imagine children of light (Eph. 5:8) being taken care of by children of the night (1 Thes. 5:5). This reminds me of what Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 6:14-16

(14)Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

(15)And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

(16)And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

(NKJV)

If Christians should not:

- Be unequally yoked with unbelievers
- Have fellowship with lawlessness
- Have communion with darkness
- Be in accord with Belial
- Have a part with unbelievers
- Be in agreement with idols

How then can they be sustained in their work by non-believers? They *'accepted nothing from the Gentiles'* and today's workers should do the same. If they are to do the same this means that we (God's people) are to support them in their work.

⁸ Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

This is John's conclusion concerning what Gaius is well known for. It is up to believers to support God's workers. It is our duty towards them for they are representing the Lord God. Now John adds an encouraging note: *'so that we may be fellow workers with the truth'*. We may not go forth into the world and leave our family and friends but we can partake in their ministry.

Romans 10:14,15

(14)How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

(15)And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

(NKJV)

Yes some are sent (v.15) and if they are sent they also need to be supported. This is how we can participate in their ministries – by supporting them. The children of God shall all receive rewards for the good that they have done in the name of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). Supporting the needs of Gods workers in the field is certainly a good thing to do. So are you a fellow worker in the truth? Do you share some of your income to encourage others to go out into the world and spread the Good News? Gaius did and we should do this also.

THIRD JOHN
1:9,10
04 - 'About Diotrephes'

⁹ I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. ¹⁰ For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire *to do so* and puts *them* out of the church.
(NASB)

As I wrote before in a way John is comparing the beloved Gaius to Diotrephes and how Christian living can differ when one walks with the Lord and the other does not. In our next section John will speak of yet another 'beloved' his name is Demetrius. It's as though John is 'sandwiching' Diotrephes between two great Disciples of Christ!

⁹ I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.

John had written '*something to the church*'. No one knows the content of this letter because it has been 'lost'. What I mean by 'lost' is not that man has frivolously dealt with it and somehow it was misplaced. But rather that the Lord did not want this letter to be placed in the Canon of the Bible (He did not want it to be part of the Bible). We also see this in the Old Testament where books that are written by Old Testament prophets can no longer be found such as:

- The Book of Wars (Num. 21:14)
- The Book of Jasher (Joshua 10:13)
- The Book of the acts of Solomon (1 King 11:41)
- The Book of Nathan the prophet (1 Chron. 29:29)
- The Book of Gad the seer (1 Chron. 29:29)
- The Book of Shemaiah the prophet (2 Chron. 12:15)
- The Book of Jehu son of Hanani (2 Chron. 20:34)

God uses people to write His word – we all know that. The question is this: 'Is everything that a person (such as Paul or Jude) writes *automatically* the Word of God? If God used Peter to write what will become part of the New Testament (First and Second Peter) are all his other writings ALSO the Word of God? It is clear from Third John verse nine that the answer is no!

There is a discussion within Biblical scholars whether Paul did write another letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 7:8) between his First and his Second epistle. This is an interesting matter but it presently has no effect on our text so let's get back to it.

John introduces a new person – his name is Diotrophes. He is not to be compared to our beloved Gaius. There is something profoundly wrong with this Christian man because he does not reflect Jesus but rather has a worldly spirit. This man openly manifests that he does not have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16) but rather is living in 'the flesh'. Paul wrote concerning this:

Romans 8:5-8

(5)For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

(6)For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

(7)Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

(8)So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

(NKJV)

Let's look at the different ways that Diotrophes manifested that he was a Christian living in 'the flesh'.

The first point is that *'who loves to be first among them'*. Diotrophes loved to be 'number one'. The Greek word is PHILOPROREUO which simply means: to be fond of being first, ambitious of distinction, love to have pre-eminence. He had not received but rejected the following words of Jesus:

Matthew 23:11,12

(11)"But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

(12)"And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

(NKJV)

Mark 10:43

"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.

(NKJV)

From the meaning in Greek we see that Diotrophes was fond of being first, had ambitions of distinctions and loved to have pre-eminence. In other words he was power hungry and an egomaniac!

He wanted to be the greatest in the church but did not want to serve others. No wonder John wanted to deal with him! Do we have a little bit of Diotrephes in us? Do we also willingly forget that we are called to serve one another (Gal. 5:13)? Do we sometimes also desire to be placed on a pedestal and receive honors for the work that we do in our church?

The second point is that Diotrephes *'does not accept what we say'*. This gives me the idea that John and others had tried in the past to deal with him. There may have had bad reports concerning his ministry and people wanted this to stop – but it didn't. Diotrephes *'did not accept'* (EPIDECHOMAI) meaning: not to admit or receive. Attempts were made to see him or speak to him but they were refused. I remember once having to deal with a pastor who troubled his church and people had asked for help. Instead of receiving our assistance to settle the matter he sent us an official letter telling us to 'back off' or legal steps would be taken against us! He was a typical Diotrephes not accepting the advice of other pastors. If one refuses to accept the wisdom found in God's Book he should never be placed in a position of authority. I often see this second point in church people systematically refuse to change or to heed to God's warnings. They often are quick to find weak spots in others while being blind to their own (Mat. 7:3-5). Are we like Diotrephes, stubborn in our ways and not accepting advice from others?

¹⁰ For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church.

A third indication that Diotrephes was walking in the flesh was that he was *'unjustly accusing us'* (PHLUAREO) meaning: to berate idly or mischievously. Here we see that Diotrephes talked and talked against John and others. Jesus had taught his disciples right from the beginning (Sermon on the Mount) that we should only speak of the truth!

Matthew 5:37

"But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

(NKJV)

The 'evil one' was certainly speaking through Diotrephes' mouth! Imagine tearing down such men as the apostle John – the apostle that Jesus loved (John 19:26). We all have heard people talk against others in our churches. Some make a game of it and even destroy the reputation of a beloved child of God. When this happens we should take a stand and rebuke the person who does this, reminding him of the following:

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.

(NKJV)

This is a grave sin and if you are that person, you need to repent, ask forgiveness and make amends.

A fourth manifestation of walking in the flesh was that he used '*wicked words*' (PONEROS) meaning: hurtful, evil, calamitous. The words that Diotrephes used were aimed directly at hurting John and the others with him. He depicted them with words that colored them as 'really bad people'. He chose his words and used them as daggers to stab and wound them. Have you ever been a victim of such a person – saying things that were simply not true and finding you to have to defend yourself? How sour is this fruit of the flesh! Or are you as Diotrephes? Using your tongue to destroy those that Christ has died for? Remember what Jesus said:

Matthew 18:7

"Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"

(NKJV)

A fifth fruit of the flesh in Diotrephes is '*he himself does not receive the brethren*'. This church leader simply refused to fellowship with certain Christians. The ones that did not see things the way that he did! He segregated himself from God fearing men and women. Can you imagine having 'guards' in the church and putting out people that are on the pastor's 'black list'? Can you imagine even having a 'black list'? Now it does happen that because a person is disciplined by the church that he is no longer welcomed until he repents of his sin. It is normal that he should not be allowed to fellowship with the believers which was what Paul teaches the Corinthians to do (1 Cor. 5: 1-5). But Diotrephes was not allowing good Christians to walk in and fellowship – he was a dictator! Churches should be open to receive all true believers and allow them to partake in worship. The church is the Body of Christ and all 'good standing' members are welcome! We may not go as far as Diotrephes but are there Christians that we really don't want in our presence simply because they are not exactly like us?

A sixth and last fruit of walking in the flesh is that Diotrephes “*forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church*’. Not only content with refusing to receive certain Christians Diotrephes also took action against those who opened their hearts and home for these brothers and sisters! Diotrephes was truly a spiritually sick person! It is one thing to sin by oneself but quite another to force others to do so! I would love to know what later on happened to this man – if he ever repented or not! If you are reading this and are presently pressured to take sides against a person that you know is a good Christian – please don’t. Be a child of God and stand up for what is pure. Never succumb to threats against you by doing what evil minded people want you to do. On the other hand, never be the person that desires to attack an innocent servant of the Lord. God will surely be against you!

John will not let this pass and he writes that *‘I will call attention to his deeds which he does’*. Sin is often left alone in the church. People acting in an unloving or ungodly way are never disciplined. People are left to do as they please or to affirm things that are not from God. Leaders willingly turn a ‘blind eye’ refusing to take action. Paul warned the Corinthians who did not want to discipline one of its members:

1 Corinthians 5:6,7

(6)Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

(7)Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

(NKJV)

Sin in the church does not stay insignificant and remain small – never! Sin left on its own grows and grows until the entire Body of Christ is affected. That is why the leadership absolutely needs to act rapidly against sin. John writes that he will bring this matter up when he will arrive. He is not afraid to confront Diotrephes and we should also not be afraid to confront open sin in the church. I am not saying that we should begin a crusade but rather if sin is openly present we should address it!

THIRD JOHN
1:11-15
05 - 'About Demetrius'

¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. ¹² Demetrius has received a *good* testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

¹³ I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write *them* to you with pen and ink; ¹⁴ but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face.

**¹⁵ Peace *be* to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.
(NASB)**

John now comes back to Gaius having finished speaking concerning Diotrephes. We can read the conclusion that he arrives at concerning Christian living.

¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.

This is the fourth time John calls Gaius '*beloved*' in eleven verses – that's a lot! He may be trying to get a point across – he truly is well loved as a person. It is heartwarming to see that there are those special Christians that stand out. Their light shines forth so intensely that one cannot but be struck by it. Why are there men and women who stand out and others do not? Why do some live so passionately while others are so apathetic? Why do so many drag their feet while others jump at the occasion to serve the Lord? The real answer, without any detour is given by Christ himself!

Matthew 13:44-46

(44)"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

**(45)"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls,
(46)"who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.**

(NKJV)

In both of these parables a person finds a wonderful treasure and sells everything he has to make certain to obtain it. Why are some people on fire for the Lord and others lukewarm? It is because their treasure in life is not Christ. This is so true that Jesus explained it this way.

Matthew 6:21

**"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
(NKJV)**

If your treasure is Jesus – your heart will also be given unto Him! Remember that you cannot serve two masters at the same time (Luke 16:13). So who will you serve?

John tells Gaius '*do not imitate what is evil*'. The word '*imitate*' (MIMEOMAI) means to follow. Jesus told his disciples 'Follow me' (Mat. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21) not only in Matthew but also it was recorded in all four gospels. What John is writing to Gaius is simply that he should not follow the example of Diotrefes who WAS following evil (KAKOS) meaning: worthless, depraved and wicked. This can be brought further for no Christian should follow (imitate) any evil. To make it simple, '*evil*' is anything that does not resemble the character of God. So for a follower of Christ it is evil:

- Not to be the salt and light of the world (Mat. 5:13,14)
- To be angry with a person without cause (Mat. 5:22)
- To call people nasty names (Mat. 5:22)
- Not to reconcile with others (Mat. 5:24)
- To make peace with your adversaries (Mat. 5:25)
- To lust after the opposite sex (Mat. 5:28)
- To divorce without Biblical cause (Mat. 5:28)
- To make a false oath (Mat. 5:33)
- Not to turn the right cheek (Mat. 5:39)
- To turn away from those who are in need (Mat. 5:42)
- Not to love and pray for your enemies (Mat. 5:44)
- Only to love those who love you (Mat. 5:46)

All of this was only taken from Matthew chapter five – imagine the entire Bible! It is so easy (and natural) for all mankind to '*imitate what is evil*'. Do you have to teach a child how to misbehave and not to listen to orders – absolutely not! You have to teach him how to behave and do what is right. Our fallen nature is within us and as blind sheep we follow its desires. Paul writes in Rom. 7:8 that it is the sin in me that pushes me towards evil desires. He also writes that the evil in him stops him from doing the good that he desires to do (Rom. 7:19). He later writes '*Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*' (Rom. 12:9). This is what John is telling Gaius to cling to what is good and to let go of what is evil. He tells Gaius why he is not to '*imitate what is evil*'. Simply because:

(11)...The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.

Bearing the character of God (doing good) *'is of God'*. One can not really *'do good'* if he is not of God. We must understand that all that one can do, if it is through the flesh (as with Cain who offered a sacrifice to God), is worthless. Our deeds are received only when they are done *'in the Spirit'*. This is simply because the flesh and the Spirit are at war against each other. One pleases God and the other does not (Gal. 5:17). There is a sharp contrast between what mankind considers to be good and what God does. How can I do good when my very nature is not good (Rom. 3:9-19)? Only a spiritual birth (being born again) can change all of that. What we learn from this simple phrase is this: Be what you have become – a child of God. For *'the one who does evil has not seen God'*, he is still in darkness or has become overpowered by darkness as with Diotrephes. May I ask if you are of God and if you are bearing the fruits of this statement!

¹² Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

John now speaks of Demetrius who is another good Disciple of Christ. I'm glad that Gaius did not have to stand alone, that he had at least one strong brother in Christ. It is so important to find other strong Christians within our Christian community. We easily imitate others and by being with strong believers we will be edified and fortified. The opposite is also true. Demetrius *'has received a good testimony from everyone'*. He is quite the follower of Christ. It is common to receive a good testimony from some in the church but to have a unanimous accord concerning one person is truly extraordinary. I know that we are not called to please people but to please God. But it seems that some Disciples of Christ really don't mind irritating others! Demetrius not only had a good testimony from the congregation but most importantly *'from the truth itself'*. His personal testimony (his life at large) was solidly resting on God's truth. His yes was yes and his no was no (Mat. 5:37; James 5:12). Demetrius did not imitate what was evil but what was good and because of this people recognized the value of his life. It is one thing to be recognized by people but quite another to be recognized by God. Every day we have this choice that lies before us – living for God and one day receive his praise (Mat. 25:21,23) or living for the world and receiving its present praise (Mat. 6:5). It seems that John also knows Demetrius because *'we add our testimony'*. Praises seem to flow from everywhere concerning this man! May it also be the same for each believer.

¹³ I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write *them* to you with pen and ink; ¹⁴ but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face.

¹⁵ Peace *be* to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

We have come to the concluding verses of the Third Epistle of John. We see (as in Second John) that he would have other things to discuss. But for some reason he does not want to.

'I am not willing'. Was it because of the sensitive situation of the church? Or is it simply because it is far better to *'speak face to face'* as he writes? We also see that his desire was to come and see Gaius but also to settle accounts with Diotrephes (v.9).

¹⁵Peace *be* to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

In all the turmoil that Gaius was living John knew the spiritual recipe he needed – spiritual peace. The peace John is speaking about does not come from the world but rather from the Lord himself.

Joh 16:33

**"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."
(NKJV)**

In all our tribulation we must keep looking up and remember that it is normal to have tribulations and that victory is at hand with Jesus. A last word if I may, when you see your brothers and sisters the next time you congregate – greet them, talk to them and truly be interested in them. Build friendships and you may find a Gaius or Demetrius here and there. If you do make friend with them it will be worth your while.