

~3 John~

Lesson 1- Fellow-workers in the Truth

Today we are looking at the 3rd epistle of John. John is writing this short intimate letter to his beloved friend Gaius, and he is encouraging him to continue to stand for Truth and to love the Brethren even among persecution, **3 John 1-14**.

Similar to 2nd John, this is a short letter with only one chapter, consisting of 14 verses and a total of 219 Greek words, making it the shortest book in the Bible. This letter, along with 2nd John, was probably written shortly after his release from the isle of Patmos in 96AD. There is an expectancy when John is writing this letter to come talk face to face to Gaius, 3 John 14, and to also sort things out with Diotrephes after being gone for some time, and so this tells me he is probably writing this after being exiled for a year. These letters, both 2nd and 3rd John are so precious because we get a glimpse into the heart of John as he and the Brethren face the internal struggles of walking and standing for Truth.

Last week, in John's 2nd epistle, John warned the elect lady, and us, not to welcome just anybody into our home or into our life. He warned that we must watch ourselves and not share, koinoneo, *κοινωνέω*, in false doctrine and the evil deeds of the antichrists. John taught us that walking in Love is synonymous with walking in the Truth and the most loving thing we can do is to strive for Truth and help our Brethren grow in the Truth. And we do this by guarding our hearts and allowing the Truth to guide our lives. Because when you are walking in the Truth, you will never be deceived. It is the Truth that guards our hearts from error so that we do not utterly destroy our soul, **2 John 7-11**. We do this by keeping our eyes fixed on the Truth, who is Jesus Christ.

When we are focused on the Truth and walking in the Truth, we have a desire to put away anything that is contrary to the Truth. This is sanctification. It is a separation from the evil of this world. And as you walk in sanctification, you begin putting barriers up in your life to guard you from deception. And this is what John was speaking of in his 2nd epistle. You do not receive an antichrist into your house or into your life.

But the world wants us to drop these barriers and just accept and tolerate everyone's beliefs and lifestyles. This is how the enemy will infiltrate into your life and they disguise this by love. They say love is tolerance, but True Love is proclaiming Truth and walking in Truth. There is only one Truth, only one way to Eternal Life and that Way is Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and anything else only leads to destruction. So, the most loving thing we can do is proclaim Truth. This is loving in Truth.

But the world rejects this. They boast tolerance, but yet they are so hypocritical, because when it comes to Christians and The Truth, they are violently intolerant. They reject us, they blaspheme the Truth, and they persecute all those who stand for the Truth. And that is the example that John brings to us today in his 3rd letter. In 3rd John, we learn of a faithful man named Gaius who is standing for Truth even while being violently attacked and persecuted. And what's worse, is we find that this persecution is coming from within the church.

This letter of 3rd John to his beloved friend Gaius is a letter of encouragement to not give up, stay faithful, love the Brethren, continue working for Truth, and continue to walk in the Truth, and continue striving for Truth even among persecution.

Let's begin with verse 1...

1 The Elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: *Ἦ ὁ πρεσβύτερος Γαίῳ τῷ ἀγαπητῷ, ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.*

John begins this letter in the same way he did in the 2nd epistle. He refers to himself as **The Presbyter** or **the Elder**, *ha presbuteros*, Ὁ πρεσβύτερος... John is The Elder of Asia, the last surviving Apostle, and he has earned the right to be called The Elder. And he is writing to his beloved friend Gaius. Gaius was a very common name in the first century. There was Gaius the Macedonian, Acts 19:29; Gaius of Derbe, Acts 20:4; Gaius in Corinth, Romans 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14; and now this Gaius in Asia whom John is writing to. This is probably a different Gaius than those associated with Paul because this letter was written about 35-40 years later and this Gaius is probably a convert of the Apostle

John not Paul. John loves this man because he begins his epistle saying, “to the beloved Gaius, 4 times John refers to Gaius as “beloved” and John says... whom I love in Truth.” When John mentions Truth, he referring to Jesus Christ who is the Truth. We love in Truth because we are in Christ and we have a love for the Truth.

John is writing this personal letter to Gaius, but we as outsiders looking in, we don't really know the backstory leading up to the is letter. So as we read this letter, we have to pick up clues to help put the pieces together. There is a reason why John is writing this letter to Gaius, and once you understand the premise of this letter, everything makes sense.

As we go through these 14 verses today, I thought it would make things a little clearer if I expounded the translation from the Greek. So, the words of 3 John below are not the NKJV, but my Zamplified version to help explain what John is saying.

<p>2 Beloved, I desire, concerning all things, that you prosper in your way and be healthy just as your soul prospers.</p>	<p>² Ἀγαπητέ, περὶ πάντων εὐχομαί σε εὐοδοῦσθαι καὶ ὑγιαίνειν, καθὼς εὐοδοῦται σου ἡ ψυχή.</p>
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This is a simple greeting and a desire from John's heart for his beloved son in Christ. John has a shepherd's heart and just as every good father wants his child to be successful and healthy, so does John desire this for his beloved Gaius. Notice where John places the emphasis when speaking of health and prosperity. He says, “just as your soul prospers.” This isn't a formula to gain physical wealth and prosperity. Gaius has a pure and healthy soul, one that prospers because he walks in Truth. Therefore, John's desire is that his physical life be as abundant as his spiritual life. Why? Is it so that he can be rich, wealthy, and healthy and live a luxurious lifestyle in this world? No, it is so that he can be an effective worker for the kingdom of God. Using this verse to try and gain physical prosperity is taking this verse out of context.

As this letter begins, we start to get some clues to why John is writing this letter to Gaius. In verses 3 and 4 we see the Brethren returning from a journey with good news about Gaius...

<p>3 For I was greatly joyed by the coming of the brethren and their witness of you in the Truth just as you are walking in the Truth.</p>	<p>³ ἐχάρην γὰρ λίαν, ἐρχομένων ἀδελφῶν, καὶ μαρτυρούντων σου τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς σὺ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατεῖς.</p>
<p>4 I have no greater joy than this, that I might hear that my children are walking in the Truth.</p>	<p>⁴ μειζότεραν τούτων οὐκ ἔχω χαράν, ἵνα ἀκούω τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατοῦντα.</p>

Gaius was a convert of John who is living in another city. And we know this because John calls Gaius his child. He says in verse 4, “I have no greater joy than this, that I might hear that my children are walking in the Truth.” This shows the heart of John. He has a shepherd's heart and when a pastor hears that his children are walking in Truth, there is no greater joy. I have had the opportunity to experience this personally. As I have been teaching this class, God has been giving me a shepherd's heart. He has given me a love for all of you and when I see you growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and growing and walking in the Truth, it brings a joy in me unlike anything this world can give.

This is the fullness of joy that John is describing. John had just been released from Patmos and he came back to Ephesus. And being the Elder over all of the Asian churches, he wants to check in on his flock. So he sends brethren from Ephesus to another church in Asia where Gaius was. And he sends them with a letter to the church. We know this because of verse 9 when he says, “I wrote to the Church.” After some time, these brothers return back to Ephesus, and they give John the good report concerning Gaius. That even after they were rejected by Diotrephes, Gaius took them in. And they told John of all that Gaius was doing, that he is walking in Truth and showing hospitality to them and that he provided their needs.

After hearing this good report, and of the stress that Diotrephes is applying to the church, John decides to write another letter specifically addressed to Gaius. That's this letter of 3rd John. And in this letter, John continues commending Gaius for his faithfulness and hospitality toward the Brethren...

5 Beloved, you are faithfully committed unto the work which you yourself are doing unto the Brethren and unto the strangers.

5 Ἀγαπητέ, πιστὸν ποιεῖς ὃ ἐὰν ἐργάσῃ εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ εἰς τοὺς ξένους.

These Brethren and strangers are the specific missionaries sent from John. John writes, *εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ εἰς τοὺς ξένους*, specifically with the article in front of both, notating not just any Brethren, but the Brethren from John who came back with a good report about Gaius because of his hospitality. John uses the word strangers, ξένους, writing to Gaius because even though they were brothers in the Lord, they were strangers to Gaius because Gaius had never met them personally. But John commends Gaius because he welcomed them as Brothers.

John continues telling Gaius about the good report the Brethren gave when they returned from seeing him...

6 Who (these Brethren who you welcomed) have testified of your love in the presence of the Church.

6 οἱ ἐμαρτύρησάν σου τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐνώπιον ἐκκλησίας.

When these Brethren had come back to Ephesus after seeing Gaius, they testified to the Ephesian church publicly of Gaius' hospitality toward them.

John now is sending these same Brothers back to Gaius from Ephesus with this 3rd epistle that John has written personally to Gaius. And John is writing this from the perspective of when Gaius is reading the letter...

6 Who (these Brethren who you welcomed) they have testified of your love in the presence of the Church.

6 οἱ ἐμαρτύρησάν σου τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐνώπιον ἐκκλησίας.

Who, (after receiving them now a second time) you will do well, sending them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.

οὓς καλῶς ποιήσεις προπέμψας ἀξίως τοῦ Θεοῦ.

John is anticipating the loving hospitality that he had already showed to them once before, and he knows Gaius will do this again. This is his faithful work that he is committed to doing in verse 5.

Verse 7 tells us why Gaius will do well in sending them on their journey...

7 For, on behalf of His Name, they went out...

7 ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ ἐξῆλθον...

The Brethren are going out in the name of Jesus. They left Ephesus in the Name and they returned from Gaius in the Name...

7 For, on behalf of His Name, they went out, not receiving anything from the Gentiles.

7 ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ ἐξῆλθον, μηδὲν λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν.

When John says Gentiles, he is saying *ἔθνος*, nations. These are the unbelieving nations. Not believing Gentiles, because a believing Gentile is a Brother. These missionaries did not receive anything from the Gentiles they were preaching to. Why? Because the Church provided their needs. You can see that these missionaries were doing a couple of things: They were delivering letters for John; And also proclaiming the gospel to the world. And the Church took care of their provisions. This was a model set by Paul. When Paul would come to a new town, he would not accept payment for the work of the gospel. Even to the point that Paul would make tents and work with his hands to provide for himself so as not to be a burden to those he was preaching to, 1 Thess 1:9; Acts 18:3. Paul also did this to prove that his motives were pure and not greedy, not being one was peddling the Word of God for money, **2 Cor 2:17**; 1 Cor 9:11-18; 1 Tim 6:5.

8 Therefore, we have an obligation to receive in hospitality those such as this, *Brethren who are coming and going who are not receiving from the Gentiles*, so that we might become fellow-workers in the Truth.

8 ἡμεῖς οὖν ὀφειλομένοι ἀπολαμβάνειν τοὺς τοιούτους, ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ.

This “we” is emphatic, we, *ἡμεῖς οὖν ὀφειλομεν*. We as the church... **have an obligation** to send the missionaries out with the necessary provisions, as well as receive in hospitality those who are being sent out and coming to us. Again, supplying their needs, **so that we might become fellow-workers in the Truth**. We work in the Truth and for the Truth by sending and receiving those who preach the gospel of Truth. This is why John told Gaius that he would do well to send them in verse 6. This is what the Philippian church did for Paul when he traveled to Thessalonica, **Phil 4:14-19**.

John continues into verse 9 telling us about the opposition these Brethren encountered...

9 I wrote to the Church, but Diotrefes, who loves to be first place over them, does not receive us.

⁹ Ἐγραψα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· ἀλλ’ ὁ φιλοπρωτεῦων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς.

“**I wrote to the church...**” and John tried sending an earlier letter with the Brethren the first time they came. This may have been the letter of 1 John, **but Diotrefes, who loves to be first place over them does not receive us**. Loves to be firstplace- philo-proteuon, *φιλοπρωτεῦων* – he loves to have the preeminence. Diotrefes loved himself and exalted himself in the place of God as head of this church. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church and He alone has the Preeminence, **Colossians 1:18**. Diotrefes has exalted himself and is rejecting the Truth and he is even rejecting the Apostle John. John says, “**I wrote to the church**, but he did not receive the letter, because **he does not receive us**. Jesus warns of this, **Matt 10:14-17**. This is what Diotrefes was doing. This persecution was coming from within the leadership of the church. He rejected the Truth and he scourged believers in his synagogue. But look how Jesus tells us to respond, **Matt 10:22**. He who endures to the end will be saved. Diotrefes was a wolf in sheep’s clothing who had taken over this church in deception. This is what Paul warned the Ephesian elders in **Acts 20:29-30**.

Gaius sees the error of Diotrefes and he takes a stance for Truth. Gaius took on the responsibility of receiving the traveling brothers from John and he showed them love and hospitality. John hears of this and in verse 10 he tells Gaius that he will deal with Diotrefes when he comes...

10 Because of this, when I come, I will remind him of the works he is doing, I will call attention to his works; speaking evil malicious words and babbling gossip against us. And not being content upon this, *as if this wasn’t enough*, neither does he receive the Brethren, and also hinders those desiring *to receive the Brethren* and expels them out from the church.

¹⁰ διὰ τοῦτο, ἐὰν ἔλθω, ὑπομνήσω αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιεῖ, λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς· καὶ μὴ ἀρκούμενος ἐπὶ τούτοις, οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐπιδέχεται τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς, καὶ τοὺς βουλομένους κωλύει, καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκβάλλει.

This Diotrefes is a bad guy. He is a hater of the Truth and completely rejects the Truth. He is doing this because he wants the preeminence, not the Truth. He is speaking evil, malicious words and babbling gossip against the Brethren, neither does he receive the Brethren, and he also hinders those desiring to receive the Brethren and expels them out from the church. It is very possible that Gaius was put out of the church for helping these Brethren.

John tells Gaius he will address this situation when he comes by reminding and calling attention to his works. Does John say he is going to call down fire from heaven on Diotrefes? No, we don’t know exactly how John is going to deal with him, but we know it will be done in Love and in Truth. But you remember that 60 years earlier this is what John wanted to do to the Samaritans when they rejected Jesus, Luke 9:53-54. But now notice John’s response because we can learn a lot from this. Look at the advice John gives to Gaius in verse 11...

11 Beloved, do not mimic that which is evil, but that which is good. He who is committed to good, is out from God. But he who is committed to evil has not seen God.

¹¹ ἀγαπητέ, μὴ μιμοῦ τὸ κακὸν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγαθόν. ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ κακοποιῶν οὐχ ἑώρακε τὸν Θεόν.

John tells Gaius, don’t get caught up in his lies and blaspheme. Don’t get into a war of words as Paul says, 2 Tim 2:14. John says, do good and not evil and stay the course. John tells Gaius that Diotrefes is not of God. He does not know

God and neither has he seen Him. But you on the other hand, Gaius, are faithful and you are of God and you are of the Truth. Continue in your faithfulness and do the good work of the kingdom in Truth.

Then in verse 12, John names one of the Brethren sent by John that returned from Gaius that gave testimony to all that was happening...

12 Demetrius has testified by all and by the Truth itself, and we also are bearing witness, and you know that our witness is true.

¹² Δημητρίῳ μεμαρτύρηται ὑπὸ πάντων, καὶ ὑπ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας· καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ οἶδατε ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθῆς ἐστὶ.

Earlier in this letter John told us of the testimony of the Brethren that came back and reported to John, **2 John 3, 5-6**. Demetrius is one of these Brethren that testified before the church of Ephesus about Gaius' love and hospitality, and he also gave testimony of all the hateful things Diotrephes was doing. John then gives Gaius the assurance that he knows about the situation and will take care of this when he comes. In the meantime, John tells Gaius to continue working and walking in the Truth. And to continue being faithful to the Lord and the servants of the Lord.

John then closes with a final greeting in verses 13 and 14...

13 I have much to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink,

14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face-to-face. Peace to you. These friends greet you. Greet these friends according to the Name.

¹³ Πολλὰ εἶχον γράφειν, ἀλλ' οὐ θέλω διὰ μέλανος καὶ καλάμου σοὶ γράψαι.

¹⁴ Ἐλπίζω δὲ εὐθέως ἰδεῖν σε, καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσομεν. εἰρήνη σοὶ. ἀσπάζονται σε οἱ φίλοι. ἀσπάζου τοὺς φίλους κατ' ὄνομα.

You can see the love and encouragement that John is sending Gaius in this letter. John says, I have sent you this letter by the hands of these Brethren, but I have much more to talk with you about, and I hope to see you soon and speak face to face.

And John grants Gaius peace saying, **Peace to you**. This has been hard for Gaius, but he has stood for Truth even among persecution and being expelled out of the church, but not "The Church." What an amazing assurance Gaius had, to receive a personal letter from the Apostle John and his friends. He says, "**Greet the friends according to the Name**." This is what joins us together as family. This is being a fellow-worker of the Truth because we are working in accordance with the Name above all names, Jesus Christ.

This short letter gives us a unique glimpse of what it means to walk in Love and in Truth in Fellowship with the Brethren. It's a letter to hold fast to the end, continue in faithfulness, and continue working and walking in the Truth. In this world there will be persecution, because *all who desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution*, 2 Tim 3:12, *but be of good cheer, I have overcome the word*, John 16:33. Evil is all around us, but we must hold fast to the end, looking to Jesus and proclaim His Truth.