

Sunday Morning Message

June 27, 2021

3 John – Biblical Hospitality

Text – 3 John

Congregational Reading – 3 John 1:1 - 4

Introduction

We have been studying these three epistles of John.

3rd John is the last of three letters written by John. 2nd and 3rd John are the two shortest letters in the New Testament, each containing less than 300 Greek words, which would be the approximate number of words that would fit on a typical sheet of papyrus. According to MacArthur: “Third John and 2 John present the closest approximation in the New Testament to the conventional letter form of the contemporary Greco-Roman world, since they were addressed from an individual to individuals.”¹

The first letter contained many proofs or evidences of a genuine salvation experience, which including things like:

- 1 A true believer will not walk in darkness (1:6)
- 2 But will walk in the light (1:7)
- 3 He will confess his sin (1:8 – 10)
- 4 He will keep God’s commandments (2:3 – 4; 5:2 – 3)
- 5 He will keep His Word (2:4)
- 6 He will have “an unction” (2:20, 27 – χρῖσμα [*chrisma*] an anointing – and will know the truth)
- 7 He will not deny the Son (2:22 – 24)
- 8 He will “purify himself” (3:3)
- 9 He will do righteousness (3:7)
- 10 He “Doth not commit sin” (3:4 – 6, 8 – 10; 5:18)
- 11 He will not murder (3:15)
- 12 He will have the Holy Spirit dwelling within him (3:19 – 24; 4:13)
- 13 He will get his prayers answered (3:22; 5:14 – 15)
- 14 He will recognize truth from error (4:6)
- 15 He will confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (4:15; 5:1, 5)

¹ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1979.

16 He will dwell in love (4:16)

By far, however the greatest emphasis given in 1st John regarding characteristics of a real faith were:

17 He will not hate his brother (2:9)

18 He will love his brother (2:10 – 11; 3:10 – 12, 14 – 15; 4:7 – 8, 11 – 12, 20 – 21; 5:1)

2nd John clarified this point somewhat and stated that we cannot take the concept of love beyond where God intended it. In other words, we are not to run with the wrong crowd, or help people by way of support who are working against the cause of Christ. We are to love all people in a general way – even our enemies – but we are not supposed have fellowship or communion with people who are working against the cause of Christ; we should not work together with those who do not love and serve the Lord.

3rd John will clarify this further by encouraging believers to make sure they are hospitable to true believers.

Illustrate – John Phillips, a master wordsmith, writes this regarding the connection between 2nd and 3rd John:

There are similarities and contrasts between John's last two letters. The second letter was sent to a woman, the third to a man; the second urges against receiving false messengers, the third warns against rejecting true messengers; anonymity marks the second letter, naming of individuals highlights the third; the second letter warns against being too soft, the third against being too hard; one warns against the deceiver, the other against the dictator.²

3rd John will continue this discussion of hospitality. Hospitality was a very necessary thing for Christian workers who travelled from place to place; city to city. There was not a Hampton Inn in every village. Christians needed to take in and feed these travelling evangelists and assist them in their needs so that they could do what God had called them to do. Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth regarding this:

"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"
(1 Corinthians 9:11)

Paul wrote to the believers in Rome:

*"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; **Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.**"*
(Romans 12:10-13)

When Paul lists the qualifications for pastors in 1 Timothy 3:2, and in Titus 1:8 he stated that hospitality was a must.

² John Phillips, *Exploring the Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), 3 Jn 1–14.

Illustrate – One of the reasons that God has blessed us with the house that we have is so that we can entertain people. Not a week goes by where we are not having people over to the house. People from our church as well as people from other churches.

Peter also encouraged the people that he wrote to be hospitable, especially in times of persecution:

*"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. **Use hospitality one to another without grudging.** As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."* (1 Peter 4:7-10)

Transition – 3rd John further clarifies the connection between hospitality, which is a tangible expression of loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the Truth. Our love for each other can never be separated from the Truth. We will meet and discuss three individuals in this letter and see how their love and hospitality relates to the Truth.

I. **Gaius the Beloved (vs. 1 – 8)**

Gaius is the recipient of the letter. The name Gaius was fairly common in New Testament times. Four times the name is mentioned in connection to the Apostle Paul (Acts 19:29 – a Gaius from Macedonia; Acts 20:4 – a man from Derbe, which is near Galatia; Romans 16:23 and 1 Corinthians 1:14 – a man from Corinth). The Gaius mentioned here is probably another person altogether. Gaius was a believer who was faithful to the Lord even though his church was veering away from the Truth.

A. **He was a man of Truth (vs. 1 – 4)**

The particular truth referenced here would be an incorporation of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. This man Gaius was a Bible believer. He believed that Jesus was the Son of God and God, the Son – who came to redeem men from their sins. He believed that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, and was crucified, buried, and rose again from the dead. Gaius believed that the only way to have sins forgiven was through the grace of God and faith in the risen Saviour. Gaius was a fundamentalist. He believed in the fundamentals of the faith.

We define fundamentalism as the passionate defense of fundamental beliefs found in the Word of God. This belief system requires a literal interpretation of Scripture. The fundamentalist has the primary goal of being faithful to the Lord and His Word.

There have been different lists of the fundamentals. In 1878, the Niagara Bible conference published a list of fourteen statements, but by the twentieth century the list of fundamentals of the faith were narrowed down to five:

1. The Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:1; John 20:28; Hebrews 1:8-9).
2. The Virgin Birth (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:27).
3. The Blood Atonement (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:12 – 14)

4. The Bodily Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1 – 4; 14 - 15)
5. The Inerrancy of the Scriptures themselves (2 Timothy 3:16 – 17; 2 Peter 1:20)

Practical Point – In these last days when so many things are changing rapidly, please do not do away with the fundamentals of the faith.

B. He was a man given to hospitality (vs. 5 – 7)

Paul commended Gaius for his past love for the servants of God and then encouraged him to keep it up. Again, hospitality is not just having somebody over to your house for coffee, or for dinner; in a biblical sense, hospitality is taking care of the needs of a servant of God so that they could do what God has called them to do.

Notice the word, “strangers” (v. 5 - ξένους from ξένος - *xenos*):

"Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Hebrews 13:1-2)

Illustrate - See 2 Kings 4:8 – 17 – The Shunamite woman and Elijah

II. Diotrophes the Belittler (vs. 9 – 11)

Diotrophes rejected the Apostle John and the men that he sent to minister to the church, and he hindered others who would have accepted them, and even had them removed from the fellowship.

The word, “prate” (v. 10 - φλυαρῶν from φλυαρέω - *phlyareō*) means to utter nonsense.

Verse 11 clearly indicates that Diotrophes was not a true believer, but was in fact a tare that was sown in by the devil to hinder the work of God.

Illustrate – The way to keep this from happening in our church is to keep **God’s Word** at the very center of all that we do, and to fulfill **God’s Work** of fulfilling the Great Commission. If the focus of our church remains on the Word and Work of God, the devil will not be able to destroy this church. We need to keep preaching the Bible and reaching lost sinners with the gospel.

There is a Diotrophes in every church who is just looking for an opportunity to gain a foothold.

Illustrate – Ocean County Baptist Church – “Diotrophes”

III. Demetrius the Behaved (vs. 12 – 15)

Demetrius seems to be the one that delivered the letter and was being recommended by the Apostle Paul to receive Gaius’ hospitality. It seems that Demetrius was being sent to either fix what was broken in the church, or to gather together a group of believers that would be faithful to the Truth. Demetrius would need Gaius’ help and hospitality.

Conclusion

What we need to take home from this letter is that we are to actively support those who are standing for and promoting the Truth.

1. Help those who are sound in doctrine and who are actively communicating the message of salvation - Demetrius.

Get behind those who are working for the Lord.

Make sure they have what they need to succeed.

Help them by doing whatever you can to make their job easier.

2. Don't support people who are working against the cause of Christ – Diotrephes.
3. Become a Demetrius yourself – if you continue to help those who are doing something for the Lord, eventually you will become the one who is leading and doing it for yourself.
4. Be careful that you do not become a Diotrephes yourself. There is something inside all of us that wants to have the preeminence among men. Don't seek greatness. Great men never sought out notoriety. They just accomplished something and the notoriety came.

God told Baruch through the prophet, Jeremiah:

“And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek [them] not:” (Jeremiah 45:5)