

Sermon Notes & References  
Fellow Workers with the Truth  
3 John 1:8  
June 20, 2010

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<sup>A</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:18  
<sup>B</sup> John 14:6, 8:36, Ephesians 1:13, Galatians 2:14, Titus 2:10

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<sup>C</sup> Matthew 11:19, Luke 19:10, Matthew 23  
<sup>D</sup> Hebrews 13:7, 1 Corinthians 11:1  
<sup>E</sup> Romans 14:18-19

A. Introduction

1. Second and Third John

- a. was probably written very late in John's life
- b. naming himself as 'The Elder' was doubly appropriate, for as well as one of great age and Christian experience, he served as a leader of the church of Christ
- c. our information on John's later life comes Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, known as 'early church fathers,' as well as from the early church historian, Eusebius
- d. with destruction approaching Jerusalem in 70AD, a number of Christian Jews warned by Jesus' prophetic words had fled first to Syria and then to Asia Minor, strengthening the churches that Paul had founded there
- e. John headed in the same direction and settled in Ephesus for life, except 90-96AD when according to tradition<sup>—{2}</sup>, he was exiled to Patmos by the emperor Domitian, after which he returned to Ephesus
- f. as mentioned in Paul's letters, many of the churches of Asia Minor were relatively small, meeting in houses, but known collectively as the church of such and such a city
- g. these together formed the church in a given city or region
- h. Paul's words, 'there is the daily pressure on me of concern (or, care) for all the churches' (2 Corinthians 11:18) would encompass these house churches as did also his letters
- i. with ¼ million population, Ephesus would have had such house churches, one being in the home of Priscilla and Aquila; each with its elders, together forming the church
- j. from the contents of these letters, the home of the 'Elect Lady' in 2nd John, and of Gaius in 3rd John were locations of two such churches. John wrote these personal letters to them for their instruction and encouragement. They have been preserved for us for the same purposes

2. In John's third letter

- a. we seem to have three such local churches involved
- b. possibly each situated at about a day or so's journey apart – illustrated by the distance between towns in rural areas
- c. John's own church may have been in the Ephesus proper

- d. from here John sent this letter, probably using Demetrius as its bearer, to the house of Gaius
- e. which the content of the letter indicates, was somewhat nearer to the next church, where Diotrophes was leader
- f. John writes in a very self-effacing humility – not usually mentioning his own name or apostleship in his writings – but that does not mean that he ever makes light of the commission given to him by the Lord Jesus Christ
- g. he speaks gently, but he speaks with authority

### 3. What Is Christ's Purpose for a Local Church?

- a. the answer to that question is vividly illustrated by these three men: Gaius, Diotrophes, Demetrius
- b. in two cases, positively; in the one sad case, negatively
- c. local churches and the members in them, have this purpose – they are to be fellow workers
  - (A) with the Truth
  - (B) by the Truth
  - (C) to the Truth
  - (D) for the Truth
  - (E) all these apply, for English is too restricted to bring out the full force of the Greek sentence

### 4. In my notes, I have capitalized Truth

- a. but, in doing so, I am not personalizing an abstract notion
- b. rather, the word Truth, as used repeatedly in this short epistle, means a very specific Truth
- c. first and foremost, this Truth is the very Person of the One described in John 14:6, 'Jesus said to him, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."'
- d. second, this Truth is the Gospel Truth which delivers men from the guilt and bondage to sin: 'So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.' (John 8:36) 'In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise' (Ephesians 1:13)
- e. third, this Truth is Truth in practise, the Christian living 'according to the truth of the gospel' (Galatians 2:14), as one seen 'showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in every respect.' (Titus 2:10)

5. How then can we as a local body of believers be like this?
  - a. a main theme of the letter is the hospitality that can be shown by the church to travelling brethren engaged in the work of the word, and thereby becoming fellow workers with them in the Truth
  - b. but there are other aspects of this fellowship in working together as a body of believers that are found in this letter
  - c. all these things have to do with the local church and its people being fellow workers with, by, in and for the Truth
  - d. the church is intended to be a true Hospice
  - e. the church is intended to be a Handler of truth
  - f. the church is intended to be a safe Haven

B. The Church is Intended To Be a True Hospice

1. the word hospice and hospital are closely related
  - a. the original meaning of hospital was almost the same as hospice: a place for the reception of strangers or guests; only later did 'hospital' take on other aspects of care
  - b. but the meaning which I want to draw on this morning, is that of the exercise of care or concern for fellow Christians that goes beyond our immediate circle of friends
2. this is illustrated first by John's greeting to Gaius in verse 2: 'Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.' (3 John 1:2)
  - a. John shows a great concern for Gaius
    - (A) that concern is shown in John's prayer life
    - (B) that concern extends over all facets of Gaius' life – he doesn't limit it to one or two perceived needs but says that it is 'in all respects' or, 'above, or, in all things'
  - b. the basis of John's concern is found in the last part of the verse, that is his care for Gaius' spiritual condition, which caused John much joy: '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.' (3 John 1:3-4)
    - (A) Gaius gave evidence of that third Truth

- (B) he lived out the gospel truth in his daily walk
  - c. on this account John can express also concern for Gaius' material and physical situation – that he should prosper, that he should enjoy good health
    - (A) this isn't the teaching of some of the health and wealth preachers we can hear on TV today
    - (B) but rather, that Gaius had shown himself to be a faithful steward of what God had entrusted to him
    - (C) so John has no hesitation ask that God may extend the length and scope of that stewardship
3. The Church is Intended to be a Hospice where People are Welcomed and Ministered unto – 'Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers' (3 John 1:5), or if you allow my own rendering, 'Beloved, how faithfully you do whatsoever you carry out for the brethren, and strangers at that!'
- a. on the one hand we see this as a commendation of Gaius' stewardship; the way he used his health and wealth
  - b. but, consider for a moment, what it must have meant to those strangers that arrived at his church – if it was a house church, that meant at his front door! – and these were received, they were provided for, and, as intimated in the next verses they were graciously assisted on their trip
  - c. 'When a Rabbi visited a town, it was customary on his departure to escort him on his way' (Lightfoot); the Christian church did likewise, though this meant breaking off from their normal duties and occupations in the interest of those who came to them in Christ's name.
4. The Church is Intended to be a Hospice where People are Assisted in their Christian Calling – '6 and they (that is, the guests who came to Gaius) 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.' (3 John 1:6-7)
- a. this certainly includes the providing of support and help, in both finances and prayer to missionaries and ministers, those who go out for the sake or cause 'of the Name'
  - b. but Christian calling or vocation goes far beyond those who have been called for full-time service – it includes every child of God in every part of their life: the so-called secular as well as the sacred side of their living
  - c. if we are to be fellow helpers with, by, to and for the Truth it means that we will encourage one another

in the use of the gifts that God has entrusted to us for His service

C. The Church is Intended to be a Handler of Truth

1. The Church is Intended to be a Handler of Truth where People are 'loved in the truth' verse 1
  - a. as well as John's personal statement of affection for Gaius, he is addressed repeatedly as 'beloved'
  - b. there are churches where everyone – at least the men – address one another as 'brother,' yet sometimes the term may almost be pronounced as with a sense of duty
  - c. Oh that from the heart we might address one another as 'beloved', or, if that is too flowery, at least 'dear friend!'
2. The Church is Intended to be a Handler of Truth where People 'walk in the truth' verse 3
  - a. read through the gospels and what do you discover about Jesus and his attitude towards sinners?
  - b. 'The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.' (Matthew 11:19); Jesus admitted that testimony to be true for this reason: 'For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.' (Luke 19:10)
  - c. but, on the other hand, when Jesus spoke to hypocrites, he did so sharply; read through Matthew 23 sometime to see the sad, harsh words He had to those pretending to be good: 'But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ...'
  - d. as we handle the Truth given to us in God's word, let us do so in such a spirit of grace that we may walk in that Truth
3. The Church is Intended to be a Handler of Truth where People have True Examples – verse 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.'
  - a. evil and good in this verse are not abstract ideas nor are they absolutes of moral or ethical principles
  - b. you cannot imitate abstract ideas or absolute principles
  - c. the first part of the verse is explained by the last part
  - d. the good that we are to imitate is that which we see in the godly, God-given examples who have blessed our lives

- e. the evil that we are to avoid imitating is that which we see in those whose eyes are not upon God but upon the world
  - f. Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. (Hebrews 13:7)
  - g. and Paul said, 'Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.' (1 Corinthians 11:1)
  - h. seek to both be such an imitator as well as one imitated
4. The Church is Intended to be a Handler of Truth where People Receive a True Approval, verse 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.'
- a. you have no doubt heard of some of the testimonials that have appeared in letters of reference and their translation:
    - (A) He takes great pride in his work – he blames others for his mistakes
    - (B) He has strong organization and communication skills – he tells others what to do and talks a lot
    - (C) He is extremely professional – he wants a high salary
  - b. part of the building up of believers in the faith is that of bringing them to the walk in Christ deserving of approval
  - c. 18 For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. (Romans 14:18-19)
  - d. Demetrius was such an example; everyone knew it; truth witnessed to it by his walk and talk; and John told of it
  - e. Oh, that we might have a church full of Demetriuses!
- D. The Church is Intended To Be a Safe Haven
- 1. despite the fact that Diotrophes may still be around: 9 ¶ I wrote something to the church; but Diotrophes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept (us) 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. (3 John 1:9-10) – Diotrophes provides a negative example

2. Diotrephes occupied his attention with his own pre-eminence rather than that of the Lord Jesus Christ and to that end he opposed all that might cause him any loss of face in his little church
  - a. he accepted neither John's letter, nor John himself, but rather lied wickedly about John
  - b. he wouldn't receive the missionary brethren (who came probably from John with the letter of introduction)
  - c. he wouldn't let others receive them, and excluded them from church fellowship if they did show them hospitality
  
3. Oh pray that your pastor be delivered from this evil! That this church may be a safe haven for the child of God
  - a. that wicked accusations be not allowed among us
  - b. that we remember we are but sinners saved by grace who have been accepted by God and that we likewise accept those saved by the same Lord in the same fashion
  - c. that our church body provide a place of stability where the child of God may first stand, then walk, and then work
  
4. The Church is To Be a Safe Haven where People Want to Meet
  - a. [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.](#) (3 John 1:13-14)
  - b. John was quite an age, the trip on his part was not easy
  - c. but the joy of fellowship with the people of God was more than sufficient to overcome any such obstacle
  
5. The Church is To Be a Place of Enduring Friends
  - a. the letter closes with these words: ['Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.'](#)
  - b. Peace: Shalom! – fulness, health, rest, friendship
  - c. these are John's closing wishes for God's people
  - d. that their mutual friends greet each other in a very close and very personal fashion, by name

E. Conclusion – Bless be the tie that binds ...



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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
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NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
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PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. *Eusebius Ecclesiastical History*, Bk 3, Ch XVIII; dates from various sources