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BIBLE STUDY

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**DOCTRINE, DIOTREPHES, DEMETRIUS**

**III John**

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

Like 2 John, 3 John is more or less a brief postcard from the apostle. We find this letter to be a personal letter written by John to his friend Gaius. Notice, he is a friend that John loves very much. The reason that John thinks so much of him is because he, also, is a student of the true doctrine of Christ. To be in the truth, the doctrine would have to be part of you. In Scripture “truth” is “sound doctrine” and refers to the entire body of essential theological truths that define and describe that message.

***Titus 2:1 “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:”***

***2 Timothy 4:3 “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;”***

***1 Timothy 1:10 “For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;***

***1 Timothy 4:16 “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”***

***Titus 1:9 “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”***

Doctrine, then, is scriptural teaching on theological truths and is indispensable to Christianity. Christianity does not exist without it. The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes the value and importance of sound doctrine, sound instruction and a pattern of sound teaching. John like all apostles defended the faithful proclamation of the gospel and formulated Christian faith in doctrinal terms, then called for its preservation. Knowing the truth was and is the only way that a person can come to faith. Believers, in general, were instructed to guard the faith, that is, to stand firm in sound doctrine.

***1 Timothy 6:3-5***

***3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;***

***4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,***

***5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.***

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

John's wish for Gaius to prosper has a condition on it. He knows that his soul is prospering, and John wants him blessed to that extent. John prays that Gaius is prospering in every way and in good health, just as [his] whole life is going well. Good clean living brings good health many times. Some of the diseases that we have, we bring on ourselves with the type of life we live. This is not always the case but is true many times. For instance, look at the problems the doctors have discovered that smoking cigarettes has brought. Another good example is the disease A.I.D.S. Not all cases are brought about by drug use and by homosexual activity, but by far the majority of the cases are. At least we can cut down our chances for these diseases by good clean living. That latter part of verse 2 could also be translated “just as your soul prospers.” Some people have wrongly tried to advocate a “prosperity gospel” using these verses. Now, God is not against prosperity and health. There’s nothing inherently evil in having money or being physically fit. Getting a raise at work and improving your fitness are fine. But these things are only beneficial “as your soul prospers.” Without a prospering soul that is, without spiritual development your motivations will be misplaced, and your health and wealth will leave you hollow.

***1 Timothy 6:10 “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”***

***1 Timothy 6:17-21***

***17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;***

***18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;***

***19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.***

***20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:***

***21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.***

***Matthew 16:26 “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”***

***III 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."***

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

It seems that John has received a glowing report of Gaius walking true to the gospel message every day. Gaius is indeed prospering in his soul. How did John know that Gaius’s soul was prospering? Not because of any material benefits he had, but because fellow believers testified to his fidelity to the truth. His daily walk bears out his faith in the truth. How do you measure your success in the Christian life? The measuring rod for your spiritual well-being is whether or not you are walking in truth, that is whether you’re living by the standard of God’s Word. Gaius was not the physical son of John. He more probably is someone who John has led to Christ. He is a spiritual son of John. There is no greater joy than to know someone you have led to the Lord is walking in the salvation they received. Knowing that believers were walking in truth brought great joy to the apostle and it brings joy to God too.

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

***III 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:"***

It seems that Gaius was filled with hospitality for all the Christian brothers, whether they were strangers to him, or not. He was faithfully carrying out the commandment to love God and his fellow man. When Gaius stands before the Lord Jesus on judgement day, he will hear Him say, "Well done thy good and faithful servant". Jesus will remind Gaius that what he had done to the least of these he had done for Jesus also, because he did it in love of the brethren. This brother shared what he had with those less fortunate than himself. That’s what Gaius did. He demonstrated love for the brothers and sisters who were engaging in ministry, even those who were strangers to him. When we support those who are faithful to the truth, God credits to our account the blessings that he gives to them because we are their coworkers, sharing in their ministry.

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

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

In 2 John we learned that the church must not support or give an audience to those who reject the truth about Jesus Christ.

***2 John 10-11***

***10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:***

***11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.***

Instead, we should support those who set out for the sake of the Name of Jesus in other words, those who are doing the work of God as evangelists, teachers, church planters, and missionaries. By providing them with financial support, hospitality, encouragement, and prayer, we can be coworkers with the truth. Gaius had helped them, and it was not necessary for them to live of those who were not believers. This has to be speaking of missionaries that went to carry the gospel message to the lost world. It seems Gaius' part in this was to furnish them with funds for food and care. The person who supplies the support for the missionary is just as involved in the missionary task, as the one who actually goes with the message. Gaius will get a missionary's reward. The one who furnishes the funds is actually a fellow-helper with the missionary.

***III John 1:9 "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not."***

﻿Gaius was a faithful leader, committed to the truth. Sadly, we can encounter church leaders who don’t share his commitment. John identified one of them by name: Diotrephes. What was wrong with him? He loved to have first place. He liked to be the center of attention, the king of the hill, the top dog. Diotrephes was full of pride, which demonstrated itself in a variety of ways. We see the opposite of Gaius in Diotrephes. He is a very selfish man, who wants all of the authority in the church. What was wrong with him? He loved to have first place. He liked to be the center of attention, the king of the hill, the top dog. Diotrephes was full of pride, which demonstrated itself in a variety of ways. When John wrote to the church, Diotrephes refused to receive his authority. Understand that John had been chosen by the Son of God himself to serve as one of his apostles and to write Scripture. Nevertheless, Diotrephes wouldn’t listen to him. You don’t get a clearer rejection of the truth than that!

***III 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 seems that this Diotrephes had some position of authority in the church, because he had thrown some members out of the church if they disagreed with him. It seemed he did not want the Christian brothers to come to the church, and he went so far as to throw the members out who welcomed other Christian brothers. This is pure jealousy, which has no place in the church. Gaius supported traveling believers who were doing the work of Christ, but Diotrephes slammed the door in their faces and excommunicated church members for helping them. In a word, Diotrephes was a despot. A leader submits himself to the truth and exercises godly authority for the good of those under him. A despot refuses to submit to the truth and rules over others for his own gain. The apostle John was not afraid to call him out. Diotrephes compounded his sin by slandering John and his coworkers with malicious words. It seems John has talked to Diotrephes privately about his problem. He has sent others to speak to him and since none of this worked. John will expose him to the whole church when he comes, and it may be his turn to be thrown out. John had great authority in the early church and this Diotrephes would have to listen to whatever reprimand John had for him.

***III 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."***

***III 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."***

John urges Gaius (and us): do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. John does not specifically mention Diotrephes, but that is probably who John says not to follow here. Diotrephes was an obvious example of evil to avoid. Demetrius, by contrast, was a good example to emulate. The church spoke well of him, the apostle and those with him spoke well of him, and even the truth itself spoke well of Demetrius. There was consistency in the man’s life. The way he lived matched the truth of Scripture. When you see this kind of pattern in a leader, you know you can follow him, because the one who does good is of God. This is another explanation that men are what their daily lives are. If they live evil lives, they are not of God. If they live good wholesome lives, loving their neighbors and God, they are Christians. Demetrius had to be the one who brought this letter. He was a trusted Christian. He lived before other Christian in such a way that they all knew he was a Christian. John is standing good for Demetrius. John is giving him a good personal reference here. Demetrius stood up for the truth. John reminds them of his own character here, when he tells them that his report is true.

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

***III 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."***

John concludes his letter by highlighting the limitation of using pen and ink. John explains that there was no need to write more, because he was coming to see them, and he would tell them then. This is a reminder that writing can be useful, but it can’t replace talking face to face. Whether someone needs warning or encouragement, emails and text messages don’t compare to looking a brother or sister in the eye and “speaking the truth in love.” This is a typical closing to John's letter. He promises to come and see them real soon. When you have Jesus, you have the peace which passes understanding. He includes all the believers, when he speaks of friends in his greeting.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Who was this letter written to?
2. What was John's feelings toward them?
3. What kind of letter would this be classed as?
4. How could you be in the truth?
5. John wished that he would \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and be in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
6. He wanted him to prosper as his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ prospered.
7. What are some diseases we bring upon ourselves?
8. What caused John to rejoice greatly?
9. Is Gaius John's real son?
10. It seems that Gaius was filled with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the brothers in Christ.
11. What really good trait did verse 6 say he had?
12. What will Gaius hear Jesus say on judgement day?
13. Who was the man causing the trouble in the church?
14. What was his problem?
15. What had Diotrephas done against John?
16. What will John do, about this situation when he comes?
17. He that doeth good is of \_\_\_\_\_\_.
18. Who brought this letter?
19. What kind of a person was Demetrius?
20. Who, besides John, sent a greeting?