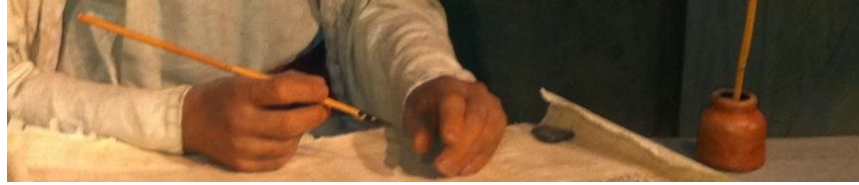


The 3rd Letter of **John**



Lesson 1-Practical Lessons from John's Letter to Gaius

Focus: 3 John 1:1-14

- **Introduction:** The third letter of John is believed to have been **written around the year A.D. 90** (the same year as was 2nd John) **from Ephesus**, where it is believed that John spent the later years of his ministry, and from which he likely would have written all three of his letters. This letter was written to a man named **Gaius**. This name was a common name at that time in the Roman Empire. There are three other Gaius' mentioned in the New Testament (1) One of Paul's traveling companions (See Acts 19:29), (2) Gaius, Paul's host in Corinth, who was one of the few people that Paul actually baptized (See Romans 16:23; 1 Corinthians 1:14), and (3) Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20:4). It is likely that this Gaius was not any one of those, but rather a different Gaius who evidently lived in Asia Minor.

This letter is known as **the shortest letter in the Bible** (even a bit shorter textually, though not verse-wise than 2nd John). The internal evidence of John's authorship is strong (though the external is not as strong because the letter would not have been so widely circulated as others). You can see some parallels between this 3rd Letter and the 2nd Letter of John in terms of structure and some comments made. Interestingly enough, 3rd John makes no mention of the name Jesus Christ (like 1st and 2nd John do), but does say in verse 7, "...they went forth for His name's sake," which is commonly used as a reference to Jesus (compare Acts 5:40,41). There are three characters mentioned in this book: Gaius, Diotrephes (and evil doer and antagonist towards the gospel message), and Demetrius (a righteous servant of God). This letter encourages Gaius in the truth, and in the gospel work. It also rebukes Diotrephes, while recommending the righteous character of Demetrius. Finally, it informs of John's plans to come there and to help straighten out any difficulties that were being had.

- **John's commendation to the beloved Gaius (v.1-4)**
 - John begins this letter with the same introduction as found in the 2nd letter of John, stating his title as "the elder," in reference to himself. The audience is clearly mentioned here. The letter was directed to "Gaius," one whom John dearly loved and who was faithful in the truth of God.
 - (v.2) John wished greatly for this man to be in good health! Certainly, John knew that this man's soul was prospering in the Lord Jesus, but John prayed that even the man's physical health would be in a wonderful condition! Certainly, these are the things that God cares about as well! The Lord cares about each of us in a very holistic way! God cares about the complete being! He wants us to have a sound mind and to be in good health (spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, etc.). (See Matthew 4:23,24; John 14:7-9; 1 Peter 5:7). God cares for our wellbeing greatly as a dear father who loves His children with a tender heart! God is always looking that we would follow His righteous principles and live in health! Let us be sure and careful to care for our bodies as God desires (See Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 7:15; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

- (v.3,4) It was a great and wonderful joy to the heart of the Apostle to hear that one of his “children” in the gospel was living out and bearing the full fruits of the gospel in his life! There is nothing more rewarding and wonderful than to know that someone is in love with God and serving Him faithfully with joy who has even begun in that way from your sincere labors and efforts in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ!!
- **Encouragement in the work of God (v.5-8)**
 - We are to help the Lord’s faithful workers in any way that we can and to be a part of God’s work. These workers did not take money from the gentiles among whom they worked, but rather, were helped by the believers who were supporting their missions work.
- **The evil of Diotrephes (v.9-11)**
 - One evil doer by the name of Diotrephes was plaguing the local church of which Gaius was familiar with. John had written to that church about the issue or problem that was going on, but this man Diotrephes who had taken power or control there in the church was not receiving John, his fellow workers, or his messages by letter. This guy was clearly fighting against the truth and had taken a position which he wanted, but which he had absolutely no right to take in the church. Exactly which church this was by name we do not know, but evidently Gaius knew it and this situation well! We do not know exactly which city this was located in, but can guess somewhere in Asia where John was doing his ministry and probably not too far from Ephesus where John was doing ministry, although at least far enough away to have to write a letter about the situation. Exactly which letter this was which verse 9 refers to we do not know. One could assume perhaps first or second John, but actually the evidence suggests that it was another letter which we do not have any copy of today. Obviously this letter would have dealt more specifically with the issues being faced in that church where Diotrephes was controlling things. 1st and 2nd John do not deal exactly with those issues nor do they name this man. His wicked influence in a place of power or control which he did not deserve to have was creating many problems in the church and was turning others away from the true message of God! This was a serious problem and sin which God’s servants were laboring diligently to counteract or fix, and which God himself will one day judge the man for.
- **Closing Remarks and commendations (v.12-14)**
 - Here John made some commendations for a righteous character who deserved to be thanked and praised for his faithful labors in God. That is Demetrius. This person was making a good influence for God, while the other was making an evil one. John was speaking for this good man who had been hurt by the bad, most likely.
 - Finally John stated his intentions to come there, as he also did in 2nd John to the other person to which he wrote.

Question (s) for the Heart:

There are many choices we must make in this life about how to live and treat others, and also, who to serve. Will you choose today to be on the Lord’s side in your life’s service? _____