

3 JOHN

INTRODUCTION

John speaks of himself as “The Elder” for he was older in both years and experience than those to whom he wrote near the end of his life in A.D. 90.

This letter is the shortest New Testament epistle in the original Greek, and it gives us a glimpse into an early assembly (church), its people and its problems. From it we see that what we experience today is not far different from what he describes in his time.

The book of 2 John warns us of the heretics and of our having fellowship with them; 3 John describes true teachers who were making circuits of the churches, and he encouraged their having fellowship and giving hospitality one to the other.

John addresses three personalities in order to carry out his purpose in directing God’s church in accordance with the pure Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 John 1-8

This letter was written to his generous and warmhearted friend called Gaius. This man was the type of the true Christian layman who has dedicated his wealth and talent to the Lord. His purse strings are loose and his latchstring is out. All he has belongs to Christ. He is the picture of the man who has found Christ to be the "Way," and in his everyday life, he tries to show that gracious "Way" to others. Such men, scattered here and there, have through the years, kept not only the Church alive in an unfriendly world, but have kept Christ's love burning brightly in the midst of God's people when all seemed dark.

Gaius was noted for his loving hospitality. John urges him to continue entertaining the traveling preachers in spite of opposition. Hospitality is a manifestation of Christian love.

(What the Bible Is All About, Henrietta C. Mears)

"If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well." (3 John 6b) **What is the motive for sending forth people to promote the gospel?**

3 John 7-8

3 John 9-14

Already the spirit of declension, that afterwards culminated in the great apostasy, had entered the primitive churches. Paul tells us that, "At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me" (2 Timothy 4:16). They had turned away from him, and now John makes the still more painful confession, "I wrote to the church: but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church" (3 John 9-10).

It was out of this spirit of ecclesiastical ambition and pride, contending for preeminence and earthly honor, that the Romanish apostasy first arose; and the same cause is destroying the purity and separation of many in the Church today. We must not blame the pulpit for it all, although it takes its most hideous form in ministerial pretensions, high sounding titles and selfishness and luxury on the part of the preachers of the gospel. The spirit of the pew will soon be reproduced in the pulpit.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Even the Lord's disciples argued who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Matt. 18:1). It is a fleshly desire to have dominance and control over others and as these fleshly desires crept into the church many years ago it is still with us today. **What major quality was Diotrephes lacking?**

Phil. 2:1 Phil. 3:17 Col. 1:18

Demetrius was a man worth imitating because he had a "good report" from the church fellowship. He also had a good witness from the Word itself. John had warned that he was going to visit the church and confront Diotrephes (3 John 10), and no doubt both Gaius and Demetrius would stand with John in opposing the "dictator." They were the kind of men who would support the truth and submit themselves to authentic spiritual authority. **If you have been in a church situation where someone has opposed truth and godly authority, causing division, how do you feel you would stand (knowing that you no doubt would be subject to criticism by the other side)? What would be the first thing to do, and how would you back up your stand?**