

3 John 1-14

“The Goodness Of Gaius, The Demise Of Diotrephes”

The early church had problems. Often times it seems that we as people have a tendency to glamorize the past; especially if things are difficult for us in the present. We remember how it “used to be” but the reality is that your past had problems to; problems aren’t only in your present, they were in your past. But somehow and for some reason present problems always seem to eclipse the problems of the past.

Think of the children of Israel and how they were in hard bondage and slavery to Egypt; and they cried out to God to deliver them and their cry was heard from heaven and God did just that; He delivered them. But then they got out there in the desert and started having a few problems and suddenly they didn’t remember it being that bad in Egypt, they thought that their present plight was way worse than their past. They wanted to go back, in their minds they highlighted the garlic and the leeks of Egypt but somehow the whips of the taskmasters; the chains, the brutality, the hard bondage and forced labor escaped their memory.

That happens to us, we have a tendency to forget how hard things were, and what it was that caused us to cry out to God and beg for His deliverance in our lives; the desperation and desolation that we felt, hopeless and with out direction, nowhere to turn and no place to go.

But the application doesn’t only apply to salvation, we seem to glamorize the past in virtually every arena of life, “the good ole days.” “Man that’s when things were happening; if things could be today like they were then...” But listen, there were problems then to; but for some reason we highlight the mountain tops and forget about the valleys.

We do the same thing as it pertains to the early church, we think, “Man, if we could only get back to the way things were in the early church things would be great.” But we do well to rather than long for the past, live for the present, God has called you to a time such as this. If He wanted you there you’d have been born then, but you’re right here, right now, today. Lay hold of that for which God has laid hold of you and serve the Lord with all your heart.

Listen, the early church had problems to, how do I know that? Because it was filled people like you, and like me; and I have discovered that anywhere there are people there are problems. 3rd John addresses a problem, now as to where 2nd John said, “Don’t be blind to the fact that there are deceivers out there and exercise discernment so as not to share in their deeds.” 3rd John says, “However there are genuine men of God out there who deserve our support; don’t reject the legit, receive them, encourage them and stand behind them.”

Vs1

Again John introduces himself here as “The Elder.” As I mentioned in 2nd John it’s an appropriate title both from a physical perspective and a spiritual perspective. John didn’t outrank the other apostles, but he did out live them and at the time he wrote this he was the last living apostolic authority on the planet.

Therefore be it positionally and/or practically he appropriately refers to himself as “the elder.”

Here we discover whom he’s writing to and rather than writing to a church or a region he’s addressing an individual whom he desires to encourage to continue in his generosity (as we’ll see) even in the face of potential hostility from a particular “leader” in the church. Now we would like to think that when it comes to church leadership you can always trust them, always look to and rely on them to steer you in an appropriate direction. Unfortunately poison can seep through the ranks of leadership just as readily as it can anywhere else; that’s why we’re to know the word of God and anytime there’s discrepancy between what a leader has to say and what the word of God plainly declares we default to God’s word not the leaders word. “Well what if I’m shunned as rebellious and put out of the church?” Then you’re put out of the church and you commend yourself into the hands of God to tend to the situation. No matter what, in every situation categorically we’re to obey God rather than man. Now when our leaders are in line with God’s word, we’ll readily submit accordingly, but the word and the ways of God will always trump the word and the ways of man.

Vs2-4

You might just note again in passing the emphasis that John places on truth, “Love and truth” are the 2 primary highlights of John’s ministry.

He lets Gaius know that he’s love in Vs 1, and again in Vs 2; then as the 1st order of service John establishes the fact that he’s praying for him. I like that; I underlined those 2 words right there in Vs 2, “I pray.” Because that tells me that those whom John loves, he prays for. Question: how much time do you spend praying for those whom you love, be they friends or be they family?

If God has brought us into the sphere of a person's life or into the sphere of certain people's lives we do well to pray for them. God has them in our lives for a reason and you don't know but it could be that you're the only one who's really digging in, getting on your face and praying for them. You may be pivotal or instrumental in their lives as it pertains to God's dealings with them or His grace toward them. Or it could be that you're one in a sea of many whom God has called to pray for them either way we should pray, because God has seen fit to place them in our lives.

I want you to know if this is your church home, and you're here week after month after year, I'm praying for you. I pray for this fellowship; the marriages in it, the holiness of it, the spiritual growth that God desires to take place through it. I pray that you would just love the Lord, and hunger for His word, that you would be effective in your witness for Him.

You know the bible teaches that there is a sin of prayerlessness, it's a good reminder now and then isn't it? Remember when Israel wanted a king like the other nations, they didn't want Samuel to judge them anymore, they wanted a king. Long story short God gave them what they wanted, Samuel rebuked them, God sent thunder and rain, the people were freaking out asking Samuel to pray for them so they wouldn't die...

Samuel encouraged them to continue to follow the Lord, yeah they may've blown it in what they *did*, but the question is what are you doing to *do* right here right now? Samuel said, "Turn from your sin and follow the Lord with all your heart." Then he said, "*Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.*" 1 Sam 12:23 God help us that we not be guilty of the sin of prayerlessness...

What does John pray for? He mentions 2 things, basically his physical/practical well being and his spiritual well being, "That you may prosper in all things and be in health (practical and physical favor from God) just as your soul prospers (spiritual favor from God)"

Now I suppose that I would do well to at least touch on this mention of prosperity, what it means and what it doesn't mean. What does it mean to truly "prosper"? Does it mean to have a few million dollars in the bank so that you can kick back take your ease and enjoy life with out a worry? There are those who would have you to believe that and they will use this Vs to support that.

There are people who subscribe to the fact that God basically exists to make sure that you have health/wealth and all the perks and pleasures of this world. They name things, and claim things and confess things into being seeking to convince themselves and muster up enough faith to have their wishes granted by God. Unfortunately that mentality places me in the place of God and God in the place of the servant doing my bidding which is the polar opposite of what the bible teaches.

On top of that it often time keeps me focused *on* and mindful *of* the things of this world, instead of focusing on things above I'm seeking to muster up enough faith for material gain. Yet the bible says, "*Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.*" 1 Tim 6:6-9 Far from contentment that position will fuel covetousness (which the bible says is idolatry). Now having said that is it wrong to be wealthy from a material perspective? No, you've heard me say before that money makes a great servant, but it makes a terrible master; as long as it belongs to you and you don't belong to it you'll be alright. Certainly there are people whom God entrusts vast amounts of resources to in order to propel His purposes here on the earth, if that's you praise God for it; lay up for yourself treasures in heaven, invest in the things of the kingdom and secure for yourself an eternal return that will by far exceed any temporal return you could ever hope for.

It seems to me that "prosperity" from a biblical perspective is simply laying hold of all that God has for you and utilizing it to the fullest for His glory; I've met incredibly impoverished people who believe me when I tell you they're prospering, even as their soul prospers.

Notice that John correlates his physical health to his spiritual health. If you flourished physically to the same degree you're healthy spiritually how would your health be? Oh we know that ultimately if you're in Christ your soul prospers, if not your soul is in utter poverty.

Of course it won't be until you *realize* that you're bankrupt of Spirit that you'll see your need for Jesus, Who paid the debt that *we all* owe; and it's a real problem in modern day USA. We don't see the spiritual need because of the material wealth, we think we got it all, we don't really have a need; we're like the church of Laodicea there in Rev 3. Remember what Jesus said to them? He said, "*These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked —*" Rev 3:14-17 Jesus rebuked them, exhorted them to repent and return to Him, to trust in Him, not the things of this world. So many times material prosperity is way more of a hindrance than it is a help... If our physical health correlated to our spiritual health how would you look? Fit, in shape, ready to roll? Or bedridden, feeble, sick and anemic?

Vs3-4

There where it says that brothers "came" that doesn't indicate that it happened once, but it's saying that over and over again John was continually receiving reports of what was going on in Gaius' life and how he was a right on brother who tended to the needs of the brethren; that He was all about the truth and walked *in* (or led life according to) the truth of God's word. Gaius was genuine, he was the real deal, what people saw *in* him was true *of* him.

Do you ever wonder what people testify of you? I told you once before of the time I was in our fireworks tent that the youth was running and I met some guy and invited him to church; he said he'd been here but now that he's married he's been going to another fellowship where his wife wanted to go (she'd never been here). It was pretty obvious he didn't recognize me and I didn't really know what to think when he said, "Yeah, I keep trying to get her to come and check it out I tell her 'you got to see this guy, he's a trip!'" I thought, "What does that mean???" What are people testifying of me? 😊 What do people testify of you?

It's true that Jesus made himself of no reputation and we definitely on the one hand shouldn't concern ourselves with our reputation, seeking to be a somebody, it's not our aim to be in the "Who's who" we're content being in the "who's he?" Yet at the same time we're to be careful to safeguard our witness of who Jesus is to others, we should be mindful of how our actions, intents, and words impact others.

What a great thing that people nothing but good to say about this guy; evidently John led him to Christ at some point and all these years later he's still walking in Christ, that thrilled John's heart (understandably so).

Vs 5-7

They went forward with the principle of where God guides God provides and we won't look to the world to support the work of the Lord.

But check it out, Gaius led his life openly, honestly, scripturally and he did *whatever* he did *faithfully*, not inconsistently or ½ heartedly. I love that, the context here is hospitality, generosity, but regardless of what he committed to you could count on him, he was faithful.

You guys at the end of the day that's what it boils down to, that whatever God places before us that we attend unto it faithfully. The results of the endeavor are up to the Lord, it's our part to be faithful as a good steward of the gifts, graces and property of the Lord. "*Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*" 1 Cor 4:2 Of course we're all familiar with the words of the Lord Jesus; those words we all long to hear one day. "*Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.*" Matt 25:21 This fella was faithful to follow through on whatever the Lord placed before him, because whatever he did, he did unto the Lord; he was faithful because he considered it a work of faith.

Notice he was no respecter of persons, if he knew you or didn't know you it didn't matter, if you were in the body of Christ he was going to take care of you, serve you and minister to you with the same kindness and compassion as he would his best friend or family member.

John says, "If you send them forth in a manner worthy of God you do well." Meaning in a way that reflects the heart of God toward the people of God, or in a manner that you would serve God Himself; either way. If Jesus was coming for dinner we'd set our best wares, "Get that bent fork out of here, the Lord's at the table!" We're to serve the brethren as though we're serving the Lord, in a manner worthy of God. One has said that we're never more "godlike" than when we're sacrificing to serve others.

Again the bottom line is hospitality and generosity; it was recorded in 1977's June 3rd addition of "Christianity Today," "Singer John Charles Thomas, at age 66 wrote to syndicated columnist Abigail Van Buren: 'I am presently completing the 2nd year of a 3-year survey on the **hospitality or lack of it** in churches. To date, of the 195 churches I have visited, I was spoken to in only 1 by someone other than an official greeter and that was to ask me to *move my feet*.'"

It's true we have official "greeters" but here's the news flash guys; we're *all* greeters, we're all to extend a welcome and an appreciation to anyone who has chosen to fellowship with us here in this place. Don't leave hospitality up to someone "on duty," it's your duty and my duty simply as believers. Gaius had both down, hospitality *and* generosity.

Now I don't want this to be awkward for you but I'm going to address it, John is talking about the fact that Gaius supported these guys financially, making sure they could continue on in the ministry.

As believers we're to get behind godly ministry and ministers; those who look *to* God, and trust *in* God should be supported by the people *of* God. In more than one place Paul speaks of not muzzling the ox while it treads out grain, which is the Lord's way of saying, "Don't starve the people laboring in the Lord for you, keep them in supply so they can minister efficiently and effectively." He said, "*If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?*" 1 Cor 9:11 You're not going to out give God, Jesus said, "*Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*" Luke 6:38 Now you're free to sow sparingly and reap sparingly, or you're free to bountifully and to reap bountifully.

Of course I realize that there are those who've twisted and perverted those principles for their own gain and I'm sorry for that. But the bible says what the bible says and I'm not sorry for that. God desires that we be generous, I heard somewhere that we should rarely resist a generous impulse. God is a giver and as such He desires us to be givers as well, and when God sees that He can entrust someone to be a funnel as opposed to a reservoir He starts pouring it in, so that it might be poured out; it's simply what the bible teaches.

We're to get behind and stand in support of right on ministries; of course it starts in your home church; that's where the tithe comes, to the storehouse, beyond that if you want to make an offering that's great, if you want to use your offering to support other missions or ministries that's great, but as the people of God we're to stand behind the work of God to the glory of God. In so doing we become fellow workers for the truth; notice.

Vs8

Here's what that means. You may not be a missionary, or a preacher, or an evangelist, but God has ordained that should you supply them, should you support them, you'll share in their reward. You're making an investment and a portion of that return will be accredited to you throughout eternity. Think of the thousands of souls Billy Graham led to Christ, if you invested into his ministry, you'll have part in that reward, that's what this is teaching. Check out 1 Samuel Ch 30 sometime, you'll discover that whether you were on the frontlines, or you were staying with the supplies you would share equally in the spoils of war. You may not be on the frontlines (so to speak) but if you're keeping the supply of the combatants, you'll share equally in the spoil; isn't that encouraging?

Vs9-10

This guy was a real piece of work wasn't he? He would either rule you, or he would ruin you, of course pride was his primary problem. It would seem as though Gaius was in his church and John says, "I wrote to the church but you never seen that letter because Diotrephes wouldn't let the people hear what I wrote." He resisted the authority of the apostle John, he loved the preeminence, loved to be seen as the person in power, 1st in line; always in the limelight.

So what he didn't do #1 was receive John's authority, what he did do #2 is spread slander and gossip about him and those associated with him, "Prating against us with malicious words." Now can I say something about gossip real quick? It takes more than one railing to create gossip, it takes another receiving to complete the transaction. We're not to receive accusations against church leaders with out the criteria of 1 Tim 5:19 being met (2 or 3 witnesses). Proverbs 26 declares that where there's no wood fire will cease; and where there's no talebearer (or gossip) strife will cease. In order for there to be fire there needs to be a flammable substance; the question is will you ignite under the spark of gossip? Or is it quenched when it seeks to find you?

Diotrephes wielded his authority like a sword; his way or the highway, it wasn't enough for him to forbid people, if anyone else wanted to house them he kicked them out of the church. John says here...

Vs11

Here's the bottom line, you do the good and godly thing and let the chips fall where they may. Don't be intimidated by the "Diotrephes" of this world. Those who make themselves out to be something; they're nothing, God is no respecter of persons (Gal 2:6). You just honor God and trust that God will honor you.

Vs12

Demetrius was probably carrying the letter and John says, "Hey, don't worry about Diotrephes, I'll deal with him, you just keep ministering to those who are proven to be of the truth. Demetrius is of that company, he has a good testimony from everyone who knows him, his life accords with the scripture and I'll stand to vouch for that personally." Again an awesome thing to have spoken of you...

Vs13-14

John realizes face to face is better than email, or texting or whatever, there's no personality to text, but when you see my face and hear the tone of my voice it can make all the difference, you see my heart, it's not subject to personal interpretation at that point. Be careful addressing serious issues via pen and ink, whenever possible it's always best to meet face to face.

John ends this letter dealing with contention and conflict with a word of comfort; "Peace to you." Imitate that which is good, be faithful with that which God has committed to your trust and despite conflict receive the peace of God that passes understanding in Jesus Christ

Prayer points:

God help us to stand for the truth; and be faithful to that which You've committed to our trust regardless of what may come of it. We ask that Your peace would safeguard our hearts and our minds, that we would learn to trust in You with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding. God give us hearts of hospitality and generosity; that we might rightly reflect You and Your heart both to one another and the world around us to the glory of Your name.

Before we close let me ask you a question. How's your soul fairing today? Is your soul enjoying prosperity, or is it in poverty? If you're existing in spiritual bankruptcy you need to know that your debt has been paid and your slate can be wiped clean today. Jesus paid your debt when He hung on the cross and shed His blood; and the moment He rose from the dead you were justified through faith in Him. God is willing to see me just as if I'd never sinned in Christ; how does that sound? Forgiveness of sin, newness of life can be yours in Christ today; I trust you're here because you're open to all this being real; if you want to find out, give your heart to Christ and you'll never be the same in Jesus name!