



# 3 John

## Leading in Love and Truth!

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Message #1 of 1 – S722

Sermon given on January 15, 2017



Sunday Morning Service

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### Opening Comments

- Turn to **3 John**
- The Bible teaches that Jesus is the ‘head’ of the church **Colossians 1:18**

**He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

- That means He is the highest authority and that in all things the church is to submit to Him
- It would be very spiritual of me to stand up here and say to you that Jesus is leading this church
- But saying it doesn’t make it true
- Jesus chooses to lead through humans, as imperfect as they are
- God help me, I am trying to yield my heart, mind, soul, and body to Christ so that He is leading through me
- Sadly, I don’t do that perfectly, I wish I did
- The strength, health, and testimony of the church depends upon the leaders of that church yielding to Christ
- And when a leader in the church or in a ministry makes a mistake, people are hurt
- And if a leader refuses to humble himself before the Lord, the whole church can suffer
- The Apostle John is going to address that very issue today
- Let’s pray now and then get into our text
- **Pray**

### Teaching

- **Leading in Love and Truth!**
- In the original language 3 John is the shortest book in the NT
- John will identify three men by name
- Two of those names also appear in other parts of Scripture
- But the letter is so short that it is impossible to say with any certainty that they are the same guys

- It is also impossible to say where this church is located, though most commentaries believe it was in Asia Minor – modern-day Turkey
- We have referred to the Apostle John as the apostle of love because he teaches more about love than any of the other New Testament writers
- But he and his brother were also given the nickname ‘sons of thunder’ after they asked Jesus if they should call down the fire of God upon a Samaritan village for not receiving Jesus
- Today we get to see a little of the ‘son of thunder’ side of John
- But first – a man is presented to us that John loves
- Our first man is an **Encourager**
- **3 John 1-4**
- John opens on a positive note with a prayer for this man that he loves in truth
- To love in truth = to love in accordance to the Word of Truth, the Scriptures, the Bible
- John’s prayer is interesting – for prosperity and health
- Some suggest that means that Gaius is struggling financially and is in poor health
- I don’t think so, because John is going to ask him to do something that assumes that Gaius is in good health and is financially secure
- Instead, I believe this is a testimony of Gaius’ great faith
- John’s prayer is that God blesses Gaius with prosperity and health in comparison to his great faith
- I wonder how many people would be terrified by the idea of John praying that for them
- What if your finances matched the richness of your faith, and your health was equal to the health of your soul – scary thought
- Reports were getting back to John about what Gaius was doing to those who were traveling between Gaius and John
- **3 John 5-7**
- These are the traveling prophets and preachers of the gospel who were fairly common during this time
- In 1 John and 2 John He warned about false teachers
- But some men were being faithful to the gospel message

- And whenever they showed up in Gaius' town, he welcomed them, helped them, and provided for them to continue their journey
- Gaius had strong gifts of hospitality and generosity
- Jesus made a promise to people who receive God's messengers

### **Matthew 10:41-42**

**He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.**

- Exactly what that reward is cannot be known for certain, but John says that Gaius is worthy of it
- John then makes a general exhortation that applies to all believers

### • **3 John 8**

- Not everyone is called to go out and preach the gospel
- Some are called to support those who are called to go out **Galatians 6:6**

**Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.**

- John says that by doing that, we 'become fellow workers'
- You may not be able to nor are called to go out to the mission fields of the world, but if you support someone who does, you are becoming a partner in the work that they do
- If you give to this church financially, you are participating in the work
- Or if you are involved in ministry, serving somewhere in the church, you are sharing in all the work that is getting done
- Whether you give of your time, talents, or treasures, you are helping the gospel message to go forth, and God notices
- John is praising Gaius for helping these traveling ministers to continue their journey of faith

**All believers are on a journey to heaven, and we all ought to be helping one another any way we can to move forward.**

- Gaius is an encourager – helping people on their journey of faith
- Now we come to our second character – **The Egotist**

### • **3 John 9**

- John had written previously to the church that Gaius was a part of, but this man Diotrophes rejected John's authority

- This man has an ego problem
  - He is in some position of authority within this local church, but rejects the Apostle John's authority
  - He seems to have taken on the place of the final authority in this church
  - He wants the 'preeminence' = to have the highest rank or position
  - He has forgotten what Paul wrote about who is to have preeminence in the church and in our hearts **Colossians 1:18**
- He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**
- The reality is, if Christ is not preeminent in my heart, I will be
  - John then tells us what he was doing
  - **3 John 10**
  - John says I'll deal with him when I get there
  - 'prating against' = talking nonsense or gossiping
  - Not only that but he refuses to receive the traveling prophets and gospel preachers
  - Probably so that his will be the only voice heard from the pulpit
  - In this church, you will notice that I don't teach every Sunday
  - I believe I am called to be the primary Bible teacher, but I am not the only one
  - I periodically step away and ask someone else to teach
  - Often it is someone from within the church like Pastor Randy, or I will invite someone from outside
  - I am going to be bold and challenge you to examine your heart
  - Attendance typically dips when someone other than me teaches here
  - Frankly, I believe that is similar to what Diotrephes did – 'did not receive the brethren'
  - In the same way that I cannot be the only voice heard from this pulpit, mine cannot be the only voice that you will receive from this pulpit
  - Diotrephes went so far as to kick anyone out of the church who would receive these traveling teachers
  - That was not right
  - **3 John 11**

- John told Gaius to keep receiving the traveling ministers, which would put him at odds with Diotrephes
- Doing the right thing is always the right thing to do
- Even when it means you are going against the flow
- Diotrephes was a very influential man in the church, possibly one of the elders
- John is saying that his behavior is not right, it is evil, don't imitate him
- Imitate what is good, because all good is from God
- John then briefly mentions our third character – **The Example**

- **3 John 12**

- It is believed that Demetrius is the man who carried this letter from John to Gaius
- If you need an example to follow, here is a good one – Paul said **Philippians 3:17**

**Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.**

- Paul freely admitted that he wasn't perfect, but he was striving to live a life that pleased God
- And his faith was such that he felt confident that his life was worthy of imitating
- This is one of the goals of my life, that my life would be one that anyone could imitate and grow in their faith
- I believe this should be the goal of every Christian
- John closes this letter similar to his closing of 2 John

- **3 John 13-14**

- Even though John is writing in the authority of an apostle of Jesus, he considers these people his friends
- All three men mentioned in this letter were leaders in some way within the church
- He is writing because there is a problem in the leadership – that's why he calls for 'Peace to you.'
- One of the leaders is behaving badly, another is being encouraged to keep up the good work, and the third is being exhorted to be a good example
- We live in a time and culture where leadership in the world is wanting

- We have an innate distrust of those in leadership in the world
- Accusations of corruption and misconduct are regularly making headlines
- And sadly, the church is not immune to those kinds of accusations
- Turn to **John 15**
- But I would say that most churches are trying to faithfully serve God and spread the gospel
- But because even good churches are filled with people, personalities conflict and hurtful circumstances happen
- And so I think it is good to remind ourselves of some things about who we are as Christians
- As Christians we are children of God, we are family – brothers and sisters in Christ
- We are commanded to love one another **John 15:12**
- Jesus calls us His friends **John 15:13-15**
- Friends of Jesus are to be friends to one another
- The Bible also teaches us that we are all equal
- While some may be called to roles of leadership, it doesn't make them better or more important
- In my almost fifteen years as a pastor, Kelly and I have had to endure some very painful experiences, often at the hands of those we call 'friends'
- And we are not alone, anyone who steps forward to lead in God's church will eventually feel the pain of betrayal, false accusation, and abandonment
- I would like to leave you with three quick things we all ought to do when a conflict with a Christian leader arises
- First – **Let them be human**
- The church has only one perfect leader – Christ
- All the rest of them are imperfect beings, working out their salvation just like you
- Don't be surprised when they make mistakes, or do or say something they shouldn't
- Second – **Give them the benefit of the doubt**

- Over the years people have left the church because they believed something happened that didn't happen
- Or over a misunderstanding
- Give them the benefit of the doubt and find out what the truth is before you make a decision
- Third – **Stand with them, not against them**
- One of the greatest tools the Devil uses within the church is division
- Nothing hinders the gospel within a church like division
- That is why our expectation of the elders of this church is absolute unity in public
- Disagreement is not to be expressed publicly, should be brought to the leader privately and biblically
- The church is a group of imperfect people attempting to grow in their faith, trying to be a blessing to others, and all for the glory of God
- And to do that we need to learn to love God and each other
- And as we learn to do that, the world sees that love will know that there is a God in heaven that loves them too, and wants them to be with Him forever
- Amen