

The Faithfulness of God's Man

3 John 1:1-8

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This week and next we are going to look at the last of John's letters, 3 John. It is a very short letter. In fact we will be reading the entire letter in a few minutes this morning.

This is an extremely personal letter. John mentions three people in this letter, Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius, making it his most personal. In fact, it is so personal one might wonder how it can actually apply to us. Well, the answer to that will become clear as the message unfolds.

Now it is almost necessary to read 2 John and 3 John together. Unfortunately we don't have time to do that over a 2-week period of time, so I will bring you up to speed on 2 John as an introduction to 3 John.

Like 2 John, 3 John is a very short letter. A similar problem is identified in both letters, namely the visits of itinerant teachers and how they were to be treated. Both letters are concerned with Christian truth and love and with their relation to hospitality.

There are differences, however.

In the second letter John writes to a local church where as in the third letter he addresses by name one of the members of a local church, and refers to two others.

The message differs also. In 2 John the church is warned not to extend hospitality to false teachers who deny the doctrine of the incarnation, while in 3 John a member is commended for the hospitality he has shown to teachers of the truth, and is urged to continue it.

John then sharply rebukes another member for his refusal to welcome them and for his opposition to those who wished to do so. In this way the positive encouragement of the third letter is opposite the more negative tone of the second.

In the ancient world hospitality was a necessity. You didn't have all of the hotels we have today for people to stay. People were largely dependent upon somebody opening their home to them.

As the church expanded and moved and grew, and went from city to city, believers began to move and travel and itinerant preachers did the same. They had to be embraced by the believers as well who were in every city and be given a home and a place to rest along with food and support.

This reality is behind both 2 John and 3 John.

In 2 John, the church is warned to be very careful who they welcome in. Hospitality is a form of Christian love. We are called, to love Christians in a unique and special way.

But we have to be very careful. Why? Well it all came down to verse 7 and following in 2 John.

"Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, or for that matter any other heresy. This is the deceiver and the antichrist." 8, "Watch yourselves that you might not lose what we've accomplished but that you may receive full reward. Anyone who goes too far doesn't abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. The one who abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you, does not bring the teaching that is the true teaching of the gospel, the fullness of the truth revealed in Scripture, do not receive him into your house and do not give him a greeting. For the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds."

The Didache', the first century church manual per se, shows that early Christian hospitality was sometimes abused. Instructions are given that:

- An itinerant preacher may not stay beyond one day or, "in case of necessity", two. If he stays three days he is a false prophet.
- On departing, he may receive enough food to last for his immediate journey.
- But if he asks for money he is a false prophet.
- It is recognized that true preachers have a right to stay and be supported, but an ordinary Christian traveler may not be entertained free for more than two or three days.
- If he wants to stay, he must work for his living. If he refuses to do this, he is "trading on Christ".

In 2 John and 3 John, truth and love are very closely linked.

In 2 John we are told who to keep out and in 3 John it is who to let in. But it is always based on TRUTH, not our own preferences.

2 John says if people coming in don't hold to the right doctrine (read truth), we have to shut the door a bit.

3 John says that those who DO teach the truth should be welcomed. It is based on truth.

Let's read this entire letter together.

1 The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

2 Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.

3 For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

5 Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, 6 who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.

7 For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.

8 Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

9 I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.

10 So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

11 Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

12 Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

13 I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink.

14 I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

15 Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name.

Verse 11 is the crux of the letter. That will become clear as we discuss this letter over this week and next.

This morning we will focus on verses one through eight.

We immediately see that John loved Gaius greatly, and so did others.

- In verses one and two **John** gives testimony of Gaius faithfulness.
- In verse three the **brothers/church** give testimony of Gaius faithfulness.
- In verse five those **itinerant Christians and preachers** give testimony of Gaius faithfulness.

So here we see Gaius is a man offering great hospitality to strangers.

- It is a faithful thing he is doing.
- He is supporting godly men and fellow workers.
- He is doing everything right in the area of offering proper hospitality.

But that is not the first thing John commends him for is it? No. John commends Gaius because he walks in the truth.

You see, we can do a lot of “ministry” things, but not be walking in the truth.

- We can be feeding the homeless, but not walking in the truth.
- We can be taking meals to those in our congregation who are in need, but not walking in the truth.
- We can be teaching ABE, children’s classes, or working in the nursery, but not walking in the truth.

John makes it clear here that Gaius is living out the truth, not simply doing stuff.

Truth is a huge theme as John talks about Gaius.

We see right away in verse one that the love that John has for Gaius is based in truth, or in Christ. He loves this dear brother in the Lord. And he immediately begins to pray for this man.

And in verse two it is an encouraging prayer. John prays that Gaius physical health would be as strong as his spiritual health. Gaius not only knew the truth, but he lived the truth.

As we have already seen, Gaius spiritual life was strong. The brothers, possibly some of those itinerant preachers, had made it clear to John that Gaius was indeed walking in the truth. What a fantastic thing to be able to say about another brother in Christ, that his spiritual health is so well that we would wish his physical health that good.

Then in verse 4 John adds this general comment. "I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my children are walking in the truth".

What a personal statement, "My children." Could it be that John is Gaius spiritual father?

I understand John's sentiment here. Here is a man who may have been 90 or more years old at the time he wrote this book. Certainly at that age, and even at my age, one would have experienced most all of the joys of life. Yet as I look back over my life over the past many decades, there really is no greater joy than to see those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, through God using me, growing in their faith and serving well.

That's what we are after in ministry here at the Chapel, that you know the truth, believe the truth and live the truth.

There should be a correlation between what you claim to believe and how your life is lived. What you profess, you also practice.

And it all begins with understanding and believing right doctrine, right theology, what John calls the truth.

And this may be a bit surprising to hear from this pulpit, but, as much as we value – no TREASURE the truth at Clearcreek Chapel, my greatest joy is not teaching the truth.

No, my greatest joy in ministry is to know that our people *understand* the truth, and then *walk* in the truth.

And now in verses five and six, John goes on to commend Gaius again. It is a faithful thing you do for these brothers and strangers. People you don't even know, you serve. And why? Because **they** were faithful to the truth.

- Gaius opened his home to them.
- Gaius shared his possessions with them.
- Gaius shared his life to them.

Jayne and I have friends today because we took opportunity to work shoulder-to-shoulder or house missionaries home on furlough. We didn't know them, but we wanted our children to hear the stories of God working in the lives of the lost all around the world. We wanted our children to hear and see the expressions on faces of these men and women who struggled through adversity for the name of Jesus.

Even though they were strangers to him, *he* was faithful, because *they* were faithful. And these to whom he was faithful, testified of his love before the church.

And then John adds this further counsel, "You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God."

So Gaius has done everything well. He has done all he could possibly do for these strangers and travelers. He has acted faithfully in whatever he had done for them.

But Gaius – there is more.

And his instruction is both ambiguous and yet all-encompassing at the same time, “send them on their journey in a **manner worthy of God.**”

“Send them on their journey” is a phrase in the early church for missionaries. These are missionaries. We understand that, don't we?

It implies receiving them, caring for them, meeting their needs, and then giving all that is required to send them on their way to accomplish their next objective in the next stage of their journey.

This was a real part of the early church, traveling preachers going everywhere proclaiming the gospel, planting churches, strengthening churches. And they had to be supported, they had to be cared for. They needed money and clothing and supplies.

And the standard is high - In a manner worthy of God implies that we give them our best.

This isn't what we always do though is it? Not with missions, and not within the mission of the local church.

- Pastor, Billy spilled grape juice on the carpet in our living room and Stanley Steamer couldn't get it out. So we replaced it with new carpet. I know the church nursery could use some new carpet as well, would you like the old carpet we just replace?
- An orphanage in Cambodia is in great need of clothing so we hold a clothing drive. Do we normally buy new clothes and donate them, or do we give them the old clothes we don't wear anymore?
- There is a food drive for the Gospel Mission. Do we go to the store and buy fresh food or do we clear off our shelves of the old canned yams and sardines?

We don't need to answer these questions aloud, but the haunting question remains, do we give in a manner worthy of God?

And why do we do this? Verse 7 answers that question, “For they have gone out for the sake of the name...”.

What name is John writing about? The name which is above every name, the name Jesus. The very center of the truth of the Gospel.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

11 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, 12 so that the **name** of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:16-16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the **name** of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Philippians 2:9-11

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the **name** that is above every name, 10 so that at the **name** of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1 Corinthians 6:9-12

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the **name** of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Why did the early church send these people out? The same reason we send missionaries, and each other out. Three reasons:

1. It is for the sake of the name, for the glory of God, to the honor of God. There is no higher calling.
2. They didn't take any money from the pagans, the heathen, the Gentiles. Not that there was anything wrong with taking money from pagans – the pagans simply would not have had any interest in supporting the Gospel. Verse 8 says, "Therefore we ought to support such men." They don't have any other support.
3. That we may be fellow workers for the truth. We can't all go, but we can all give.

Look at our missionaries.

- The world isn't going to support them
- They have gone out for the sake of the name
- They are faithful to the truth
- They are worthy of our support
- When we do support them, we become fellow workers in the truth with them

Now, there is a model for missions!

And so we meet Gaius - beloved by God, beloved by John, called that three times in a short little letter.

Loved, why? Because he lived his life in harmony with the truth which meant that he would love in the way that God wants us to love and **that** love would show up in hospitality to strangers who are also faithful to the truth. This is what it means to live in love and to walk in truth.

Conclusion

You know a couple times in this passage, John identified fellow believers as brothers.

And for those of us who are, knowing that we truly are brothers and sisters is incredibly special isn't it.

None of us are perfect, but good, bad, or ugly, we are brothers and sisters in the truth. We are in this for the long haul. We are in it together.

And apart from Jesus we cannot say that. Nothing else in the world does this. Only the almighty God does this when he comes and adopts people into his family.

And that is the truth that brings about love and service toward one another. It is the name of Jesus.

If it was not for that Name
If no one had told me
If no one had showed me
About the Name

Jesus, Name I call on
Rock I stand on
Jesus, God and Savior
King forever
In my joy and sorrow
Today, tomorrow
Jesus, Jesus
Name above all Names

If it was not for the cross
If it was not for the rugged cross
Who would pay so dearly
To forgive so freely
At the cross

Who would light my darkness
Who would lift my sadness
Who would pay so dearly
Jesus, Jesus

Jesus, Rock that breaks me
Jesus, heals, remakes me
Jesus, friend and brother
Jesus, Jesus

Jesus never fails me
Never will forsake me
Out of death has raised me
Jesus, Jesus

If it was not for this grace
Who would bear my sorrow
Give me back tomorrow
If it was not for that Name