

I. Walking in the Truth Brings Great Joy (v 4)

Are you walking in the truth of the Bible? Do you know it? Is your life characterized by faithfulness in the Lord's ways and are you joyfully obeying the Lord Jesus? The Apostle John in his third letter speaks of the witness of a local church that practices the truth (vv. 3-8). In v 4, he says "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

John commends the church in three ways:

1. John loves Gaius "in truth" (v 1).
2. The witness is that they walk in the truth (v 3).
3. They care for the brothers and they provide for traveling missionaries on their trips (vv. 5-8).

The Christian life walked in truth produces joy. Those who walk in the truth are a good witness on behalf of Jesus Christ. Works and fruit accompany their faith and are an outworking of it.

In the third letter of John, it seems that the elder, Gaius, is in charge of the church or at least occupies an important place in it. According to John's praise for him, by the grace of God he's done good work in that local congregation. He is faithful in caring for the missionaries who are taking the Gospel out to the pagan world. The church's walk in the truth brings great joy to the Apostle John.

The Scripture commands us to walk in the truth. Jesus himself said that he was "the way, the truth and the life," and that we would know the truth and that it would set us free. The result of walking with Christ is a Spirit-filled life in the believer that he or she uses to be part of a healthy, dynamic, evangelizing and growing church. A church that has a missionary zeal. A church that works faithfully and joyfully in all that it does. Walking in the truth brings great joy.

II. Because Not Walking in the Truth Results in Wickedness (vv. 9-10)

John warns of the danger of those who do not walk in the truth, are poor witnesses and are bad examples. It seems that Diotrephes, a member of the church didn't walk in truth and put himself in first place. John felt obligated to rebuke the brother who wasn't following the Lord and who was self-centered.

Our sinful human nature wants us to be first. One of the battles we have with the flesh is against the "I" or "me" in each one of us. Sometimes we don't think about others. Other times pride and arrogance make us think that we're better than others. Or we just have our own preferences and want to impose those on others. According to John, Diotrephes had a very high opinion of himself.

The Scriptures teaches us that all are sinners and we are all lost without Christ's light (Romans 3:23). And the Bible teaches us clearly the importance of thinking of others (Philippians 2:3-4; Romans 12:3). Paul says in Ephesians that we're saved by grace through faith and not by works, "so that no one can boast." And nobody has a right in the church to think that he is better than another since Jesus has given the Holy Spirit to every believer (1 Corinthians 12:4). That same Spirit gives us diversity of gifts and of ministries, but nobody is more important than anyone else. When God converts us he changes us so that we are servants in his kingdom. And we don't seek first place or the spotlight (see Mark 9:35; Luke 22:24-30; Romans 6:6).

What does John say that Diotrephes does?

1. He likes to put himself first and he does not acknowledge authority.
2. Talks "wicked nonsense."
3. Refuses to welcome the brothers (missionaries) and puts out of the church those who want to welcome the brothers.

These are evil acts (see v 11) which a disrupter in the church is committing, causing damage to the body of believers. Sadly, we don't have to look too far in the church to find these kinds of personalities. How many churches have split because of people like Diotrephes in them? How many churches disappear because of arguments and fights among Christians? How much selfishness remains in us, how often do we want to be in first place, and do we admit that to ourselves?

When we stray from walking in the truth, we stray from walking in the Light and we can do great harm to ourselves and others. Not walking in the truth results in wickedness.

III. And by Walking in the Truth We Imitate God (vv. 11-12)

Notice the contrast in v 11. John emphasizes the importance of obedience and of doing good and not evil. What contrasts does John make?

1. Imitate good, not evil.
2. Whoever does good is from God; whoever doesn't, doesn't know him.

The church overall seems to have a good testimony given to the courier, Demetrius (v 12). At Cristo Redentor we emphasize four responses to God's goodness to demonstrate that we are walking in the truth:

1. Reading the Bible
2. Prayer
3. Attendance on the Lord's Day
4. Service

Isn't it interesting that the Lord Jesus read the Bible, he prayed, he attended the synagogue and he served? When we walk in the truth, we imitate God. When we walk in the truth, we seek his will. When we walk in the truth, we put others ahead of ourselves. When we walk in the truth, we have a close fellowship with the Living God and seek to obey him in everything that we do.

IV. Are You Walking Joyfully in the Truth?

So the question is: are you walking joyfully in the truth? What type of example are you? What's your witness? Are you known as someone sincere, true, and trustworthy? Are you like the faithful members of the congregation, commended by John, or like Diotrephes?

How are we doing as a church? Are we walking in the truth? Do we imitate the Lord Jesus? We can ask ourselves these questions:

1. Do I love God's Word so that I read it on a regular basis?
2. Do I pray consistently and do I practice Christian meditation?
3. Do I attend regularly on the Lord's Day?
4. Do I serve and seek opportunities to assist others, especially those in need?

We have to walk in the truth. We must imitate good and not evil. We must walk joyfully and victoriously in the truth, even as we struggle to overcome our sin by God's help. How do we do this? By looking to the Lord Jesus Christ who blesses us abundantly with the riches of his grace and mercy. He is the example par excellence that we follow by means of his word and a personal relationship with him. Do you want to walk joyfully in the truth? Follow Christ. Only in him will you overcome this world in order to walk in the truth.