

Scripture Reference: 3 John

Date: July 13, 2014

Title: "A Tale of Three Men"

Focus: What living the eternal life looks like, and doesn't (John Series 7 of 7)

This letter was prompted by the visit of Demetrius to a local congregation. When he arrived, he was well received by some, others, led by Diotrephes, treated him poorly.

Keeping with the issue found in his first and second letters, John challenges the actions of Diotrephes and encourages Gaius and the others who "walk in truth."

### **vv. 1-4; Opening**

Following a short greeting, John gets to the purpose of his letter. John was blessed when he heard Gaius and others were living in a manner consistent with the truth revealed by Jesus' life.

*vv. 3-4; "I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth."*

John understood that God calls those who affiliate themselves with Him to live in a manner consistent with the life seen in Jesus.

Jesus stated; "I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do; because I go to the Father." (John 14:12)

Paul reminded his readers, "*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*" (Phil. 2:5-7)

Jesus revealed the character of God in His person. So too will those who live after the pattern seen in Jesus.

1 Peter 1:14-16; "*do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'*"

As all who follow Jesus know, this endeavor is not easy. What may not be realized is that it was not intended to be so.

Living in truth requires effort. However, God promises His leading and grace to be able to live in truth. (i.e. Phil. 2:13; 2 Cor. 12:9)

## **vv. 5-8; John's Joy**

John was joyful over how some of the people in this congregation treated Demetrius when he came to their fellowship.

John reminds them believers have a responsibility to treat others *as God would* (v. 6), whether these people are friends or strangers.

Living in truth entails how the disciple treats others as much as how a person interacts with God.

Matt. 22:34-40; *“When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.’”*

The one who claims to follow God, to possess the life of God within, but yet does not treat others as God would, contradicts his claim. (Matt. 18:21-35; James 2:15-17; 1 John 4:20)

## **vv. 9-12; John’s Disappointment**

Treated people in a ungodly manner was the case with Diotrephes. He refused to help Demetrius and punished those in the congregation who wanted to.

John lists four things Diotrephes did:

1. He “unjustly accused]” John and others.

2. Called John's character and actions into question with “wicked words.”

3. Diotrephes personally did not show grace and kindness to others.

4. He “put . . . out of the fellowship” those who tried to welcome Demetrius.

Have we witnessed such actions by people who claim to be followers of Jesus?

It cannot be ignored when *godly* people act in *ungodly* ways.

God has told us those actions which do not emanate from Him, but instead are the result of the spirit of man.

*Gal 5:19-21; "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

John did not say these people were not believers. He stated these traits are not consistent with living in the truth. They must be challenged in us personally and in the lives of those who say they are following Jesus. (1 John 5:16)

Believers have a responsibility to one another to challenge the lies we sometimes live in order that we would live in the truth.

This is accountability. But, we are to do this gently and with love. (Gal. 6:1-2)

## **vv. 13-15 - Closing**

As with 2 John, there were other matters John wanted to discuss. I'm sure they were not all bad. However, this matter was the most important.

There are many things that take place in the lives and relationships of God's people. We can be distracted from the important one by spending a lot of time disputing over minor matters.

It was John's love and concern for these fellow believers that moved him to action.

## **The Last 18 Inches**

Do you and I care enough to bring up the issue about whether we or others who claim to be disciples of Jesus are walking in truth ?

Is the consistency of Jesus life (truth) in us or others important?

John cared more for the truth that God made known and the people who said they were children of God than he did for hurt feelings or awkward moments.

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