Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Friends and Foes in the Church, Part 1
Scripture: 3 John 1-8
Code: 64-1

As I mentioned this morning and last week, we're going to look at the last of John's epistles, the third epistle of John...the third epistle of John. The wonderful, wonderful brief book. In fact, let me read it to you. Rarely do I have the opportunity to read an entire book of the Bible, but I want you to catch the flow.

"The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness 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. Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers. And they bear witness to your love before the church and you will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God, for they went out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men that we may be fellow workers with the truth. I wrote something to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God, the one who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we also bear witness, and you know that our witness is true. I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; but I hope top see you shortly and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name."

Personal, isn't it? Very personal. Gaius, Diotrephes, Demetrius, friends...this is John's most personal letter. In fact, it is so personal one might wonder why it ended up in the canon of Scripture. And the answer to that becomes clear once the message unfolds. Again you can see the emphasis here on the truth, some form of the word true appears seven times. Everything in the church is always built on the truth...always. John loves in truth. He affirms the importance of bearing witness to truth, of walking in truth, of being fellow workers with the truth, of receiving a good testimony from the truth. At the foundation of everything in the church is the truth. That was our emphasis in the second letter and it certainly spills over here. This is about how to live and love in the truth.

Now as I told you when we studied 2 John, in the ancient world hospitality was a necessity. You didn't have all of the fancy hotels and motels and inns and resorts that we have today for people to stay in in the lap of one level of luxury or another. People were largely dependent upon somebody opening their home to them. On the day of Pentecost, you remember, there were all kinds of pilgrims in Jerusalem who had come to celebrate the Passover. They stayed through Pentecost. When Peter preached, three thousand of them were saved. Three thousand of them then brought into the church of Jesus Christ and that was the only church that existed on planet earth at that time, the only and only. They didn't want to go back to where they came from because they now were a part of the body of Christ and the only place they could meet and fellowship was there with the Apostles in Jerusalem. And so the church there, those that had come to Christ prior to the day of Pentecost, the 120 in the upper room, and those who came to Christ on the day of Pentecost had to absorb all those believers and care for them and meet their needs. That's why later on the Apostle Paul took a collection in order help the church support the strangers who never went back to where they came from because there new reason to live was singularly located in Jerusalem.

And from then on, as the church expanded and moved and grew, and went from city to city and town to town and place to place, believers began to move and travel and itinerant preachers did the same. And they had to be embraced by the believers as well who were in every locale and be given a home and a place to rest and food and support.

This wasn't really anything completely new in the ancient world. Hospitality was really a duty even in the secular side. Strangers were supposedly under the protection of Zeus Xenios who was known as the god of strangers... *xenos*means stranger. And the ancient world understood that there was a deity in their own mind that was sort of a sign to take care of strangers. And if they wanted to have that deity on their side and not against them, they needed to be kind to strangers. The ancient world even had a system of guest friendships, whereby families in different parts of the country undertook to give each other's members hospitality in their parts of the country when they traveled. It was reciprocal. People carried what was called a "Sumbalon(?)," they carried a token to identify themselves to their hosts. The host would know the token that belonged to him and open up his home to show hospitality. If the heathen did that, if the pagans did that, how much more importantly should the Christians do that? And that is why when you look at the New Testament, you see this emphasis on hospitality. First Peter 4:9, "Be hospitable to one another without complaint." The Greek word for hospitality is love of strangers, love of strangers. It's just basic to the Christian responsibility to open up our home to those we don't know, particularly other believers who are strangers to us.

In Romans 12:13 it says, "We are to be practicing hospitality." In 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 2, you have the qualifications for an elder and the qualifications for an elder include this very directive. "You are to be an overseer above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent,

respectable, hospitable." And in Titus 1:8 it says the same thing. They are to be hospitable.

Elders, pastors, shepherds needed to be the first to open their homes and embrace strangers in order to set the pace for everybody else. This was a basic responsibility, a basic expression of Christian love. In fact, in the early church, the home was the center of everything, absolutely everything. As you read the New Testament you don't find any church buildings. You finish the New Testament and there hasn't been a church building built. They met in homes for prayer. They met in homes for fellowship. They met in homes for teaching. They met in homes for evangelism. They met in homes to break bread and to have the Lord's supper. They met in homes to worship. They met in homes for personal discipleship. They even met in homes for preaching. They met in home for discussion and dialogue. Everything happened in the home. And so the home was the church, the place where they gathered and so it was very natural for them to open their homes to the traveling believers who came their way, even though they didn't know them.

This is behind both 2 John and 3 John, this reality...this reality. And as we learned in 2 John, you have to be very careful who you welcome in. Remember? Very careful. And again the truth is the essential ground on which your hospitality is built. Hospitality is a form of Christian love. We are called to Christian love, to love other Christians in a unique and special and embracing way. But we have to be very careful. Why? Well it all came down, didn't it, 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." Verse 8, "Watch yourselves that you might not lose what we've accomplished but that you may receive a 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. Fo the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds." Pretty serious.

So we saw the restraint, the constraint, the limitation put upon Christian love and hospitality. And the limitation comes in regard to a false teacher. It doesn't mean you shouldn't let an unconverted person in your home. You are not, however, to harbor a false teacher. Your love does not go to that extent even though he may claim Christ, he may claim Christianity, he may claim to be a brother or sister.

That theme then is continued in 3 John...in 3 John. Second John is sort of the negative, who not to receive. Third John is the positive, who to receive. And so together we get a great insight into how we deal with those who say they represent Christ and who come to us for support and help and need. There are some we reject, there are some we accept.

Now another way to look at 3 John is to look at it in comparison to not only 2 John but 1 John. First John was written generally to the whole church. It was generally written to all Christians telling them how they could test the validity of their faith, how they could be sure they were saved. And the tests were given, doctrinal tests, and moral tests. John pictures that on the broadest scale in his first epistle, written to all believers. The second epistle narrows the audience and it's written to a family...a family in the church. The family is identified as the chosen lady and her children, and the children of her chosen sister also mentioned in the last verse. So the first epistle is broad and general to all the family of God. The second epistle is to a family. And the third epistle is to an individual, to the beloved Gaius. The second epistle calls for families to be loyal to the truth. The third epistle calls for individuals to be loyal to the truth.

In 2 John and 3 John, truth and love are always related, always. Hospitality is limited. It is limited to those who are in the truth. And here in 3 John we further see those who are in the truth are not to be forbidden to have that hospitality. But you were there when I read it, "Diotrephes, he forbids people who desire to help those who represent the truth and he puts them out of the church."

This is unacceptable. This is evil. The third letter is also more personal. First John has no personal references at all to anyone. Second John has an anonymous personal reference, to the chosen lady and her children, and her sister and her children. Third John is totally personal. For the first time in his epistles, actual people, Gaius, Diotrephes, Demetrius. So John starting at the widest level, speaking to all believers, narrows it down to a family and then to a man. And the themes are always the same, truth and love. In the general epistle, truth and love, sound doctrine and love are what define a true believer. In the second epistle, sound doctrine is the essential for showing love. And in the third epistle where someone is sound, that love is to be shown and never ever withheld.

Now the third epistle is easy to outline. You just outline it by the three people: Gaius, the one who gave hospitality, Diotrephes, the one who refused hospitality, and Demetrius, the one who is to receive hospitality. John oversaw the church at Ephesus and probably had oversight over daughter churches that had literally been founded out of the church at Ephesus. John was, of course, the last living Apostle. You're now in the last decade of that first century, A.D. And though he is an Apostle and though they aren't many years from the very life of Christ and although he's a eyewitness to all of the events of the life of Christ, he has problems. Somewhat comforting. He is a pastor of pastors, an Apostle, and yet he has to deal with people in the church who make life in the church difficult. Some too loving, too embracing, some too harsh, too narrow, to unkind and in the second epistle he dealt with the one who was too inclusive, and too embracing, and too tenderhearted and too compassionate, too hospitable, threatened to open the arms of the church, let antichrist in. Here he's going to deal with one who is the very opposite. That's what you struggle with in the church.

You know, when you try to build the ministry on truth, when you try to found everything on truth, you always get people who whether it's because of their sentimentality, whether it's because they are

generally compassionate people, or whether it's because their lack of discernment, or whatever, they always want to kick the door wider than it should be and let people in that shouldn't be let in. And there are those of us who always want to make sure we're there to close the door when it needs to be closed. And we become sort of the bad guys. We're the ones who are accused of being unloving.

And then on the other hand, you have those narrow-minded, self-important, loving to have the preeminence kind of people who want to make the thing so narrow that only the things and the people that they approve of can be accepted. I mean, it either goes one way or the other. And as I said, it's comforting to know that even the Apostle John had trouble in the church. And those at least are two of the extremes we have to deal with. We are called to love, it's in our hearts to love, the love of Christ is shed abroad there. We want to extend that love and there's always that temptation by those who are committed to that love to be too embracing and the temptation by those who are so strongly committed to doctrine to be too narrow. And so we come to this balance.

Well, for tonight, let me see if we can get a little ways into 3 John. And we'll take the first point, Gaius, the one who gave hospitality...Gaius, the one who gave hospitality. "The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth."

The letter, as I said, is from John the Apostle to Gaius, a member of a local church somewhere in Asia Minor, modern Turkey. John is probably writing from Ephesus which was the mother church for that region. And he starts out in a very typical traditional normal sort of letter pattern. They didn't do it the way we do it today. I get a letter and it says, "Dear John," I know that and I always have to go to the bottom before I go anywhere else and find out who it's from. It's really backwards. It should be like a phone call, "Hello, this is Bill," that's very helpful, is it not? You wouldn't want to have a phone conversation with somebody who didn't tell you who they were until the end because you would have such a guarded approach to the conversation, not wanting to say anything that was offensive or revealing.

But they did it right in those days. The elder, who needed no further definition. Everybody in that part of the world and certainly Gaius knew who he was, John, the elder, as he calls himself also in 2 John. Literally means "the old man." Perhaps it is a reference to his age. He was aged at this time. It could also well be that he was assigned that title, elder, in the church at Ephesus, although he more than likely would have been called an Apostle. He is the old Apostle, is who he is and everybody knows him. He's the only one still alive. So it's me, he says, the old Apostle, to the beloved Gaius.

That's a pretty typical way to start a letter in ancient days. Now just who is Gaius? Wish I could tell you. There are a number of men named Gaius in the New Testament. There is Gaius of Corinth who was the host of Paul and of the church in Corinth. That's not this Gaius. There was Gaius of Macedonia who was one of Paul's companions who suffered in the riot at Ephesus. And then there

was Gaius of a town called Derbe, who traveled with Paul on his last missionary tour. These are not the Gaius being addressed here. Gaius, I found out, was one of the most common of all names in the Roman Empire. It's like going to Russia and having somebody be introduced to you as Alexi. There are only about eight male names in Russia. Gaius was a very common name and there's no way to identify this man in particular.

He was some leader in the church, some important man in the church. And visiting evangelists and visiting preachers had stayed with him and he was highly respected and beloved, no doubt, by all who knew him. And that's why he is addressed this way, "The elder to the beloved Gaius," and the beloved, *agapetos*from *agapao*, the noblest kind of love. This simply identifies his familiar character. Everybody loved him. He was loved by the community. He was the beloved Gaius. He was a man of love. He was not only loved by the community, but he was loved by who else? By God. And as John had addressed the lady to whom he wrote his second letter, as the chosen lady, he addresses this as the beloved Gaius. And all who are Christ's are both chosen and beloved, is that not true? Colossians 3:12 says that Christians are the elect of God, holy and beloved. So John while he certainly could be referring to the man's well-known character as a loving man, is also pointing out that he belongs to God in Christ and therefore is the beloved of Christ. He is beloved of the Lord, as the lady was elect of the Lord. And so, this identifies him as a saint, as a believer, beloved.

But he was not just loved by the Lord and also we could add by the community of believers, he was loved by John because John adds immediately in verse 1, "Whom I love," but he qualifies it, in...what?...in truth...in truth. You see, the truth was the sphere in which their love existed. I really do understand that. I really do understand that. You bring somebody into my life that has the same passion and devotion to the truth, and I find myself irresistibly drawn to their well-being and their fellowship. You bring someone into my life and try as I may, if they do not affirm and hold to the truth of the gospel, if they deviate somewhere from the truth of God, it's like turning the magnet around. There's something that pushes me away. I can go anywhere in the world and find strangers that I've never met but if they love the truth, there is a bond, there is a magnetism that draws us together with a divine force. Love and truth are inseparable. And love is built upon truth. Truth always governs the exercise of love. That's why truth is spoken of in verse 1, 3, 4, 8, 12. They were both in the truth.

Now we are to love all people in the world in an evangelistic way, we are to love them in the sense that we care about their souls the way God loves the world. But that's not what we're talking about. We're talking here about a love that is unique to those who are in Christ and in the truth. A special love, a unique bond, a family love among Christians. And if you deviate from the truth, try as I may, I find myself being pushed away from you. I don't know if any of you saw that article in the L.A.Times about Fuller Seminary, started many years ago by Charles E. Fuller and the Fuller Evangelistic Association. It was in the Times today with the Fuller Seminary was announcing that they have received a one million dollar grant from the Federal Government which they initiated in order to bring

about a conciliation with Islam, since they worship the same God. They have abandoned the truth. The God of Islam is not the God of the Bible. The God of Islam is Satan. They have made a deal with the devil. This is Faust revisited. They have made a deal with the devil. And they have agreed over a two-year period not to evangelize Muslims. And so they have abandoned the Great Commission in their deal with the devil.

You know, I'm always glad when institutions or people who think that way make it public because it removes any doubt about the direction. I don't rejoice in that, I grieve in that. But I find myself pushed hard away when someone abandons the truth. No matter what I say, I'll be accused of being unloving. And the truth of the matter is, at that point by this definition of love, I am unloving because I am constrained not to love outside the bounds of the truth. And so John loved in the truth. This is the tone that he sets at the beginning of the letter. I love in truth.

So the introduction of Gaius. And then comes the concern. "Beloved," and I love that, he already called him beloved Gaius but he was talking about his belonging to God, his being loved by God. If you will, his election, his being chosen, his being predestined, his being justified. He was talking about the relationship that he had as the beloved of the Lord. Now he's talking personally and he says, "I love in the truth," and then he says, "Beloved," and it's personal. And then in verse 5 he says it again, "Beloved," and then in verse 11 he says it again, "Beloved." I like that.

John is often called the Apostle of love, he was once the son of Thunder, praying judgment down on people's heads. He's become the Apostle of love, and here's a perfect illustration of it. He can't stop saying "beloved" when he talks in this letter to this man Gaius. He loved him. And what it tells me is Gaius was committed to the truth because John was committed to the truth. Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers."

That's a wonderful sentiment. That is a wonderful sentiment, isn't it? A great way to begin a letter. Something you ought to do. I mean, it's a wish for physical health. I want you to prosper. That is a word that refers to a state of well being, condition of well being. And by the way, that statement "that you may prosper and be in good health" is found in a lot of ancient letters frequently. It doesn't necessarily mean that Gaius was ill, it was just a well wishing. It's like we say, "I hope you're feeling well." A gentleman came to me this morning from Ireland, and he said, "Are you well?" And I said, "I'm well." And he was really saying to me, "I pray that you're in good health just as your soul prospers." That's a gracious and kind affirmation of one's concern for well being. He is talking about his physical well being. He wants the physical health of Gaius to match his spiritual well being. And so he says, "In all respects, across the board, in everything..." and this is used only here and in Romans 1:10 and once, I think, in 1 Corinthians. I just want in everything that you would prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. This is the greatest insight we could have in to Gaius, he has a prosperous soul. He has...the word prosper can mean successful, he has a successful spiritual life.

That's the idea. He has a successful spiritual life. He's flourishing spiritually. It is the same term used in Titus 1:13 translated "sound in the faith, healthy." He has spiritual health. And John says, "I would wish that your physical health would be as good as your spiritual health." That's a good prayer. We pray that the spiritual health of someone would be good, but I think we pray much, much often that the physical health would be good, don't we? Don't we more often pray about people's physical ills than we do about their spiritual health?

Well the inner life of Gaius was strong and robust and prospering. And John had heard about it, knew about it, knew him. And he wishes the same blessing for his physical life. And that does lead me to say that God is concerned about physical health, he really is. If you're going to be engaged in effective ministry, you've got to take care of yourself. Food is important that's why God gave laws to the people of Israel in the Old Testament to keep them from diseases. He told them how to eat, what not to eat in order not to expose themselves to things that would take away their health. Even care of the body is important in the New Testament. First Timothy chapter 5, Paul is concerned about Timothy's health. No longer drink water, he says, don't be drinking water. Why? They didn't have any way to purify the water in those days. Everything lived in the water, every imaginable bacteria lived in the water. And water was very dangerous. One of the things that they did in order to prevent the kinds of things that came from bad water was to mix it with wine and wine fermented becomes alcohol and alcohol mixed with water purifies the water. And when they drank wine in those days, in Bible times, it was diluted wine, sometimes as many as eight to one with water, somewhere between five to one, to eight to one with water. You couldn't just drink the water, and if you're out in the middle of the day and it was a 110 degrees and you're working in a field, and you were trying to replenish the fluid in your body, if all you could drink was wine, it was complete wine, just the fruit of the grape, you'd be drunk in an hour. And so it was diluted. It was the difference between wine and strong drink, which was undiluted.

And exercise was even important. First Timothy 4:8 says, "Bodily exercise profits a little..a little." It doesn't profit like godliness because bodily exercise is only good for this life and godliness is eternal. But bodily exercise does have benefit. So food is important and God has given us a wonderful opportunity to gain a measure of health by what we eat. He's given us the kind of food that eaten in the right proportion and the right kinds can sustain our health. God does care about our physical health because it's important if we're going to serve him to be as healthy as we can. And so it's wonderful to wish someone good health.

And then in verse 3, continuing as John talks here to Gaius. "I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth." That is how you're walking in truth. Here is the commendation that John gives. What had happened was some traveling preachers had come to wherever Gaius was. And Gaius had opened his home to these traveling preachers, traveling proclaimers of the gospel. And he had given them hospitality and taken them in. It wasn't easy because there was a man in the

church who tried to prevent it. And we'll learn about him next week, Diotrephes. He literally tried to prevent it, the ugly rejection of Diotrephes. But in spite of that, Gaius had treated them with love. But John does not, notice this, John does not commend Gaius, first of all, for his love. He commends him for the truth. I was glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth.

The people you showed hospitality to, who were faithful to the truth, knew that you were faithful to it as well. And you were not restrained from doing what was right by the narrowness of Diotrephes because you knew the truth and you're committed to the truth. And what he says to "your truth," that's probably a bit of a strain of translation, it should be "Literally the truth that is in you." I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to the truth that is in you, that is how you are walking in truth. You not only know it, it isn't just doctrine, you live it...you live it. Same thing is said in 2 John verse 4, "I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth." It all starts there. And again we come back to this, it all starts there. And frankly I will tell you, folks, this is the...this is the broadest and best commendation that a Christian could ever receive. This is what you want to hear when you get to heaven and the Lord says, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Faithful to what? First of all, faithful to the truth...faithful to the truth. He doesn't just jump to commend him for love, that will come. But he starts by commending him for his loyalty to the truth. He not only knows the truth, he lives it. He walks in it. Walking, of course, is the emblem in the New Testament of daily conduct. He knows the doctrine, believes it, walks in it. This is the greatest commendation. He possesses the truth and it controls his life.

Then in verse 4 John adds this general comment. "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth." You say, "Well why isn't he concerned about love?" Because if you walk in the truth, what's going to happen? You're going to love because it's part of the t ruth...it's part of the truth.

Now it's interesting to note the phrase "my children," very personal. Could it be that Gaius was a child of John in the sense that John was his spiritual father? "My" here is in emphatic position in the Greek. It literally is, "My own children, I have no greater joy...he says...this is my highest joy, I understand this, folks, I really do. I really understand this. I have no greater joy than this to hear of my own children walking in the truth." Whether you're talking about physical children or spiritual children, anybody who has been a part of the ministry that God has given to me, there is no higher joy, there is no greater joy than to know they know the truth, believe the truth and walk in the truth.

That's what you're after in ministry, that's what you're after, that's what everybody's after. That's what our Lord wanted, that you know the truth, believe the truth and live the truth. And in Gaius there was every minister's dream, every minister's greatest joy. There was an exact correspondence between his creed and his conduct. He knew it, he believed it and he lived it. No dichotomy between profession and practice. And it starts with not being doctrinally confused. The greatest joy of the

ministry is not to teach the truth, the greatest joy in ministry is not to know that your people understand the truth, the greatest joy in ministry is to see your people...what?...walk in it. And all of us in ministry spend time grieving over those who don't, as well as rejoicing over those who do. Do you want to keep the preacher happy? Don't raise his salary. Don't give him a nicer office. Don't increase his vacation time. Just walk in the truth. There is no greater joy.

So, the introduction of Gaius. An expression of affection for him, a commendation for him, with a specific reference to his hospitality which revealed how faithful he was to the truth. And then John adds in verse 5, "Beloved...again...you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren." That is such a wonderful commendation. You are acting faithfully in whatever you literally labor in, work in on behalf of the brethren.

Now that would be who knows what, but certainly would be lodging them, feeding them, supporting them. And he says in verse 5, "And especially strangers, those you don't even know, but because they're loyal to the truth you embrace them."

This is what ties us together. This is what binds us. And verse 6 says, "They bear witness to your love before the church." There comes the love, but the love is within the framework of the truth. If you're committed to the truth, then you express true divine spiritual love. You could call it love but if it ignores the truth, it's not the real thing, it's foolish human sentimentality. And we hear that all the time, "You're not very loving, you're so narrow, you're not loving." Our love is the product of union in the truth. It is there that we live our lives. It is there that we demonstrate our love and our hospitality in the truth...in the truth. And apparently in verse 6, whoever these strangers were, these preachers, they got up in front of the whole church and gave a testimony to the love that Gaius showed them.

Isn't that wonderful? He loved them because they were faithful to the truth. He opened his life to them. He acted faithfully in whatever he could do for them even though they were strangers to him. And then they got up in front of the whole church and told the whole church about his love. And then John adds this further commendation, "And you will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God," as if to say you know you're not done yet because when they leave you they're going to need some support. And John here has some counsel as well as some commendation. And the counsel is, you've done absolutely everything you could possibly have done, you've acted faithfully in whatever you've done for the brethren, even though they were strangers and they gave testimony to that and that is good, but you're not done. You will do well...future...to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. Keep up the good work, Gaius.

"You will do well" is an idiom equivalent to the English word "please." "Please send them on their way in a manner worthy of God." That is to say, give them the support they need. It's sort of, "Send them

on their way" is a technical term in the early church for missionaries. These are missionaries. Now we're getting down to where we live, right? We understand that word, 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 is why churches support missionaries, this is where this comes from. This is 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. Look at the standard, verse 6, "Send them on their way in a manner worthy of God."

What do you mean by that? Treat them the way you think God would treat them. That's pretty clear, isn't it? How would God treat them? Treat them the way God would treat them. I would think he would be generous, wouldn't you? I would think he'd give them everything they need, and probably more. Listen to this, Jesus' words, Matthew 10:40, "He who receives you, receives Me. And he who receives Me, receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward." Did you understand that? The way you treat a missionary is going to determine your eternal reward. You're literally going to share in their eternal reward by supporting them.

You know, we didn't just invent this whole missionary idea, here it is. You see, the key to hospitality is the truth, loving in the truth, and loving the way you believe God would love. So send them on their way in a manner worthy of God, in the future. Give them the best, be generous. Why? Verse 7, this is the climax of all of it, "For they went out for the sake of the name." If you can't support this, what in the world could you think of that would be more important to support? "They went out for the sake of the name."

What is that? "The name which is above every name, the name Lord." They went out for the sake of the name. That is a great truth. I wish I had time to develop that, I don't. Romans 1:5 says, Paul received grace and apostleship to preach the gospel, to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His namesake.

Why do we evangelize? Not just for the sake of the sinner, but for the sake of the name, for the glory of God, to the honor of God. We evangelize because it is an affront to God not to believe in His Son. We evangelize because we love the Lord Jesus Christ. We evangelize because He's worthy to be loved and worthy to be praised and worthy to be honored and worthy to be confessed as Lord. We go for the sake of the name, all that He is.

In the fifth chapter of Acts and verse 40, "And they took his advice and after calling the Apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus." They said, don't you

ever speak in the name of Jesus again. They released them. So they went on their way rejoicing. They had been considered worthy to suffer shame for the name...the name, the Lord Jesus and all that He is. They went out for the sake of the name. They went out to do the work of God. They went out to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no greater enterprise. There is no higher calling. And verse 7 says, "They accepted nothing from the Gentiles," as if to say the world is not about to support them. The world will support its own, but unbelievers are never going to support the true preachers of the gospel. The Federal Government is never going to give them money. They went out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.

Let me tell you about a false prophet. They go out for their own sake and take money from everybody they can find. And how did the true Apostles of Jesus Christ, the true preachers of the gospel distinguish themselves from the endless myriad false teachers? By not taking money for what they did. Paul said, "I have a right to support, but I'll never make the gospel chargeable. If need be...he said...I'll work with my own hands but I will not become a huckster, a con man, a peddler of the Word of God. I will not sell my soul."

We don't want money from the world. There was another article I was reading in the Times about a man who embezzled millions and millions of dollars. And there was a comment in there by a false teacher saying, "He was appalled that anyone could represent Jesus Christ for money," and he himself is probably the most well-known example of one who does. Some kind of hypocrisy.

These people went out for the sake of the name. They went out for the glory and honor of Christ. They didn't take any money from the pagans, the heathen, the Gentiles. Verse 8 says, "Therefore we ought to support such men." They don't have any other support. And that's just another term for hospitality.

So the first reason for giving hospitality to traveling missionaries is that they are our brothers and we honor them because they go out for the sake of the name. And the second reason is, they don't have any other means of support. If we don't support them who will? You can't ask the heathen to do it.

There's a third reason to support them, how about this in verse 8? "That we may be fellow workers with the truth." Not all of us can go, but all of us can give, right? I looked at our little list of 55 missionary families spread out all over the world, sacrificially giving. The world isn't going to support them. They've gone out for the sake of the name. They are faithful to the truth and we are called to support them. It's that simple. That's where all this comes from. And you didn't know it was all here in 3 John, tucked away and hidden. You just thought we invented that thing, huh? Here it is. This is a model taken right out of the pages of Scripture. And the wonderful thing is that when we do that supporting, we become fellow workers with the truth again. We literally when we support a prophet share in a prophet's reward when we support a righteous man we share in a righteous man's reward,

Matthew 10:41. Can't all go but we can all be fellow workers.

And so we meet Gaius. Gaius, beloved by God, beloved by John, called that three times in a short little letter. Beloved, 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 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. This is so right and so good and yet in the middle of this church there is a man who wants to stop this love and his name is Diotrephes and we're going to meet him next Sunday night.

Father, this is so practical and foundational to the life of the church and we thank You for it. These great principles and truths tucked away in this little epistle easily lost are so important to us. Thank You for calling us again to the truth and calling us to love in the truth and out of that love to show hospitality to those who go out for the sake of the name, who have no other means of support and by our loving hospitality and support of them, we too become fellow workers, literally partners in the enterprise. How wonderful...how wonderful. And some day when we come to heaven we'll receive the prophet's reward, though we never preached, we'll receive the missionary's reward though we never went, but we made it possible for them to go. Thank You for this church and the way it has always supported the missionaries. Thank You for our new missionary adoption opportunity. We pray, O God, that You will fill our hearts with a greater love and a greater passion and a greater faithfulness and a greater desire to support those who have gone out for the sake of the name. We hate to think that there are always people in the church who would try to prevent what is right, but we thank You, Lord, that this church has expressed this love so relentlessly for so many years and we pray that You'll protect us from those who on so many occasions in so many churches, past and present, do harm to faithful servants who go out for the sake of the name. Keep us faithful to this end that t he gospel may spread through our love of the truth and sacrificial love in Jesus' name. Amen.

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