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

Friends and Foes in the Church, Part 2
Scripture: 3 John 9-14
Code: 64-2

Let's open our Bibles tonight, we have a little time before we're going to go outside. And I do want to finish up our study of 3 John. I've been asked several times, but since this is a special night, are you going to do something special? I said sure, I'm going to do the rest of 3 John. And how special can you get? I mean, that's where we are and I'd like to finish this little epistle. It has been really a wonderful blessing for me personally to go back through 1, 2 and 3 John and I think you'll find this a really compelling study.

Third John and we're going to be looking at the final half of this book, verses 9 through 14. Let me read it to you. "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'm not willing to write them to you with pen and ink, but I hope to see you shortly and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to you, the friends greet you, greet the friends by name."

Well the main character in this section of this little epistle is a man named Diotrephes, followed at the end by another man named Demetrius. But for the most part, Diotrephes occupies our attention. And you might even title this section, "The man who loved the preeminence." There have always been such people who love the preeminence, who are proud and selfish and self-centered who seek the places of power and the places of fame and the places of prestige. In fact, the Scriptures literally abound with such characters in this category, and I thought it might be instructive for us to just go back and meet some of this Hall of Infamy, people who would never show up in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, that's for sure. These are the anti-heroes.

Genesis chapter 4 introduces us to such a man by the name of Lamech. In Genesis chapter 4 we meet him in verse 23 in regard to this particular perspective. "And Lamech said to his wives, Adah and Zillah," he had already broken God's commandment by being a polygamist. "But he said to his wives, Adah and Zillah, listen to my voice, you wives of Lamech, give heed to my speech for I have killed a man for wounding me and a boy for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech

seventy-sevenfold." This is the first bully in the Bible.

Lamech composed his own song here, it's the first poetry on earth. It is Hebrew poetry. "I have slain a young man who merely wounded me, a young man who merely hurt me. God may take care of Cain sevenfold, but I'll take care of myself seventy-sevenfold." Well here is an illustration of blasphemous arrogance. The first murderer, Cain, had produced a grandson who is also a murderer. The first murder was the result of envy, this one was the result of pride. And what you have there is a picture of Lamech strutting before his two wives and pontificating about his bloody deed and how able he is to defend himself, even to the seventy-seventh limit.

Interestingly enough Lamech was the seventh in the line from Adam. And God calls Lamech's cousin, Enoch, the seventh. In the book of Jude verse 14 it says, "Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones to execute judgment upon all and to convict all the ungodly of their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.'" Well we must conclude then that Lamech was an object of Enoch's testimony since Enoch lived in the same generation. Lamech was one of those ungodly people who did ungodly deeds in an ungodly way and spoke harsh things against God. Lamech was a hard sinner and he flaunted his sin against God. He viewed himself as above God.

Another such proud man we find in Genesis chapter 10. This man's name is Nimrod. And it says in verse 9, "He was a mighty hunter before the Lord, therefore it is said, 'like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.' And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar." Now when you read verse 9, he was a mighty hunter before the Lord, it's a rather weak translation, it doesn't seem to carry what the Hebrew carries. His story is really the story, a horrible story of desperate rebellion against God by one who wanted to be preeminent. Cush began Nimrod, is what the Hebrew says, and he began to be a tyrant in the land. He was a terrible subjugator; defiant, says the Hebrew, before the face of Jehovah. Saddam Hussein isn't the first by any means of such Middle Eastern tyrants. And they all have their little day and are brought to an end. But Nimrod appears to be the first of such dictators. The first one who brought together an organized rebellion against God. And Nimrod wanted to be first and it all ended up in Babel and Babylon, the mother of all false religion, it can all be traced back to Nimrod.

And you could also go to the book of Judges and the ninth chapter and you would meet another one of these kinds of people by the name of Abimelech, the son of Jerubbaal named after Baal and went to Shechem. He was the half-breed son of Gideon. And he wanted to be king, did Abimelech. He had these tremendous aspirations to become king. And he sought power and prominence and preeminence so that he gathered together all of his brothers to support him in his effort to be king and

then killed them all, committing atrocities in order that he might eliminate any other potential claimant to his throne. God dealt with him in a most bizarre way. He did ascend to that power that he wanted. Three years later, however, he was trying to smash down the tower while his army was attacking an enemy at Thebez and there was a tower at the place and while he was there with his army attacking Thebez, from the top of the tower a woman dropped a millstone and she had tremendous aim. It hit him on his head, split his skull open. He immediately cried for his armor bearer to run through with a sword before he died from the crushed skull, lest it go down in history that he was killed by a woman. Thinking only of his pride down to the very end, he sought preeminence.

There was in the book of Esther another man like this, by the name of Haman. Do you remember King Ahasuereus ruled all the way from India to Ethiopia and he had raised a man by the name of Haman to a very high rank in his kingdom. And Haman became drunk with power and drunk with prestige. He demanded everybody to obey him and bow before him and pay him homage and honor him. And there was a Jew who did not by the name of Mordecai, remember? He decided that because of what Mordecai had done, he would literally annihilate the Jews. He would commit genocide. He loved the preeminence to such a degree that he would literally obliterate a whole race of people because of one man who would not bow to him. The story of Esther is a pretty incredible story. He wound up, by the way, being hanged on the gallows he built to hang the Jews on.

And as long as we're thinking about these people, we would be remiss if we didn't make a comment or two about one other very famous man who sought the preeminence by the name of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 4. Nebuchadnezzar sought to exalt himself and because he sought to exalt himself, you remember, God turned him into a maniac and left him out grazing like an animal for years, seven years, in fact, till he finally came to his senses. He is the model of self-centered proud power-mad love for preeminence.

And then, of course, if you come to the New Testament, there is Herod. And we find that story in the twelfth chapter of Acts. Herod declared it Herod Day in all modesty. And he on appointed day, Acts 12:21, put on his royal apparel, came out before the people, took his seat there in Caesarea, sat in his throne and began delivering an address to them. And the people kept saying, "The voice of a god and not a man." And that's what he wanted. And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he didn't give God the glory, he was eaten by worms and died. And so ended Herod Day. Not exactly the way he had planned it.

And then you could also throw into the little list that we've been putting together Matthew 23, because in Matthew 23 you have not one but a whole collection of people who loved to have the preeminence. Jesus identified them as whited sepulchers, as tombs full of dead men's bones. Jesus identified them repeatedly as hypocrites. He identified them as snakes and vipers. And who were they? They were

the scribes and the Pharisees who seated themselves in the chair of Moses, Matthew 23:1. They loved to be noticed by men. They broaden their phylacteries, the little leather boxes that held slips on which were written passages of the Mosaic Law. They carried them around only they made theirs very, very big so that people would know how devoted to Scripture they were. They lengthened the tassels of their garments, tassels were supposed to be evidences of their devotion. And they made theirs as long as possible, extending them down so that they were dragging on the ground so that people would exalt them for their piety. And then they loved the place of honor at the banquets and chief seats in the synagogue and the respectful greetings in the marketplace. And they loved to be called rabbi. And they loved to be called father source. They loved to be called leader.

There always have been these kinds of people, always. And even among the people of God. We've given you an illustration of it. And it's a temptation even for good people. You go to Matthew chapter 20 in your mind and you will remember that James and John had the audacity to get their mother to go to Jesus and plead with Jesus to give them the preeminent place in His Kingdom because they thought they were worthy of it. Can you imagine that? Matthew 20:20 to 28, Jesus said, "You know, that's something for the Father to give, but it goes to those who have suffered the most, not those who have sought the preeminence." If you want to be first, you should seek to be last. You should be like the Son of Man who didn't come to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many. And that ended that conversation.

Well all of that leads us to 3 John, let's go back. And here in 3 John we meet a man who belongs in the Hall of Infamy with all the rest of those people I've just kind of rehearsed for you. This is a man named Diotrephes and he loved to have the power, the preeminence, the prestige, the prominence, the chief seat, the chief place. It says it in verse 9, "Diotrephes who loves to be first, *phileo*, who has a strong affection, *proteuo*, to be first...to be first." That term *proteuo*is used only one other place, in Colossians 1:18 and there it talks about the preeminence of Christ. So here is a man who is competing with Christ. Here is one who doesn't believe that Jesus alone is first, but seeks to supplant Christ and to rule the church in the place of Christ. He's like New Testament Absalom, so power hungry that he would murder his own father to take the throne.

Diotrephes was a very proud man. He was so proud that in seeking his place of preeminence, he was actually busy supplanting Christ, busy replacing Christ in the church. How did he do it? By rejecting those who were serving Christ.

Now if this sounds a little bit familiar, this is an old, old story and a new one as well. We see this all the time with young men that come out of the seminary. They go into a church. They are the servants of Christ. They are prepared. They are heart ready. They are mind ready. They are soul ready. They're ready to labor, to pour their lives into the congregation. They run right into a Diotrephes who loves to have the power in the church. And before they know what hit them, they're out of the church. It happens all the time. It's a constant battle, so common.

Now remember, this is in the middle of a letter about hospitality, right? This letter is basically about how we are to open our hearts to the servants of Christ, how we are to accept them. As verse 7 says, "For they went out for the sake of the name. They accepted nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men that we may be fellow workers with the truth," as we pointed out last week. And yet, though it is our obligation as a church to open our arms and embrace the faithful servants of God, here is a man in the church who because he loves to be first sees everybody as a threat to his power. And so, in this local assembly Diotrephes was forbidding anyone to receive the traveling preachers. He saw the traveling preachers as a threat. And there were believers who wanted to open their arms to them. And so John writes to one, beloved Gaius, whom he loves in the truth and wishes him well, and tells him about what good reports he hears from the brethren who came to him to tell him of Gaius. And then he reminds him, as I just read in verses 5 to 7, to make sure that he continues to love the truth by loving those who are the messengers of the truth.

And then he stops, and there's almost a startling change in verse 9 and injects this whole section about this man who contrary to the call of loving hospitality is doing everything he can to prevent the servants of the gospel from having any reception in the church because he sees them as a threat to his power, a threat to his preeminence. Is there anything as ugly as spiritual pride? Anything? I don't think so.

Now last time, in the opening eight verses, we saw Gaius, the man who gave hospitality. I want you to look in verses 9 and 10 at Diotrephes, the man who refused to give hospitality. As graciously hospitable as Gaius was, so ungracious and unhospitable was Diotrephes. They are poles apart, they are absolute opposites. Gaius is seen knowing truth, walking in truth, loving the brethren, entertaining strangers who are faithful ministers of the gospel. Diotrephes is seen loving himself, refusing to allow anyone to come in who might somehow receive the accolades, the love, the affection, the response of the congregation which he wants for himself. The conflict is not doctrinal, it's not theological, it's not a spiritual issue, it is a personal issue of loving oneself. And so does John address this issue so frequently arising in the church.

Look at verse 9, "I wrote something to the church but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, doesn't accept what we say." John wrote a letter to this church. And Diotrephes had managed to put himself in a position to filter everything. And so Diotrephes who loves to be first among them doesn't accept what we say. We do not know about this letter written earlier to this church. It was not written to Diotrephes, it was written to the church. It is lost, perhaps because Diotrephes destroyed it, probably never even read it to the church and that's why John tells Gaius who's in that church that he wrote that letter. Diotrephes had managed to move himself into position of power and became the screener for anything and everything that came to the church and literally rejected a letter from the

Apostle John. John says, "Diotrephes does not accept what we say."

Another way to translate that, "Will have nothing to do with us." He is his own authority, even to the point where he rejects one with apostolic authority. These kind of people who are proud and self-righteous, these kind of people who love spiritual preeminence and seek power and control, they know no bounds on who they will reject. They will reject the most faithful, profound, respected, revered authorities of Scripture. In fact, the more influence a person has because of faithful ministry, the more likely they are to reject that person.

Now the man's name, Diotrephes, is interesting. It means "reared by Zeus...reared by Zeus," or "nursed by Zeus. And it was a name, as far as we can tell, it was found only among nobility in ancient families. So it may have been that he had a self-importance problem because he came from some noble family. Perhaps he was aristocratic in his background and because he had a little bit of an aristocratic background, thought more highly of himself than he ought to think. But that really wasn't his problem. It doesn't really have to do with his background. His problem is clearly identified in verse 9, he loved to be first. That's the issue. There really are not environmental contributions to this issue here. This is not a circumstantial situation. This isn't because of the way he was raised. This is a man who's greedy for power because he loves himself. He's guilty of spiritual pride of the rankest kind. And he's worked his way into spiritual leadership in the church. He's not humble. He's not selfless. He's not loving. He's not compassionate. He certainly doesn't have the mind of Christ. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," Philippians 2:3 and following.

And you will notice "he loves" is in the present tense. This is a pattern for him. This is habitual for him. He's driven by personal ambition, this is so hard to deal with in the church, particularly in small congregations where these people are entrenched. As I've said, we've picked up the pieces of many heart-broken young men who go out and are chewed up by Diotrephes here and everywhere.

Not only was he perverted by ambition, but it led to perverted action, verse 10, "I will call attention," he says, "if I come to his deeds which he does." It's not just an attitude. You can't contain an attitude anyway, whatever an attitude is becomes an action. John says, "For this reason, because of the fact that in his self-love and in his longing to be preeminent, he doesn't even accept what I, and Apostle of Jesus Christ, have to say, because of this, for this reason, if I come I will call attention to his deeds which he does." I'm going to expose the man if I come. I will not forget, John is saying, I will not forget. I will bring up the subject of Diotrephes' conduct and I will make it an issue in the church because it is an issue for discipline. And the question always arises, and I've had this question with so many young pastors, what do I do? There's a guy in my church, he's like Diotrephes, he has the preeminence, what do I do?

And I encourage them, I encourage the leaders who are supportive of the pastor, you must take the power away from the man. If you do not take the power away from the man now, then you're going to lose the pastor you have and you're going to lose the next one and the next one and the next one until you finally do what you have to do. Churches seem so reluctant to do that. Why? Because these people are manipulators, they didn't get into power for nothing. They didn't get there by just rolling out of bed. They worked their way into that. And Johns says, "When I get there, I'm not going to overlook this. This man is challenging my authority as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. This man is forbidding believers to be hospitable toward faithful preachers. I'll take disciplinary action." All the verbs here are present tense...does, accusing, does not receive, forbids, puts out, all present tense verbs. This is the habitual work of this man who has worked his way into position of power in the church by deceiving people.

Now he basically indicts him on four counts. Look at them in verse 10. Number one, "unjustly accusing us with wicked words." This is characteristic in every occasion of these people who rise to preeminence. They falsely accuse other people. This is how they gain trust. They don't gain trust by the virtue of their life. They don't gain trust by their character. They don't gain trust the long, slow, true way by exposing all that they are to people and letting people make a judgment on their righteousness and on their integrity. They get the trust of the people by destroying the people's trust in everybody else. They are malicious and destructive, accusing...the word accusing here is actually a word that occurs only here in the entire New Testament but a cognate form of it occurs in 1 Timothy 5:13 where it can be translated tattlers. They are tattlers. They go around telling malicious, gossiping tales. By the way, the root word in the Greek comes from boiling up, or bubbling over. There's a reason for that. Bubbles are hallow. This is hallow talk, foolish talk, but they foment foolish nothing, bubble talk that bursts when it's poked. False, unfounded, foolish, contrived, manipulated accusations to cause people to distrust those in leadership and then the people are left with them as the only one they can trust. They get good at this, very adept. They bring up malicious charges. They don't make them minimal, superficial, they use evil words. There's a certain viciousness here.

By the way, this term "wicked" words is used of Cain's wickedness in verse 12. And it's used of the devil in 1 John 5:18 and 19. They accuse these people that they want to replace, these people that they want to rise above of devilish things, horrible things and including us. Notice it there, unjustly accusing us. You mean to tell me Diotrephes was even falsely accusing the Apostle John? Yes. If anybody was a threat, John was a threat. And if you're a threat, you'll get it. Oh you may not know it at first, they may give you that silky, hypocritical facade but underneath the surface, they'd like to slit your throat. It's amazing through the years how many times people have treated me on the surface with kindness and respect, and it's come to light behind the scenes, known by me, the maliciousness with which they speak to others about me in an effort to push themselves up as the only ones who

are virtuous and prominent. Everybody's a threat...everybody's a threat to the position of power.

And then he adds, as if it's not enough to destroy all those around you with malicious destructive gossip, it says, "And not satisfied with this..." It's not enough to do that, "neither does he receive the brethren," whoever is already respected, they seek to destroy. And anybody who comes in, they begin to undermine as well. In fact, they will not even receive them. They will not treat them with humble love. They not only slandered the Apostle John himself, Diotrephes not only slandered John, but he deliberately defied John by refusing to welcome the faithful brethren who came to preach for the sake of the name cause everybody's a threat. If you're on the inside, you get undermined so they can get into the prominent place. If you're on the outside and you're coming along, they shut you out. And, of course, they don't want anybody too close because somebody might discover what's really going on.

And they go further than that. "Neither does he receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so." If you are going to receive those brethren, he'll forbid you to do that. How in the world does a man like this get into such a power of position in a church that he literally shuts off the Apostle John, that he maliciously destroys the people's confidence in their other spiritual leaders and their true spiritual leaders that he will not acknowledge true preachers of the gospel and that he forbids people to receive those? How does he get into that position in the church of Jesus Christ? It's amazing how subtle and devious people can be. Not only personally rejecting John and the other preachers, but he *koluo*, prevents, hinders, everybody else. And finally, "Puts them out of the church," *ek ballo*, literally means to toss them out, throw them out. He's protecting his...it's like King of the Mountain, protecting his power base. Anybody who is a threat, he figures out a way to get them out of the church through the use of malicious gossip, through destruction of their personality, their character, their integrity, pretty soon they're gone.

You know, this may have been what happened to Gaius. It may have been what happened to Gaius. And that is why John tells Gaius what's going on in the church. Why would John need to tell Gaius about Diotrephes if Gaius was still there. And maybe Gaius had been hammered by this Diotrephes and that's why in verse 8 John says, "We ought to support such men that we may be fellow workers with the truth," which is another way of John saying to Gaius, "Keep it up, Gaius, you've got to keep doing it. I know there may be a price." Diotrephes slandered John, cold-shouldered the preachers of the gospel, excommunicated the loyal and the faithful from the church all because he loved the preeminence and wanted to stand alone at the top of the heap. Maybe Gaius had fallen victim to that whole thing. Maybe Gaius had just literally been either put out of the church or crushed in his efforts to show hospitality and that's why John says you must support such men. But it may be well that he actually had been put out of the church and didn't exactly know what was going on. You know, it happens. Men are put out of a church they don't even know that a Diotrephes did it to them.

Well, all of that simply to say, the Bible warns us here about those people who are power-hungry in the church. Arrogance is where it all starts. It starts with arrogance. Arrogance produces ambition, ambition produces accusations. And accusation leads to annihilation. You start out driven by pride, your pride produces the desire to be preeminent. Preeminent then leads you to falsely accuse everybody else so you can clear the field of all other claimants. And then eventually you have to annihilate them and put them out if they don't roll over. So sad when this happens in a church and many churches aren't willing to deal with it, they aren't willing to face it. They aren't willing to overturn such a man because many of them have been deceived, others in the name of love and church unity allows this to be perpetuated.

And I've learned through the years in dealing with our young men who go out to preach that rarely ever have I heard of a church dismissing a pastor for poor preaching, rarely ever for poor living, almost always power struggles because somebody loves to be first. And that's what splits churches, destroys ministries. Well, more could be said about that. But Diotrephes for all his efforts to be preeminent, got his name in the Book, didn't he? He got his name in the book, but it's a shame that it's here.

There's a third character in this book by the name of Demetrius. And if Gaius showed hospitality and need to continue to do it, no matter what pressure might be coming, and if Diotrephes was the man who refused to give hospitality, Demetrius is one who is to receive hospitality. So here to the beloved Gaius, John introduces a man that he wants Gaius to receive. "Beloved...verse 11...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."

He's introducing him to this man, Demetrius, and in a sense saying, "Receive him, you need to do that. He said that to faithful men who go out for the sake of the name, back in verses 7 and 8. You need to do that to be a fellow worker of the truth, in spite of the fact that there's Diotrephes in the church, you need to do that and here's one in particular that I want you to receive and his name is Demetrius. And if you will receive him, you will not be imitating what is evil, but what is good. You will then give evidence that you are of God.

Look back at verse 11, we'll pick it up right there. "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil." How does that fit in? Well it simply means don't follow the pattern of Diotrephes. Don't follow the pattern of Diotrephes. He's saying to Gaius, don't be like Diotrephes, he may be the leading influence in your church, don't be like him. Demetrius is coming, he is to be commended. Maybe he was a member of the Ephesian church, coming to whatever church this was. He doesn't want Gaius to be influenced by Diotrephes if he's still in the church and thus not to receive Demetrius. It may have been that he

was thrown out of the church and maybe he's back in, we don't know those details. But the bottom line is, he says do not imitate what is evil, do not *mimeomai*, do not become a mimic of what is evil. Don't follow that model, just do what is good.

Everybody follows somebody, don't they? You choose whether you're going to follow those who do good or those who do evil. And he goes right back to the basic principle, verse 11, "The one who does good is of God, the one who does evil has not seen God." It's that simple. That sounds like 1 John, doesn't it? Back to the distinction between the true Christian and the false Christian, the moral test. The person who does good is of God, the person who does evil is not of God. The person who does righteousness is of God. The person who sins is not of God. To do good is evidence of divine birth, for you're ordained unto good works. So imitate those who do good.

John may well be saying that it's doubtful if Diotrephes is even a Christian. And I will tell you, folks, there are many churches ruled by Diotrephes-like personalities who claim to be Christians and claim to be spiritual leaders but in fact are not even Christians at all because they do evil to the servants of God and they live to elevate themselves. They have not seen God. Another way to say they don't know God...they don't know God.

So John is again writing this beautiful little letter to his beloved friend, Gaius, whom he calls beloved repeatedly whom he loves in the truth, to tell him that he needs to embrace the traveling missionaries, the traveling preachers of the truth for the sake of the extension of the gospel and not be intimidated by a man who loves to have the preeminence, who tries to shut this down for the sake of his own glory. Likely then, the primary purpose of the letter was to accompany Demetrius who was coming to visit that area. It may well be that the letter was given to Gaius from the hand of Demetrius sent by John. Demetrius hands him the letter and says, "I'm the man of whom John writes." Demetrius, says John in verse 12, has received a good testimony. You receive this man. He is one of those mentioned in verse 7 who has gone out for the sake of the name, he is one of those accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Verse 8, one of those we ought to support, one of those with whom we can be fellow-workers with the truth. Demetrius, a name coming from Demeter, the goddess of fields and crops, another Gentile name. But do you know that in the Old Testament how many...if something was to be affirmed as true, how many witnesses were needed? Two or three, right? Everything had to be confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses, Deuteronomy 17:6, Deuteronomy 19:15. Notice three witnesses to Demetrius in verse 12. He's received a good testimony, first from everyone. Do you know very many people like that? From everyone, *hupapanton(?)*, all. The testimony of everyone to Demetrius in the past remains valid in the present, perfect passive. He has received an ongoing and continually good testimony from everyone. Second witness, "And from the truth itself." That is to say you can measure him by his doctrine, you can measure him by the truth. He is loyal to the truth. And again, it's an ongoing thing, the truth he

professes and the truth he preaches is the truth he embodies and lives. It is self-evident and always has been. And thirdly, verse 12, he says, "And we also bear witness." John says we bear witness. We continue to bear witness. Gaius, if you have any question about this man, everybody will testify to his character and his faithfulness. The truth will testify to his character and faithfulness, he can be measured against it. And we also as an Apostle bear witness and you know that our witness is true. You know you can trust me.

How do you know a man's worth? What does everybody say about him? How does his life match up with Scripture? And what do Christian leaders say about him? And when you get a man who passes muster on all three of those, open your arms, notwithstanding Diotrephes or anybody else, and embrace the man.

Well that closes the letter on hospitality, really, and a short one. And again, underlying all of this is the truth. The truth needs to be spread. If it's going to be spread, the church has to support the preachers of the truth and the missionaries. We have to embrace them when they're faithful to the truth. We can't see them as a threat to our positions of power and preeminence. If we're going to follow an example, may it be an example of one who sacrificially loves, not one who seeks to be preeminent, lest we betray the fact that we may not know God at all.

And then comes the closing, very parallel to the closing of 2 John, so we'll just look at it briefly. "I had many things to write to you, I'm not willing to write them to you with pen and ink." You remember what we read at the end of 2 John? "Having many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink," exactly the same thing. Verse 14, "I hope to see you shortly." I want to come and see you. Same thing he said to the lady and her family in the second epistle, "I hope to come to you and speak face to face so that your joy may be made full." And I told you that actually means mouth to mouth. I don't want to say anymore than this in a letter. I want to come and see you face to face.

And then he closes, "Peace be to you," and I'm sure he wished that peace could pervade that congregation. And then he adds, "The friends greet you," which adds intimacy to the brothers, Gaius and John must have had mutual friends that they both knew. And then he adds, "Greet the friends...I love this...by name." John, the beloved Apostle John, the great Apostle, the last Apostle who had that amazing life with our Lord Jesus Christ, who lived into his nineties, who was now the only Apostle left who had absorbed so many friendships and relationships, still knew the names...still knew the names of the people in his life. And he closes out his last letter by affirming how important friendship is, fellowship is, and peace in the church.

Three great truths stand out and I'll close. Verse 3, know the truth and walk in it. Second, be hospitable to others who preach the truth. Third principle, pattern your life after godly examples. And

then there will be peace in the church and God will be glorified in His church.

Well, Father, we thank You tonight for this insight into what seems such a small thing and yet how really critical it is that the church be what You want it to be. Protect Your church from evil men who rise to power and protect Your faithful servants from the Diotrephes of this world who bring grief and pain and sadness to those who want to serve faithfully, not just for the sake of the servant but for the sake of the church. Protect Your church. We pray that Your church would be under the leadership of the humble, the godly and the faithful, those loyal to the truth who are selfless and sacrificial, that You truly might be glorified in Your church. And may we with open arms embrace with love all those faithful preachers and missionaries, may we never be so foolish as to be threatened by anybody who comes to us from You. We pray, Lord, that You'll continue to bless our church with protection from this. May we continue to know Your grace that humbles us. For this we'll give You praise because our hearts' desire is that Christ would be glorified in His church and not any man ever. We pray in His name. Amen.

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