

Truth in Action Part II (III John 1-15)

Introduction:

1. The conclusions drawn by most scholars and even skeptics are that the Apostle John (who wrote I & II John), also wrote this letter.
2. This is a personal letter written to a specific person name Gaius
 - John does not provide a great deal of information on Gaius other than he held him in high regard and his attitude toward him was one of genuine Christian love.
 - Although the location of where Gaius lived is not mentioned, it is assumed that he lived in the region of Asia Minor (modern day – western Turkey).
3. The date of the letter would be similar to the other two epistles of John and it if counts for anything; I agree with a date of around 95 AD.
4. There appears to be two purposes that John shares in this letter:
 - His acknowledgement and encouragement of Gaius who was **loyal to the truth** by living it out in his personal life and by also expressing genuine and sacrificial love to other believers through **kindness, generosity and hospitality**.
 - The second purpose that John shares is to remind us that we are to **look out for the truth** by patterning our lives after it (the Truth). This is accomplished by doing what is good toward others and not doing evil. We are to **look out for** and help our brothers and sisters in Christ by being a stepping stone instead of a stumbling block.

Loyalty to the Truth (III John 1-8)

1. John _____ Gaius for his loyalty to the truth (Vs 1-4)

- “The elder to the beloved Gaius, **whom I love in the truth**. Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers” (Vs 1-2)

- 1) We don’t have a lot of information about Gaius, but it is clear that John loved this man with the same “biblical love” that John spoke of in his earlier letters.
- 2) This “**love in the truth**” (at least in the context that is written) is a unique love that believers (Christ followers) share towards one another because of our unique and continual faithfulness to the truth.
- 3) Gaius walked in that truth and it was evidenced in his sacrificial love toward other believers – something that John felt was worth noting and also contrasting against the disobedience of Diotrophes whom John will speak of later in his letter.
- 4) In addition to noting the healthy spiritual condition of his friend Gaius; John also wishes him good health and prosperity in his life pursuits.

- “For 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 truth” (Vs 3-4)

- 1) This is a special acknowledgement by John who shares that Gaius not only _____ the truth (John 8:32, John 14:6), but he also lived in _____ to it. (Romans 12:1-2, James 1:22)
- 2) Since this letter speaks about showing proper hospitality and doing so in love; it is highly probable that the “**brethren**” that testified to John about Gaius were travelling preachers to whom Gaius showed **kindness, generosity** and **hospitality** to. It is fitting that John takes the time to recognize Gaius for this outpouring of sacrificial love toward other believers evidenced by his “**walking in truth**” (just doing it).

2. John _____ Gaius for his loyalty to the truth (Vs 5-8)

- “Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God” (III John 5-6)

- 1) The actions of _____ are a natural byproduct of walking in truth; and the very reason why John commends Gaius for _____ for the “**brethren**”, even more so when they are strangers.
- 2) The writer of Hebrews tell us that we are to; “Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:1-2)
- 3) It is highly probable that the tangible actions of Gaius included the provision of shelter, food and even money to the travelling preachers that came his way; and for this John commends Gaius.
- 4) In Romans 12, the apostle Paul lists a number of actions that we as fellow believers should practice and he includes the practice of hospitality; “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another, in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality” (Romans 12:9-13)
- 5) The commendation that John gives to Gaius is a good indicator that Gaius was devoted to the truth and as a result his actions revealed that dedication.
- 6) Some manuscripts read; “do not neglect to show hospitality to brothers and strangers” which shows Gaius cared not just for those he knew but for those he didn’t. This makes his concern for others all the more genuine and a good application of what Hebrews 13:1-2 says.
- 7) These actions expressed by Gaius are what a Christ follower is to be about; “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, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth” (III John 7-8)
- 1) These travelling preachers were representatives and ambassadors for Christ and they no doubt shared about the Name of Jesus; “For this reason also, God highly exalted Him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11)
 - 2) There is no need for these travelling preachers to solicit food, shelter, or funds from unbelievers (pagans), as God has placed a spirit of hospitality and love in the hearts of those who do believe to care for His servants.
 - 3) It only stands to reason that the “believing community” – the church, ought to care for the needs of those who do God’s work. Some are capable of caring for their own needs (i.e. Paul worked with his hands and made/repairs tents), while others rely on the assistance and hospitality of people like Gaius to help them. This has been a common pattern since the early days of the apostles.
 - 4) Showing hospitality and care for those who proclaim the truth should be looked at as a partnership and a noble objective for the believing community. It is an act of love which is a mark of a genuine follower of Christ.
 - 5) “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, shall receive a prophet’s reward**; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward” (Matthew 10:40-42)
3. “Whenever we become the source of blessing for others we are blessed; and whenever other believers become a source of blessing to us, they are blessed. In God’s magnificent economy of grace, the least believer can share the blessing of the greatest, and no one’s good work will go unrewarded”. (John MacArthur – Commentary on I, II, III John, page 249)

Looking out for the Truth (III John 9-15)

1. John will continue to drive home his point that a genuine believer is one who does good and will continue to do good; “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.” (III John 11)
2. John introduces two new individuals in this final passage:
 - Diotrefes:
 - 1) He was a **selfish** person, something that John points out to Gaius: “I wrote something to the church; but Diotrefes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say” (III John 9)
 - 2) Instead of commending his actions as he did with Gaius; John instead _____ **the actions** of Diotrefes as being unloving, self centered and even self seeking; “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, **he himself does not receive the brethren**, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church” (III John 10)
 - 3) It’s not completely clear that John consider Diotrefes as an “enemy of the gospel” (false teacher – antichrist); but he is clearly identifying that his motives and behavior is inappropriate and needing to be addressed personally.
 - 4) Sometimes (such as the case with Diotrefes), there are people within the church whose conduct is not becoming of a Christ follower and the apostles would often address those things personally or in the form of a written letter. The apostle Paul had to do this with the Corinthian church (II Cor. 13:1-2)
 - 5) The actions of Diotrefes were prideful, unloving and damaging to him and the church. His words of gossip and slander were evil and false and his abuse of power (excommunicating those who disagreed with him) put him on a dangerous path which John felt strongly enough to address personally.
 - 6) These identified actions of Diotrefes **are not** something we should imitate

- Demetrius:

- 1) There is quite a contrast here and the obvious purpose in John sharing it is to allow the reader to see they type of behavior that we should imitate;
“Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know our testimony is true” (Vs. 12)
 - 2) John acknowledges the reputation of Demetrius and his actions clearly represent being faithful to the truth (obedience to Christ) which are commended by John and other godly Christian leaders.
 - 3) The encouragement here is to put into practice that which is good (the actions of Demetrius) and to avoid the evil behavior that was being promoted by Diotrefes.
3. John has already written in his first letter that obedience is the external evidence of salvation.
 - 1) Diotrefes actions did not represent the actions of a genuine follower of Christ and if he continued in his evil pursuits without repenting and submitting to God then he would reveal that he was not saved. He **was not** pursuing the truth.
 - 2) Demetrius on the other hand was committed to walking in the truth and his actions reveal that he was saved. He **was** pursuing the truth.

Concluding Thoughts

1. A genuine Christ follower _____ the truth and obeys the truth
2. A genuine Christ follower _____ they are saved by their kindness and generosity to others, especially to those who preach the gospel.
3. A genuine follower of Christ _____, by glorifying God in living and being godly (holy and righteous), and being an example for others to follow.