



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

3 John 1-14

"Early Church Life: Two Examples and a Problem"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We really are grateful to Dr. Howard for the fact that we did not have services last Sunday because I think it was Saturday afternoon, a little late, that Howard Prier called me and said we've decided not to hold services tomorrow, Charles has been out in it and says it's terrible. So you can thank Dr. Howard for the fact that you don't have a broken leg or a broken arm or other accidents have happen to you. If in spite of that, you exercised willfulness and went out and are limping, it's your own fault. Human responsibility still pertains even in our divine sovereignty.

We are turning to 3 John and we're going to expound the whole epistle this morning. So we are going to read the fourteen verses of it. So if you have your New Testaments, I hope you have, turn with me to the third epistle of John. The apostle writes,

"The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth."

(Incidentally, that 3rd verse when it states, "the brethren came," the construction is such that it indicates that they were constantly coming. So it is not simply one group that came, but evidentially, others as well. The 4th verse,) "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;"

Now that might give you the impression in that he is saying you do faithfully whatever you do to the brethren and also to another group called the strangers, which, of course, he would be happy to applaud anyway, but that probably should be rendered as the New American Standard Bible renders it, "Whatsoever thou doest to the brethren," and then we should add something that has the sense of, "especially when there are strangers". So the reference is to brethren who are strangers.)

"Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." (The person referred to, of course, in his name's sake is our Lord Jesus Christ.) "We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth. I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not."

It is a very interesting little statement there because it points out that the apostles did write things of which we have no record today. We had an instance of that, if you remember in our studies of 2 Corinthians, when we talked about the correspondence that the apostle had with the Corinthian church and commented upon the fact that there are at least two letters that he wrote to the Corinthians that we do not have. Well, here is a letter that the Apostle John wrote that we do not have, as well. So when we think about the inspiration of the apostolic writings, we are speaking about the inspiration of those of which we have record in our New Testament. And that is essentially the point of the inspiration of the Scriptures. So he wrote unto the church.

"But Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and

casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God." (You'll notice he does not put it as we might have expected him to with a kind of equal parallelism. He that doeth good is of God, he that doeth evil is not of God, but emphasizes it, has not seen God.) "Demetrius" (incidentally, Demetrius is a very Greek name, and it is related to the goddess of fields, Demeter. Ceres, in Latin, is the goddess's name. And Demetrius is a name that is probably, I say probably because we don't really know, probably Demus' name. Demus, being something of a nickname for Demetrius. Now that is not, of course, the Demus that Paul knew, but nevertheless, a related individual.) "Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself:" (And again, let me make one suggestion here. "The truth itself" may be rendered "the truth himself," because of the construction and because of the fact that the Lord Jesus in Johannine literature is looked at as the truth. And many of the commentators feel that we should render this, "Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth himself," that is the Lord Jesus Christ.) "Yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true. I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the word of God and for the light that it sheds upon the truth by which we must live. We thank Thee for the apostle's faithfulness in the setting forth of the truth as Thou has revealed it to him. We thank Thee for the preservation of it. So many hands have made it possible for us to read the word of God in 1989. What a great privilege that is.

We express to Thee Lord, our appreciation for all that the Scriptures reveal of the true God, the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father, who has initiated the great plan of

redemption and oversees the successful completion of it. The Son, who is executed in the Spirit, who administers the benefits to the saints of God. We are so grateful and thankful for that which Thou has given to us. And we praise Thee Lord for all of the promises that go along with eternal life and that we can turn our hearts to Thee upon any occasion and upon all occasions and expect that Thou will hear our voice and do that which will be pleasing to us and above all to Thee.

We ask Thy blessing upon the whole church of Jesus Christ today and all of the manifestations of it in the various places over the face of this globe. Bless the word of God and the Christian fellowship and the lives of the saints. Build us up in the faith. Enable us by Thy grace to reach the maturity that Thou would have us to reach. We thank Thee for the promises that pertain to the physical wellbeing of the saints, and we pray for those who are ill and sick, and especially those who've requested our prayers. We pray for them. We pray for those Lord, who are bereaved, particularly encourage, strengthen, and console.

And Lord, we pray for our great country of which we are apart and ask Thy blessing upon our new President, upon the new administration. May by Thy grace, we have the privilege of further preaching of the word of God in this land. May there be responsiveness to the word. Deepen our spiritual lives. We sense, Lord, so much shallowness and superficiality in our own lives and wilt Thou by Thy grace deepen the life of the church of Jesus Christ. Bless the ministry today in the Chapel and those who carry it on during the week, and then today, may it be fruitful, may our time together be profitable for us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today as we expound 3 John is, "Early Church Life: Two Examples and a Problem." The sister epistle to 2 John is 3 John. And the emphases of these two epistles are somewhat related. One emphasizes love in the truth. One notices that as he turns to 2 John 9, "Whosoever goeth forward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God." Love, if to be true love, must be love in the truth. This epistle, on the other hand, emphasizes that we must hold truth in love. So they are sister epistles in the sense of their emphases, related to one another,

but a bit different. In fact, the two Greek words translated, "transgresseth" in 2 John verse 9, it should be translated something like, "goeth forward". And then the word "loveth" to have the preeminence, summarize the two.

And they point, on the one hand, to intellectual arrogance on the part of those who go forward, but do not abide in the doctrine of Christ, and on the other hand, to personal aggrandizement. That is, the kinds of things that make us appear great that we do in order to make us appear great. Diotrephes, the example of personal aggrandizement and then those that held the false doctrine in 2 John, those who had the intellectual arrogance to suggest that with their Gnostic teaching could actually go beyond the teaching of the word of God.

The contrasts between the two are also interesting. In one we are told to refuse the false. In the other, we are told to receive that which is true. Refuse the false doctrine. Receive those who bring us the true doctrine. One is address to a lady, perhaps. We are not absolutely sure of that as we mentioned two weeks ago. The other is addressed to a man. Third John, incidentally, is the shortest epistle in the New Testament. You might look at it and say, well it has fourteen verses and 2 John has only thirteen, does that not mean that this one is the longest? No, it really doesn't. I was looking at some old notes that I had a few days ago and noted this and noted too, that I had made a little mistake in my typing, and so I wasn't sure of the precise number of words in 3 John. So I opened my Greek Testament and counted them, and my count was correct. It is truly the shortest epistle, shorter than 2 John. It has, in case you are interested in this trivia question; it has two hundred and nineteen Greek words. Put it down; ask your friends. If you want to put them down sometime, "You don't even know how many words are in the Greek text of 2 John." Two hundred and nineteen is the correct number.

Now you can tell from the title, "Early Church Life: Two Examples and a Problem," that this letter revolves around three men. There is Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius. And of course, the author is the elder. We have suggested that the elder is the Apostle John. Of course, that's not

stated in this epistle, but it would be perfectly consonant with the place of the apostle in the church at this time.

He was, so far as we know, the remaining apostle. He was an elderly man having been very young in the days of our Lord and having outlived the others, so far as we know. To speak of himself as the elder, would be true doctrinally too, because it was the feeling of the early church that when one of the apostles remained in one locality for a lengthy period of time as an apostle, but nevertheless serving in a local church, his apostleship shaded into eldership. We know that in the case of the Apostle Peter, who in the 5th chapter of his first epistle speaks similarly. He says, "The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a protector of the glory that shall be revealed."

So the elder here is to be understood as a reference to John the apostle now located evidentially, in a semi-permanent way, in one particular locality. We are not to understand this as "the old man". That's possible that John was known that way, as the old man, but it would be rather unlikely that he would address an epistle and sign it, the old man under the well beloved Gaius. Incidentally, you have permission to use that of me, if you would like. [Laughter] I am not an apostle. As a matter of fact, not even in elder in the Chapel at this time. So the idea of the elder is the relationship to the Apostle John.

Now the first eight verses of this epistle set forth the apostle's approval of Gaius. This is one of the common names of the New Testament. If you read the New Testament much, you'll remember other individuals with the name Gaius. In fact, there are at least four in the New Testament who have the name Gaius. And one of them particularly stands out, not simply the one who traveled with the apostle, but the one in whose house the apostle stayed when he wrote his epistle to the Romans. So Gaius is a very common name at the time. There is so far as we know, incidentally, no relationship between this Gaius and the other Gaiuses of the New Testament.

He writes to Gaius and he has some things to say of Gaius, an approval that touched his spiritual standing, his doctrinal standing, and also some things that have to do with his practical life.

He begins in the first two verses and states, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." I love this verse because it's a marvelous way to greet your friends to start with, but it expresses also a very significant spiritual wish for one's friends. The apostle says, "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health as thy soul prospereth." In other words, for the apostle, his wish, his prayer for Gaius is knowing that he is prospering spiritually that he may physically prosper as his spirit prospers before the Lord.

This was a very common way, incidentally, for people to address one another in correspondence in this particular time. In fact, there was a little expression that was very commonly used, so commonly used that when individuals wrote to one another in Latin, which of course, was very common at the time, they would just put the first words of the statement. The statement would be, "*Si vos es puteus,*" that is, if you are well, "*is est bonus,*" it is good, "*EGO sum puteus,*" which mean I'm well. So if you are well its good, I'm well. So they would just put "*svbeen*" and that would say it all in a kind of acronym.

So the apostle says, "even as." So let's stop for a moment on this because I think it expresses something that has some practical significance for us. We have to pray the other way around. We, of course, instead of saying, "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health as thy soul prospereth," we have to turn it around and say, "I wish above all things that your soul may prosper as you are physically in health." As a matter of fact, if we prayed for individuals as the apostle suggests here, "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth," someone of those whose physical condition is not very good would be very strong.

An individual, like say Amy Carmichael, who as a missionary to India spent most of her later years in bed and had physical problems her whole life, very serious physical problems. If her physical condition was as her spiritual condition, she would have been an Atlas or Hercules, or something like that. John Calvin, who was of frail physical existence most of his life, he too, would have been extremely strong and robust in physical health. "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and

be in health even as thy soul prospereth," is what the apostle prayed for Gaius. In other words, the chances are if the reality were there, "I wish above all that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth," most of us would be sickly dwarfs.

We live in the days of aerobics and everybody is concerned about their physical existence, but the spiritual health, the spiritual wellbeing, the spiritual strength is something else. I think it is kind of typical and at the end of the street we have aerobics that is, in all that we do to make the outward man look good. And my suggestion is, it is great to be interested in your physical wellbeing, but really you would be much better off if instead of being down at the corner doing your aerobics exercises and carrying on in that way, you'd be much better off really, ultimately if you were at Believers Chapel listening to the word of God. So as I go up and down the street of Preston and down Church Hill there, often think of that. We are in the wrong locality. We shouldn't be down on the corner. We should be down hearing the word of God.

So, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth." So I'll turn it around, I wish above all things that your soul might prosper as you prosper physically and are in health. I am afraid that that's the kind of petition the apostle really would need to make for us. I like this word, "prosper". It is a word that really means, it comes from two words that mean something like, "to have a good journey". And so when he says, "I wish above all that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth," it is almost as if he were saying, "I just wish that you might have a happy journey as your soul is having a happy journey toward the Lord God." Have a good journey. May your soul have a happy journey. May your soul have a happy and as healthy a journey as you are having in your physical existence here upon the earth.

Well, those are things that have to do with Gaius' spiritual existence. He was a man that the apostle knew prospered in his inner man and to him that was a significant thing. But he goes on to speak about the doctrinal, and he says in the 3rd verse, "For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren

came (or as the brethren were coming) and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth." I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.

Now this little word "truth" here is used in a rather emphatic way, in particular, with the pronoun that goes with it. "I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee." Thy truth. In fact, John puts it in an emphatic position in the original text, thy truth. So he rejoiced that they came and told him of Gaius' truth. It suggests, incidentally, that there were difficulties in the church of which Gaius was a part, and the remainder of the epistle goes on to say something about them. But these individuals came and they brought a report to the apostle, Gaius' truth is sound and solid. He knows it, he lives it. He's walking in the truth.

And the apostle says he has no greater joy than to hear his disciples walking in the truth. It's a rather vivid picture, isn't it, of the early church? We have the idea that the early church must have been a magnificent group of people who always walked in the truth as long as they were upon the face of this earth in those early days. But that is a far cry from what the New Testament sets forth for us. In fact, this is a vivid picture of the continued troubles even in an apostolic church; one that the apostle knew and a church that knew the apostle.

In fact, the ideal primitive church bright in the unbroken possession of truth and holiness is unknown to the Christian historian. You cannot find any church that lives up to that standard in the historical records of the early church. It just says to us, the fact that the people who lived in the 1st century, are like the people who live in the 20th century. It is true; they had contact with the apostles. They didn't have a number of things that we have. Not everyone had the Scriptures. In fact, most of them had only parts of what we would call the New Testament, at best in the time of the Apostle John. But at least there was no indication in those churches that they did not have the problems that our churches have as well.

Now he goes on to speak of the practical in verses 5 through 8. He says,

"Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy love before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth."

This is rather interesting because it indicates that in the early church there were individuals who sought to carry out the words that our Lord spoke in Mark chapter 6. You may remember when we read of the mission of the twelve Mark says in chapter 6 and verse 6,

"And He marveled because of their unbelief. And He went around about the village teaching. And He called unto him the twelve and began to send them forth two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits; and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only —no script, no bread, no bag, no money in their purse."

That's rather interesting; no money in their purse. No money in their wallet. And he sent forth the twelve in that way. It's a marvelous test for those who met the twelve and tested their relationship to the truth which the twelve were proclaiming and of course, their relationship to the Lord. Now this practice continued in the early church and there were individuals who went out just like the twelve, and they went out taking nothing. He says you do well if you treat them well and remember that they are not simply brethren but they are strangers. They bore witness, as they have come back to the Apostle John, of the love that many have exhibited to them, and John urges Gaius to minister to them. He thanks Gaius for what has been done, and he reminds them that they went forth simply for the name of the Lord Jesus, and they took nothing of the Gentiles.

One of the most interesting things, I think, is the fact that in the early church these individuals went out, they were not members of the order of Dominican Friars, which did grow up

later on possibly as an attempt to repeat this kind of thing, and they went out not as begging friars, but they went out trusting the Lord. Not to beg, he doesn't say that they begged. They simply went out to preach the word of God and looked to the Lord for the supply of their funds. They took nothing, and incidentally, it is possible though this is a little bit doubtful, the original text uses a form of the negative that may indicate and suggest, note that it was true, that they did this voluntarily. That is, they took nothing of the Gentiles, they did it by choice. So they did not take anything and Gaius is exhorted to undertake for them. There is a play on words in the original text. They took nothing. I would like for you to undertake for them.

Now what is interesting about this is that we have records at this time in historical literature to show that this was common, not simply of New Testament believers, but particularly, common among the false religions of that time. Many of them went out as mendicants begging for money. And in fact, in one of the pieces of literature that we have, Adolf Deissmann's, *Light from the Ancient East*, it is recorded that one of the individuals who was associated with one of the goddesses, incidentally, that's what they did. They went out as representatives of the many goddesses of that time, each one representing one particular one. And he would go out representing a certain goddess, and he would travel through his territory begging for money. And one of them describes his response. He said when he came back after his trips he always had seventy bags of money. Think of that. Seventy bags of money. And the term that is used for a bag of money is the same word that the Lord uses when he tells the apostles to go out and don't have a wallet. They came back with seventy wallets full of money.

Now I don't know whether Jimmy and others have fallen into the tradition of this, may have been reading ancient literature, do you think that Jimmy has been reading ancient literature? And the Bakkers have been reading the ancient literature of the past and discovered that it was possible to make a lot of money by just going around begging, but that is what we have in our day. Individuals, begging friars asking for money and even then they would come back with plenty of money in their

pockets. Some of you are having a hard time in business. You want a new business? Want a sure way to make money? Don't do this, but it would be nevertheless, a sure way to make money.

So these individuals took nothing of the Gentiles. Now I think that has a perfectly good reference to what we do in Believers Chapel. One of the reasons we don't take up any offering is just that very thing. We don't want people who come in, and if you are here as a visitor today, we don't want them to come in and think that the church is interested primarily in their money. The church is not. The true church of Jesus Christ should not be. So Mr. Prier occasionally in the evening service, when we do give the believers a chance to give money to the ongoing work of Believers Chapel, is careful to point out the fact that we do not ask for money of those who do not know the Lord. And we do not ask for money from those who do know the Lord. Giving is voluntary; giving always as the Lord has prospered and for various other reasons.

In fact, I know I have often said this, but some years back when I was serving as pastor of Grace Bible Church and then of what is now Northwest Bible Church, we used to have a little saying that I would say before the offering every day. Now offering is like the communion, it is for believers and if you are here and you are not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, when the offering plates are passed, we do not wish you to put money into the offering plate. Putting money in an offering plate will not advance you one step toward heaven.

Belief in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has offered the atoning sacrifice, is the only grounds upon which we may expect to have eternal life. I think that is consonant with what these individuals did. Servants of the Lord, they went out. They took nothing of the Gentiles. We, therefore, ought to receive such that we might be fellow helpers to the truth, the apostle says.

Now in verse 9 through verse 11, he arraigns Diotrephes,

"I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence," (What a magnificent rendering of that Greek word by the Authorized Version translators. That rings in my ears constantly.) "Who loves to have the preeminence." (Diotrephes, he,) "Receiveth us not.

Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God."

Diotrephes name, incidentally, is a rather high-flown name. It means Zeus-nurtured. So the name suggests that Diotrephes is an individual who is nourished by the god, Zeus. It was the custom for Christians in those days to discard heathen names, but this man had not. He kept his name. And there are other indications by the use of this name that he came from a level of society that was of the highest. He is an individual who at least professed the truth, whether he possessed it or not, we're not actually sure. But one thing is for sure, he is the marplot of this story. Diotrephes, after Gaius comes Diotrephes. "He receiveth not the brethren." In other words, the brethren that are recommended to the church, he does not receive them, like Apollos, who had a word of recommendation from the Apostle Paul, when he went to one of the churches. Individuals had come from the Apostle John came to the church, to which Diotrephes was the leader, evidentially, among the elders, and Diotrephes did not receive them. And in not receiving them, John says, he does not receive us. "Receiveth us not." He is a man who loves to have the preeminence.

Now, so far as we know, Diotrephes' doctrine was satisfactory. We have no indication to indicate that it was not. The error here is therefore not heresy as in 2 John. The error is a kind of clericy. That is, an individual who takes such control of the local church that he determines the things that will happen in the church. So often that is true in our churches. One individual rises who has an authority that surpasses the authority of others, loves to have the preeminence and as a result seeks to have things go his way. And sometimes the true servants of the Lord God suffer thereby.

I have a good friend. He is with the Lord now. He was troubled in his church in Southern California by some individuals in the church. And after he had died of cancer of the stomach, I was speaking with his wife in California some years ago, and she said, [name redacted] left his heart and

his stomach in Santa Ana. She felt that the troubles he had in the church, which extended over a long period of time, contributed to the trouble in his stomach; the ulcers that ultimately led to his death.

"He loveth to have the preeminence." To whom does the preeminence belong? Well the Apostle Paul in Colossians tells us very plainly that it is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who should have the preeminence in our assemblies. He said that, "He is the head of the church. He is the head of the body. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead that in all things he might have the preeminence." Diotrefes then, is the father of a long line of sons in the church.

And the Apostle Peter speaks very definitely of such in his words that I looked at a moment ago when in chapter 5 of his first epistle, he tells the elders, "To feed the flock of God which is among you. Take the oversight, thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." One of the most amusing things I think that ever happened was A. T. Robertson, the great Southern Baptist New Testament scholar, who's written a number of books including a very large Greek grammar that is still read by students of New Testament Greek.

Professor Robertson was also a preacher and he wrote a paper in one of the journals of the Southern Baptist church and in this particular article, he wrote it on Diotrefes in the denominational paper. And it was published and then the editor wrote Professor Robertson and he said as a result of your article in our paper, twenty-five deacons all over the South have stopped their subscription to the paper to show their resentment against being attacked personally in the magazine. [Laughter] He writes that in his series studies on the Greek text of the New Testament. I thought that was so interesting that men could actually look at what he was saying and say, that's I. He is writing about me. And twenty-five of them wrote in and about a hundred and twenty-five or two hundred and twenty-five thought he was, but didn't want to write in, no doubt. At any rate, Diotrefes loveth to have the preeminence. May we never have such in Believers Chapel.

In verse 10, he says, "Wherefore, if I come," this is by the way the apostle of love, remember. "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words." Can you just imagine the Apostle John saying something like this? "Prating against us with malicious words," this has been translated babbling. This fellow babbling against us with malicious words. It's what we use to call back in the nineteen fifties, yakkety-yak. I remember so many years ago seeing a cartoon of a fellow who went in on the psychiatrist's couch and he was lying there and underneath it was as he was speaking to the psychiatrist, "And then doctor, three months ago, my wife's yakkety-yak began to make sense." [Laughter]

So John accuses Diotrephes of "prating against us with malicious words" and not content with that. He doesn't receive the brethren, and actually forbids those that would receive the brethren who come, and he casts them out of the church. The first church boss was a thorough church boss. Back in the Proverbs, the writer of the Proverbs uses the same term, he says, "The wise in heart will receive commandments, but a prating fool shall fall." And in 10th verse of that 10th chapter of Proverbs he says, "He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow, but a prating fool shall fall." Diotrephes illustrates it.

And he—verse 11, he makes request, "Beloved, follow not that which is evil," that seems to be Diotrephes, "but that which is good." That seems to be Gaius. "He that doeth good (like Gaius) is of God: but he that doeth evil (perhaps like of Diotrephes) hath not seen God." And finally in the last three verses, there is an appreciation of Demetrius, who evidentially is the bearer of 3 John. "Demetrius hath good report of all men." This word, incidentally, is pure Greek as I said from Demeter, the goddess, the mother of crops and fields. The Latin, Ceres. If you grew up and you studied ancient methodology, you would have remembered either Demeter or Ceres. Demus is probably short, I say he is the bearer of the letter and he is testified to by three things. Wouldn't it be nice if we had just such testimony? He says Demetrius hath good report first, of all men; that is of the world. And of the truth himself; that is of the Lord or if this is the truth abstractly of the word of God through the Spirit and we also bear record; that is the believers and you know that our record

is true. What a magnificent thing to be testified to by those about, by the Lord or the truth, and then by those who hold the truth in fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

So Diotrephes is an example to be avoided. Demetrius is one to be admired. Let me sum up what he says. Truth is necessary. The 9th verse of the 2nd chapter makes that very plain, "Whosoever goes forward does not abide in the doctrine of Christ hath not God." Truth, the truth of the word of God is absolutely necessary for the kind of life that is pleasing to the Lord God. We have so much ignorance of the word of God. That is the reason that we have so much difficulty as individual believers and as our churches. If we were acquainted with the word of God, and if we made a effort to read and study it, and apply it to our lives with the help of the Holy Spirit, that is all that we would need for a happy, fruitful, and prosperous Christian life.

Let me say to you, my Christian friend, the word of God is sufficient for our spiritual wellbeing. We do not need the advice of others. The word of God is sufficient as it is ministered to us by the Holy Spirit. Let us not talk about the inerrancy of the word of God if we do not really follow the word of God. Read it and study it. Inerrancy has become a kind of doctrinal issue that determines in the evangelical church whether you are strong in the faith or not. I am not against that. I think that that is perfectly all right. But what I would particularly like to see in the Christian church is submission to the word of God and the living out of the truth of the word of God in our own personal life. Read the word. Constantly read the word. Let the Holy Spirit apply that to our lives, and we will find the word of God in the hands of God the Holy Spirit is sufficient for our Christian life and experience. Ignorance is so common today.

Many years ago I heard Harlan Roper talk about a fellow, I guess to whom he was speaking and to whom he had recommended a Scofield Bible, and this person replied, "Is the Scofield Bible the same one Gideon wrote?" [Laughter] That fellow had traveled a little bit. He had been in a few motels, but that was all he knew about the word of God. Think of the little boy who was asking if he knew his Bible, he said, "Look, I know my Bible. If all the Bibles in the whole church were piled up in one great pile, one on top of the other, I'd still know mine." I think that is the way a lot of people

really handle the Bible. The other thing and we'll have to close with this, not only is truth necessary, but 3 John makes it very plain that truth in love is essential. He says, "I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." The Lord Jesus being, of course, the perfect illustration of both of the emphases: truth and truth in love with love in truth.

If you are here today and never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ what you need is the truth and the truth of the saving sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, who through his atoning work has made it possible for you to enter in to eternal life. May God in his grace touch your heart. May you turn to him. I cannot make that decision. Your friends and family cannot make it. You must make it. May God help you to do that. And for those of us who have known the Lord, some of us for a long time, let us remember the apostle's injunctions about truth in love. And may as a result of the working of God the Holy Spirit in us, we have the commendation that Demetrius have, the testifying of the world, the testimony of the truth itself, and the testimony of the brethren and sisters who are in Christ. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we give Thee thanks for Thy word and we are particularly grateful for these little epistles that have been written to and for us, as well as to the lady and to Gaius and others. We thank Thee for the Holy Spirit's use of them in our lives and enable us Lord to abide in the truth but to also walk in that truth in love. For Jesus' sake. Amen.