

Title: **3 JOHN**
Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius

Text: 3 John 1-14

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Tape # Y-39b

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Introduction:

(3 John) “The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. (2) Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. (3) For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. (4) I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. (5) Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; (6) 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: (7) Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. (8) We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth. (9) I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. (10) 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. (11) 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. (12) Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true. (13) I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: (14) 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.”

Here is a letter written by the apostle John to his beloved son in the faith, Gaius. Gaius was not a pastor, preacher, or elder. He was a man whom God had saved, a believer, a member of a local church, which had been visited by some missionaries. These missionaries were traveling about, preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. In their journeys they stopped at the town where Gaius lived, to visit the brethren there. So Gaius took them into his house, fed them, entertained them and lodged them for several days, perhaps for several weeks, and when they left he gave them some traveling money to help with their expenses.

When they got back to the church of which John was the pastor, these traveling evangelists, these missionaries, could not stop talking about Gaius. They told John about him. They told their friends about him. They told the whole church about Gaius. When John heard these men talking about his spiritual son, his heart bubbled up with joy and gratitude. He wrote this letter, by the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, to commend Gaius. And he does commend him! He tells us

that Gaius loved the gospel (vv. 3-4), that he was faithful in all things (v. 5), and that he was generous, charitable and hospitable to his brethren, even to those who were total strangers (vv. 5-6). Like Abraham, Gaius entertained strangers who came to him in the name of Christ, and in so doing, he entertained angels unawares (Gen. 18:3; Heb. 13:2).

2nd John was written to the elect lady, whom John loved in the truth. This epistle is addressed to a man named “*Gaius, whom,*” John also says, “*I love in the truth.*” Truth and love are companions, twin graces that can never be separated. This epistle commends truth and love displayed in Gaius’ deeds. It is written, “*faith worketh by love*” (Gal. 5:6).

In this epistle we have a clear contrast of three men, Gaius, a very gracious man, to whom the epistle is addressed, and Diotrephes who was a proud deceiver, and Demetrius who was a man of good report. God the Holy Spirit directed the John’s heart and pen to write this brief epistle for our learning and admonition. He has preserved it for us in the Sacred Volume.

GAIUS

(v. 1) “The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.”

We see the name “*Gaius*” four other times in the New Testament (Acts 19:29; 20:4; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14).

Each time it refers to different men. This man's name was as common in the Roman Empire as the name John Smith is today. The Gaius to whom this epistle is addressed was a beloved brother who was converted under John's ministry, one of his children in the faith and dearly beloved (v. 4). Not only did John love him, he was a man "*well-beloved*" — beloved of God and chosen unto eternal salvation in Christ (Jer. 31:3; Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Thess 2:13) and beloved of his brethren.

Gaius was beloved of those saints who knew him because he was a man of great faith, integrity, and generosity. He had experienced the grace of God; and that made him gracious. He was sound in doctrine and sound in heart. Gaius was a loving and lovable man.

PROSPERITY

(v. 2) "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

The word "*above*" would be better translated "in." That is obvious in the context in which the word is used. John would not desire prosperity in temporal things above Gaius' prosperity in spiritual and eternal things. Yet, his love for Gaius and his desires for him included temporal things. What he is saying here is — "I wish that you may have a prosperous journey through this world and be in good health, even as your soul prospers. I pray that the Lord will grant his continual, manifest blessings upon you." The Amplified Bible interprets verse 2 this way.

— “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in every way and [that your body] may keep well, even as [I know] your soul keeps well *and* prospers.”

Physical health is a great blessing and is altogether the gift of God’s providential goodness. Among the countless promises of God to his people, there are many that relate to temporal things (Deut. 28:1-14).

(Deuteronomy 28:1-14) "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: (2) And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. (3) Blessed *shalt* thou *be* in the city, and blessed *shalt* thou *be* in the field. (4) Blessed *shall be* the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. (5) Blessed *shall be* thy basket and thy store. (6) Blessed *shalt* thou *be* when thou comest in, and blessed *shalt* thou *be* when thou goest out. (7) The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. (8) The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. (9) The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if

thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. (10) And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. (11) And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee. (12) The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. (13) And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do *them*: (14) And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left, to go after other gods to serve them."

The Scriptures teach us that with regard to all who are called of God by the effectual, irresistible grace and power of God the Holy Spirit to life and faith in Christ, everything for time and eternity prospers and is the blessing of God upon us (Rom. 8:28). He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will with him freely give us all things (Rom. 8:32).

TEMPORAL THINGS

God's saints in this world are give liberty to use all things temporal as we live to serve and honor God our Savior. It is written, "*all things are yours...and ye are Christ's*" (1 Cor. 3:21-23). If the Lord causes us to abound in earthly goods and/or in good health, he accompanies those blessings with grace sufficient to make them prosperous to our souls. When that is the case, let us, like Gaius, use such blessings of providence "*faithfully in whatsoever*" we do (v. 5) both in connection with our brethren in the church and kingdom of God and in connection with the world, doing good to all men, and especially to them who are of the household of faith.

If the Lord sends adversity he takes out all the bitterness of it, still his grace is sufficient. He assures us that this, too, is his blessing, the very best thing for us. So that, though the fig-tree does not blossom and fruit is not found in the vine, though the labor of the olive fail and the fields yield no meat, though the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herds in the stall, yet, the child of God can, and will say, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation (Hab. 3:17, 18).

SPIRITUAL THINGS

As in temporal things, so too in spiritual things, the child of God is always blessed and prospers. It is written,

"Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all

spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him: In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Ephesians 1:3-6)

We are blessed, in time and to all eternity, with the Father's love, the Savior's redemption, and the Holy Spirit's grace. All the blessings of grace so boundlessly bestowed upon us from eternity in Christ are gifts of God which shall not be taken away, neither in this world nor in the world to come (Rom. 11:29). Our God has given us peace and pardon, through the blood of the cross. He gives us continual manifestations of his boundless love. The Lord Jesus comes to bless, comfort, and encourage us, and to make himself known to us in ways with which he does not deal with the world (John 14:18-23).

(John 14:18-23) "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. (19) Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. (20) At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. (21) He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father,

and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. (22) Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? (23) Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

“Who shall describe the out-pourings of divine love, or the incomings of divine grace, the child of God is continually receiving from the Lord, who is blessing him with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus?”

(Robert Hawker)

ETERNAL THINGS

Regarding eternal blessings, our God has not only given us the promise of the life that now is, but of that which is to come. Indeed, eternal life is ours now. It is already begun in our souls. “*He that hath the Son of God hath life.*” He enjoys it now by faith. — “*For faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Heb. 11:1). And faith in Christ is the earnest given by the Spirit of glory to come.

GAIUS’ TESTIMONY

(v. 3) “For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.”

Some brethren came to John from the place where Gaius lived and told him that Gaius was a man who believed the truth of the gospel and that he was a man of a truly gracious spirit. He walked before God and men in such a way that he was known by God's saints as one who lived for the glory of God. His life was a life that adorned the doctrine of God our Savior in all things (Tit. 2:10). The report of these men concerning Gaius filled the old pastor with joy (v. 4).

(v. 4) "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

Nothing makes a faithful gospel preacher happier than to hear that those to whom he has preached the gospel, and for whom he has been the means God used to bring them to the knowledge of Christ, believe and walk in the truth. We can bestow no greater gift upon our friends, and no greater inheritance upon our families, than the gospel of Christ. And they can bring no greater joy and satisfaction to our hearts than to receive the truth and walk therein (Acts 3:2-6; Phile. 20-21).

(Acts 3:2-6) "And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; (3) Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. (4) And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. (5) And he gave heed unto them, expecting to

receive something of them. (6) Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

(Philemon 1:20-21) "Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord. (21) Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say."

PROPER HONOR

(v. 5) "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers."

The Holy Spirit teaches us to give honor to whom honor is due (Rev. 13:7). We are not to flatter men, but it is altogether proper to honor and commend one another.

Illustration: *My Comment to Doug*

Here John commends Gaius for his hospitality and charity to God's saints and to strangers who crossed his path. He was a kind and generous man, who cared for and ministered to the needs of others. Both his heart and his home were open to men. He used that which God had given him for the benefit of others. Thus, he both blessed the lives of many and was blessed of God in his own life (Heb. 13:1-2).

(Hebrews 13:1-2) "Let brotherly love continue. (2) Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Gaius did "*faithfully*" that which he did. He did not do things in a hypocritical and pretentious way, to be seen of men and gain their applause. But he did what he did because he loved Christ and his people (Matt. 6:1-4).

(Matthew 6:1-4) "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. (2) Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (3) But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: (4) That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."

(v. 6) "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."

This 6th verse makes it clear that the "strangers" referred to in verse 5 were traveling preachers, evangelists (missionaries), who were strangers to Gaius before they came to his town. They testified before the church at Ephesus of his love, friendship and care of them. They

were greatly moved by his spirit of grace and love and gave thanks to God for the grace of God in him.

SUPPORTING MISSIONARIES

Notice what John tells us here about the support of gospel preachers, particularly about the support of missionaries. — “*Whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well.*” In 2nd John, he warned us not to support those false teachers and preachers who come preaching “*another gospel*” (2 John 10-11). Here he tells us that we do well to aid God's children and to help make their journey through this world to be more pleasant — especially those who are traveling missionaries (Matt. 10:42; 2 Kings 4:8-10).

(Matthew 10:42) "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

(2 Kings 4:8-10) "And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where *was* a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And *so* it was, *that* as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. (9) And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this *is* an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. (10) Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither."

In verses 7 and 8 he tells us why we do well in supporting those brethren who go forth in the name of Christ preaching the gospel.

(vv. 7-8) “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.”

These men have gone out from home and family for Christ's sake. They are not supported by the heathen to whom they preach, taking nothing from them, lest the gospel be reproached. Freely we have received and freely we give. We ought to support and provide for such men. In doing so we are fellow-laborers and fellow-helpers to the truth. It is a great privilege to preach the gospel and an equal privilege and blessing to provide for those who preach it, for in doing so we also serve the cause of the gospel.

The only proper reason for the existence of any local church in this world is the furtherance of the gospel. The church exists on earth only for the preaching of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church of God is a sounding board for the gospel. It is our responsibility to use every means at our disposal to proclaim the gospel of Christ as fully and universally as we possibly can to the generation in which we live. We have no other commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8). **One of the most effective means**

we have of preaching the gospel, in any age, is gospel missions, sending out missionaries to preach the good news of redemption and grace in Christ around the world.

When I first moved to Danville, Kentucky, and assumed the pastoral responsibilities of Grace Baptist Church, before we had a house of worship, before we began any other work, before the church was able to support the pastor as they desired, I asked the men and women of Grace Church to make a commitment to the support of gospel missionaries. We had no visible means of doing so. But I was convinced then, as I am now, that **where there is a will to give God will supply the ability to give.** As in all other things, our people rallied to their pastor's request. (Some of those saints make great personal sacrifices to support their pastor, those faithful men who preach the gospel in foreign countries and needy pastors and churches in our own country. I cannot sufficiently express my thanks to God for them, or commend them too highly.) Today it is our privilege to assist in the regular support of six faithful missionaries and their families, and we have never lacked anything needed for the work at home.

God honors those who honor him, and our congregation has been blessed of God, greatly blessed, since the day we began supporting these missionaries. We have lost nothing, but gained much, as our Lord promised (Luke 6:38).

(Luke 6:38) "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

In the future I intend to call upon myself and our church family to make greater sacrifices, to give more and do more for the cause of Christ, so that any man whom God raises up to preach the gospel of Christ anywhere in the world will not lack material support for his family. Why? **Why do I ask for such commitment?** Why do I call upon God's people to give to missions? **Why should we support missionaries?** Let me give you some plain, biblical answers to that question.

WHAT IS A MISSIONARY?

First let me clearly define what a missionary is. The word "missionary" is not used in the Bible, but that should not disturb us. Neither is the word "Trinity". We practice missions, as we believe the doctrine of the Trinity, because the concept is clearly taught in Holy Scripture. The biblical word for missionary is "*evangelist.*" **Paul and Barnabas** were missionaries sent out from the church at Antioch to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 13:1-3). **Philip the evangelist** was a missionary (Acts 21:8). **All pastors** are to do the work of an evangelist, or missionary (2 Tim. 4:5). **But God has given some to his church who are specifically called to be missionaries or evangelists** (Eph. 4:11).

A missionary is a man. — No woman can serve as an evangelist, for an evangelist is a preacher and God does not call women to preach the gospel (1 Cor. 14:35; 1 Tim. 2:11-12). The wife of a missionary, that is, of an evangelist, is not herself a missionary in the true sense of the word, however much she may be an excellent wife to her husband, any more than the fact of being the wife of the President makes the First Lady herself the President of the United States.

A missionary is a man with God's message. — First and foremost, like every other man called to the work of the gospel, the missionary is a preacher. **If a man is not gifted to preach, he cannot serve as a missionary.** And **the message he preaches is, and must be, the gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ.** The missionary is **a proclaimer of good news;** and the good news he proclaims is the redemption Christ accomplished for sinners.

A missionary is a man with God's mission. — Missionaries are men called and gifted of God to **establish churches, train pastors and help establish those pastors and churches in the gospel of the grace of God, so that they might carry on the work of the gospel for the years to come.** Medical missionaries, educational missionaries and cultural missionaries are not true missionaries and should not be supported by local churches. Missionaries are men who have a

mission from God, and their mission is to preach the gospel of Christ.

With these things in mind, I want us to examine what the Spirit of God teaches in these verses of 3rd John about **the church's responsibility to missionaries**. After highly commending this man, Gaius, for all that he had done, John urged him to do even more. Realizing that **God's servants are to be supported entirely by the generous, free, voluntary gifts of his people**, John gave Gaius, and us, **four reasons** why we should support missionaries.

1. It is pleasing to God for us to do so.

John told Gaius that when God's servants come to our town, we are not only to care for them while they are with us, but we are to “*bring (them) forward on their journey after a godly sort*” (v. 6).

It is the responsibility of local churches to provide all those things which God's servants need to carry on their work. Missionaries have all the earthly needs that the rest of us have and many that we do not have. They must have homes, food and clothing for their families. They must provide health care for their households. They have to educate their children, and they have to have some means of transport, just like we do. In addition to these things, every expense for the work on the field comes out of the missionary's pocket! **Whatever it takes to keep faithful men free of earthly**

care, so that they may give themselves wholeheartedly to the work of the ministry, we must do!

John tells us that this is a **“godly sort” of work**. The marginal translation of these words is: this is **a work “worthy of God”**. It is a work becoming to those who serve God. If we do this, if we support God's servants in the work of the gospel, we do well. This is a work **pleasing to God**. God delights to see those who love Christ showing their love by generosity towards his servants (2 Cor. 9:7).

2. We should give “for his name's sake.”

“For his name's sake they went forth” (v.7). — And *“for his name's sake”* we must supply their needs. There is only one thing that compels the true servant of God to take his wife and children to a remote, far distant country, to preach the gospel, leaving behind the comforts of his homeland, the company of his friends and the warmth of his family: he is motivated by a burning jealousy for the name of Christ (Rom. 1:5, 16-17).

That same burning jealousy for Christ's name inspires God's saints to give of their means to supply those men with the support they need. **Every believer wants all men and women to hear the gospel of Christ, so that our great Savior may be known, trusted, worshipped and glorified throughout the world.** The best means

we have of accomplishing that great goal is giving of our means to support faithful gospel-preaching missionaries.

Our Lord is so highly honored by the service of those whom he sends out to preach the gospel that he counts anything we do for them as having been done for him (Matt. 10:40-42), and indeed it is. God's servants are his ambassadors. Those men who faithfully preach the gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ (the gospel of his electing love, accomplished redemption, effectual grace and saving fulness) are God's representatives and spokesmen in this world (2 Cor. 5:18-21). **Anything we do to** one of God's ambassadors we do to him. **Anything done for** God's ambassador is done for him; and **anything done against** God's ambassador is done against him.

3. Faithful men have no other means of support.

“Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles” (v. 7). — These men preached to the Gentiles freely, refusing to seek, or even take financial support from unbelievers.

There are three things I want to say about preachers and money. I know what the people of this world think, and I know that the preachers of this world have a terrible reputation regarding money. Preachers, as a whole, are the poorest credit risks in our society. They have a terrible reputation for living beyond their means and not paying their bills. That is horribly shameful! But

we must never make the mistake of stereotyping God's servants with the characteristics of religious hirelings. God's servants are worthy of our generous support. Because they are faithful to Christ, the gospel of his grace and the souls of men, they have no means of support other than the generosity of God's people. There are three things we need to know about God's servants.

*First, **God's servants do not preach for earthly gain.** These men described by John “*went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.*” They did not go out seeking men's goods. They went forth seeking men's souls. It is never hard to tell whether a preacher is seeking your goods, or the good of your soul. If he spends the bulk of his time talking about your goods (health, wealth and prosperity), you can be sure the rogue is after your money! If he spends his time and energy speaking to you about Christ and your soul, it is because he is seeking the good of your soul.*

Paul condemned those pretentious, self-motivated, covetous, greedy false prophets who make merchandise of men's souls and prostitute the gospel for gain (2 Cor. 2:17; 1 Thess. 2:5-9). **God's servants do not seek personal gain. They will not enrich themselves by the gospel.** It would be impossible to make a faithful pastor or missionary rich. If he is faithful, that which he does not need he will give to someone who does. He has no desire to hoard up money, lands or jewels. Can you imagine a rich prophet or apostle? Ridiculous!

Second, our Lord expressly forbids his servants to solicit support, especially from unbelievers. When he sent his disciples out to preach, he said, “*Go not from house to house*” (Luke 10:7). That means, “Do not go begging, soliciting help, or in any way implying that the cause of Christ, his church, his gospel, or his servants depend upon the aid and support of men.

If I am God's servant, material, monetary, earthly considerations have nothing to do with what, where, when, or how I preach. In over thirty-five years of preaching, I have never asked anyone for a penny, nor even allowed the consideration of cost or expense to enter into any decision regarding the work of the ministry. I am God's servant, and God meets my needs. **This church is God's church, and God supplies our needs. We will not dishonor our heavenly Father by begging and groveling before men for a little money.** I speak from personal experience, but what I have said is true of all who truly serve our God. Any man who begs for money in the name of Christ, promising rewards from God if people give him their money, or implying that God's work might fail if they do not, is a liar and a false prophet.

Third, the Lord Jesus also forbids his servants to make provision for themselves (Matt. 10:9-10; Luke 10:4-7). He commands that all who preach the gospel are to live by the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14).

(Matthew 10:9-10) "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, (10) Nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat."

(Luke 10:4-7) "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. (5) And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace *be* to this house. (6) And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. (7) And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house."

God's servants should not have to provide for themselves, and it is wrong for local churches to make it necessary for them to do so by being, selfish, niggardly misers. **No servant of God, no man who truly ministers to the souls of men, should be required to provide even a piece of bread for himself or his family.** It is the responsibility of local churches to take care of those who preach the gospel and to see that those who preach the gospel live by the gospel. The less earthly care a pastor or missionary has, the freer he is to give himself to the work of the ministry (prayer, study, preaching, writing, etc.); and the more he gives himself to these things, the more useful he is in the cause of Christ.

Not only is this the responsibility of local churches, it is what God's churches in fact do. God's saints are not

misers! **If God is in any work, anywhere in the world, God will supply the needs of that work through the free, voluntary, generous gifts of his people.** Anything that has to be primed, pumped, pushed, pulled and promoted by men is not of God.

4. By our loving, free generous support of God's faithful servants, we become “fellow-helpers to the truth” (v. 8).

When we supply a man's needs, so that he can preach the gospel of Christ freely to others, we become allies with him in the work of preaching the gospel. What a privilege! The work of the ministry is God's work, but God does his work through the labors of faithful men, through the preaching of the gospel. And these men do their work by the generosity of faithful men and women, who work hard and freely give of their means, so that the gospel may be preached freely around the world.

God's church is one, and we are one with those missionaries we are privileged to support. Their cause is our cause; their work is our work, and their reward is our reward.

The next time we have the opportunity to show hospitality to, entertain, give to, or do anything for, one of God's servants, let us remember these things:

- This is a work that is pleasing to God.
- This is a work that is done by faith in and for the honor of Christ's name.

- This is a work done for worthy men, men who have forsaken all to preach the gospel. They are worthy to live by the gospel.
- By these things we are “*fellow-helpers to the truth.*”

Let each one of us do whatever God gives us the opportunity and the ability to do for Christ, his servants and the furtherance of the gospel, and let us pray that God will continue to raise up men to preach the gospel of his free grace in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of his elect and the glory of his own great name. — “*The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest*” (Luke 10:2).

DIOTREPHESES

(v. 9) “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.”

John wrote a letter to the church of which Gaius was a member. It was a letter of instruction, counsel and apostolic orders. But Diotrephes, who was evidently an officer in the church (perhaps the pastor), refused to accept his instruction and counsel, because he loved to have preeminence. He wanted people to honor and follow him. He craved recognition. Pastor Henry Mahan wrote, “Everything in a church ought to be done by

pastor and people in love, meekness and with mutual consent, with each seeking the glory of Christ and the good of all (Phil. 2:3-8; Rom. 12:3, 10:1; 1 Cor. 4:6,7).” Diotrephes did what he did for the glory of Diotrephes! He was one of those wolves in sheep’s clothing Paul told the church at Ephesus would arise from their midst “*speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them*” (Acts 20:30).

(v. 10) “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.”

John was determined, when he next visited the church, to expose this wicked man to the church and reprove him for his deeds (Gal. 2:11). He describes Diotrephes as one who spoke prating (empty) things against him and other faithful servants of God. How common Diotrephes’ behavior is to this day among self-serving preachers! True servants of God, true preachers of the gospel are prated against not only by men of the world, but also by professors of religion. That which is spoken against them is just “*prating,*” silly, idle and empty slanders. Such slanders take up any little matter and rail against faithful men in order to hurt their character, spoil their usefulness and render their labors ineffective. But all their railing and prating is only to exalt themselves in the eyes of the people (1 Tim. 5:19; 2 Cor. 10:10).

Diotrephes was not satisfied with speaking against the John and his ministry. He refused to receive the preachers and missionaries sent by John. He threatened to cast those who received them out of the church.

(v. 11) “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.”

The apostle here tells Gaius and us not to follow Diotrephes’ wickedness. Such as pride, ambition, love of preeminence and self-exaltation is to be rebuked and those who engage in it are to be rejected as evil men (Titus 3:1,2; Jams 4:11; Eph. 4:31,32). He who manifests the grace and spirit of Christ in attitude and action is of God, and he who does not has evidently not experienced the grace of God and does not know God at all (1 John 4:6-8, 20-21).

DEMETRIUS

(v. 12) “Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true.”

Demetrius was a man whose character, like Gaius’, was exactly opposite to that of Diotrephes. His was an example to be followed. Demetrius was kind, considerate and gracious. He had a good reputation and report. He was loved and respected by all who knew him.

It is sad, but terribly common, that trouble makers and those of a critical spirit find many followers. Let those who are wise mark the man of a Christ-like attitude and a loving spirit and follow his example. John bore record to the character of Demetrius, and we know that his word is true and dependable.”

Diotrephes and Demetrius are known to us only by name. Robert Hawker wrote of them, “How different their characters were! How opposed while they lived! How differently regarded when they died. How opposite in the esteem of the Church, through all ages! And how everlastingly opposite, if dying as they are here said to have lived, through all the eternal world? Reader! How blessed to have a good report of all men; yea, and of the truth itself, which is Christ (John 14:6). Oh! For the whisper of Jesus, in a dying hour, to confirm his grace in the soul, as manifested in a living hour; that both in life and in death the soul be found in him (Isa. 43:1-4).”

(vv. 13-14) “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.”

REFLECTIONS

I cannot conclude this study of 3rd John in a more edifying way than by giving you Robert Hawker's reflections upon these fourteen verses of Inspiration.

“What a beautiful view is here afforded, of the beloved Apostle in his pastoral office, addressing the faithful Gaius, beloved in the Lord. To behold the venerable saint of God, amidst all the infirmities of declining years, thus blessing God, and blessing the servant of God, in his wishes both for spiritual and temporal prosperity.

But while we look at John, who justly commands our veneration and our love, let us look infinitely above John, and behold John's Lord still blessing all his church; and every Gaius of his redeemed family below, with blessings in himself.

Precious, precious Jesus! We desire to praise thee for all that is lovely, in the disciple whom Jesus loved; for all that is lovely in John, was, and is derived from thee! Lord! Hasten on thy blessed purposes, and bring on thy glorious day when thou wilt come to be glorified in thy saints, and to be admired in all that believe! To thee, Lord, it belongs, to keep thy Church from falling, and to present it faultless before the presence of thy glory with exceeding joy. In the blessed hope of

thy appearing, may all thy Church in thee,
and through thee, daily ascribe to Father,
Son, and Holy Ghost, Israel's God in
covenant, endless praises. Amen.