

3 John 1:1-15—Walking in the Truth with Love

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I. Introduction

- a. One of the reasons we go to Cuba is to do exactly what this text is talking about.
- b. We not only go to teach the truth but to see if they are walking in the truth. And it was indeed a joy to see that they are remaining faithful and they are growing.
- c. One pastor in particular talked with us at length how much he had been helped by our teaching and it was bearing much fruit in the church.
- d. He had no access to learn theology and how to prepare a sermon because they cannot afford it. He sees how all the Bible fits together and he is confidently leading the church to walk in the truth through our efforts to teach him.
- e. You might ask, “Would it not be easier to teach them through Zoom or some other means of long distance communication?”
- f. As this text ends, there’s much value in face to face instruction. It seems to me that we are not only there to teach the truth and see if they are still walking in the truth but also to love these brothers.
- g. They so much enjoy seeing us come and frankly, it is very encouraging for us too.

II. Outline

- a. **Walking in the Truth with Love**
- b. **NOT Walking in the Truth with Love**
- c. **Conclusion: We Need Walk in Truth and Love Together!**

III. Exposition

- a. Intro of text
 - i. Let’s see if we can get the flow of the letter. The apostle John describes himself as an “elder” which might seem to be a little unusual for an apostle. But Peter does the something in his letter.
 1. As we’ve talked about before, the word elder is not referring to his age but rather to the office of pastor. As you know, the NT uses elder, pastor, and overseer as synonymous terms describing the one office.
 2. It seems strange that the church made separate offices of hierarchy that did not exist in the church.
 - ii. The letter was written to his “beloved Gaius.”
 1. It seems that Gaius is a member of another congregation now other than the one John is writing from. There is a man named Diotrephes who is one of elders.
 - a. Gaius may be an elder too but it does not mention it. It seems more likely that Gaius is a faithful disciple of John and a faithful member of this church.

- b. We also hear John speak of “the brothers.” He has received some information about the church to whom he is writing. In fact, that’s why he is writing. The news he received was troubling to him.
 - i. Who were these brothers?
 - 1. It seems clear that these brothers were like traveling evangelists or missionaries.
 - 2. They were recommended by John and they were visiting to build relationships with this church to support their work FOR the truth.
- c. These brothers visited this church and Gaius welcomed them...even took care of them, but Diotrephes rejected them.
- d. These brothers are the ones testifying or delivering this information to John. With that in mind, let us look at point #1.

b. Point #1—Walking in the Truth with Love

- i. Primary Themes
 - 1. The truth is of primary importance in this letter. Some form of it is mentioned seven times in this short letter...not to mention the examples of walking in the truth.
 - a. This idea of walking in the truth gives us an image of not only knowing and believing the truth but also living out the truth.
 - 2. Also, the theme of love is repeated in some form, six times. Some would like to pit love against truth. Others take up the banner of truth void of love. Neither are right.
 - a. The apostle Paul warns us in **1 Corinthians 13:2-3** ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. (See 3 Jn:3, 6—substituting love for truth)
 - 3. Application: Truth and love are inseparable. I do not know how to love apart from truth. But also, love is patient with those who are slow to learn and walk in the truth. Love helps them to walk in the truth with love.
 - a. How are you doing with this? Are you heavier on one side than the other? If you are like me, I tilt toward truth. I am aware of that weakness and therefore need to keep an eye on it. How about you? How are doing in the walk of truth and love? Do you know your weakness? Do you have someone who will help you and check on you? We need each other. The body of Christ is an important role in keeping us.
- ii. Notice how John was eager to know about Gaius’s soul—**3 John 1:3** ³ For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.
 - 1. This is how love expresses itself in the life of the church. John began the letter by saying--**3 John 1:1** The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

2. He even knows that he aligns with him in the truth. Indeed, John likely taught him the truth.
 - a. In other words, what Gaius believes was also lived out! His practice matched his profession.
 - b. I have a deeper love...a deeper relationship with those with whom I am like-minded in the truth.
 - c. I get a sense of dying together over the truth we believe.
 - d. That's one of the reasons we make use of a statement of faith. They state who we are and what we believe. They attempt to protect from potential problems concerning truth and doctrine.
- iii. Also take note that John prays for the health of his dear friend--Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.
 1. We find it easy to be concerned about someone's health often at the expense of checking on his or her soul. May it never be!
 2. We need a renewed sense of soul care. **Hebrews 12:15** ¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.
 3. But let us not neglect the physical needs either. I find that many times one can be affected by the other. Both are important.
 4. Do you pray for each other like this? Do you know the physical and spiritual health of each other? You should. Ask the Lord to stir your love for each other in this area.
 - a. **Hebrews 10:24-25** ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together
- iv. Third, I would like to draw your attention to John's greatest joy--**3 John 1:4** ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.
 1. We went over this text in our family devotion and I ended by saying to my kids that I would find no greater joy than to get word from others—even strangers—that they were walking in the truth of the gospel. This has been our most important goal for them and the most glorious one.
 2. However, this language John uses of child needs to be understood as a spiritual child. In other words, Gaius was a disciple of John.
 3. It assumes discipleship. John did not merely convert Gaius but disciplined him. Now he is out on his own and he is walking faithfully in the truth even when John is not around.
 4. I would like to encourage you to invest in someone. I would also like to encourage you to seek someone that will invest in you. Maybe with everyone seeking the same thing you will find each other. Discipleship is the program God has given us to grow and mature followers. It takes time but that time is worth it.
 - a. I read this in my morning devotional—Proverbs 9:9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.

5. There may be a void of great joy in your life because you are only self-interested. The walk of a believer is that of others. Yes. We need to attend to our own soul but it should be to pour into others!
 - a. Consider **Philippians 2:4** Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.
- v. Briefly: How can we be faithful, fellow workers FOR the truth? Is everyone called to GO to the mission field? John gives a principle to follow.
 1. **3 John 1:5-8** ⁵ Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, ⁶ who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.
 2. Gaius cares for these brothers. John calls it “a faithful thing.” Do you see the simple caring for needs as being faithful to God? Too simple?
 3. A true hint of hospitality emerges here. Hospitality really means love of strangers as we’ve talked about in Hebrews. This is what Gaius did!
 - a. Just a side note: did you hear these brothers telling John about the faithfulness of Gaius? We should imitate such behavior. We should notice God’s grace in other people’s lives. We should encourage others by telling others of their faithfulness. Not only did the brothers report this to John but John encouraged Gaius by telling him what was said about him!
 4. John encourages Gaius but then urges him to do even more—send the brothers on their journey in a manner worthy of God. Why? Because they have **gone out for the sake of the Name**, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.
 5. What does John conclude based on this? People like this should have our support. For what purpose? Because when we do, we are fellow workers for the truth!!! Not all are called to go but all are called to be workers FOR the truth. In other words, you can be a servant for the truth by supporting those who go out for the sake of the Name!
 6. You can do that in a very practical way by giving to the Golden State Offering. But you also did this for me. Your support of this work in Cuba was working for the truth. And I was able to help them financially through your giving. We are supporting their work for the truth.
 7. Go and send or disobey. There are no other options.
- c. **Point #2**—we are given a clear contrast of what love of others is versus love of self. Point 2 is **NOT Walking in the Truth with Love--9-10 says** ⁹ I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. ¹⁰ So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.
 - i. It seems John had written a letter to the church earlier and Diotrephes rejected it. This letter to Gaius was John’s pursuit of the matter.
 - ii. The question is, “Why does Diotrephes reject John’s authority and letter?”

iii. The simple answer comes from how John describes him—"who likes to put himself first."

1. It was very possible that what Diotrephes had done looked like he was protecting the flock from false teachers, which is always a danger that leaders must be on guard for. However, John sees this rejection as protecting himself...protecting his position.
2. This is such a danger because all of us love self more than we know.
3. Hunger for power will exist to the end...even in the best of us. But the answer to bad authority is not NO authority. Good authority is what we need.
4. There are some clues that should have indicated a problem in his life.
 - a. A leader was speaking "wicked nonsense" about others...in particular John and the brothers who John describes as have a true testimony, who deserve being sent out "in a manner of worthy of God" and as those who "have gone out for the sake of the name."
 - b. This leader does not welcome these brothers and stops those who want to! We should pay attention to such activities in leadership and not let that persist.

iv. This activity was revealing. John says to Gaius--**3 John 1:11** ¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

1. John is clearly telling Gaius not to imitate Diotrephes's behavior. It is easy to imitate the conduct of others. The problem is that evil can be imitated too.
2. John then makes the statement that not only includes Diotrephes but everyone in the world—Whoever does evil has not seen God.
 - a. It reminds me of **John 3:3** Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."
 - b. If you are not a Christian or you are not sure, this call is for you. **John 3:7** 'You must be born again.'
 - c. **John 3:16-18** ¹⁶ ¶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
 - d. Will you repent and believe in Jesus?

v. What about Diotrephes? Is there hope for such people? Does anyone feel they are beyond self-love? I am reluctant to claim that I have this beat! Thankfully, I have brothers who love me. I believe they would do just as John plans to do—confront Diotrephes.

1. This is the teaching of Jesus. Consider this: Matthew 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."
2. We hope this would result in its intended outcome!

IV. Conclusion—Walking in Truth with Love TOGETHER!

- a. John offered Demetrius (the courier) as one of those worthy to show hospitality. John even planned to come and visit with Gaius and talk to him face to face.
 - i. There something that needs to be noted here. We live in a digital world. There are times for conversations that do not involve a face to face encounter. But we need more of them than we have. I read a story called *The Tethered World*. One of the characters had a serious moment in her life. She said “I sat closer to my brother than normal. I needed his courage to rub off on me.”
- b. Dear friends, we need each other. We need truth and love to rub off on each other. We need to be checked on. We needed to be encouraged. We need to be confronted. We need to be walking in the truth with love!
- c. Are you walking in the truth? Are you checking on and encouraging each other? **3 John 1:4** ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.