



The Epistle of Love ***“Truth and Life”*** **The Epistle of Third John**

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In these three epistles, truth and love are always connected. True love is limited to those who have the same love for the truth about God. That love for the truth is what makes a crowd of people a part of the Church of Jesus Christ.

- 1st John was written as a “general epistle” to be read in all the house churches. 1st John establishes that truth, and John said the evidence that we love the truth is that we live in obedience to it!
- 2nd John was written to a “specific, but unnamed lady and family” in a specific church, warning her to be discerning regarding those to whom she showed hospitality. 2nd John limits the expression of our true love to those who also have the same passion for the truth.
- 3rd John was written to a “specific individual named Gaius” commending him for his gracious hospitality toward traveling evangelists, even amidst the opposition he had received from one of the leaders in the church. 3rd John exhorts those who have embraced the truth not to withhold love from those who also embrace the truth.

That which connects all three letters is John’s concern for the preservation and proclamation of TRUTH.

- The essential purpose of the Church is to uphold the Apostolic TRUTH that was entrusted to it – do not altar or adapt.
- Since the foundation of the Church is the TRUTH of the Word of God, everything that is built upon it must also be according to that biblical TRUTH.
- One day, every sermon will be tested by the fire of TRUTH.
- If it were based upon the TRUTH of God’s Word, it will survive as gold, silver and precious stones.
- If it were based upon the false philosophy of man, it will be destroyed as wood, hay and stubble.
- Jesus Christ came into the world as the LIVING TRUTH; The Word of God made flesh to dwell among us.
- The Apostles lived and walked with that TRUTH for three years, and they declared that TRUTH to those who were the “called out and assembled ones”!
- Therefore, the Church must be built upon that TRUTH, and believers are to live in that TRUTH, preserve that TRUTH, protect that TRUTH, and proclaim that TRUTH the same way the Apostles preached the TRUTH, so others can hear the TRUTH and be saved.

1. Gaius – the Beloved Leader – Vs 1 – *“The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth!”*

In that culture, in that day, hospitality was not only expected, it was required, especially of those in leadership positions in the church.

- The early church had no buildings – everything they did was carried out in the homes of their members.
- There were no “safe” inns – so the traveling evangelists were obligated to stay in the homes of the church members.
- Because many false prophets who were also seeking hospitality from the church members, some of them, including Diotrephes, not only closed their homes to ALL evangelists, but Diotrephes tried to force others to do the same.
- Gaius had welcomed many of God’s servants into his home, despite the opposition from Diotrephes.
- John addressed Gaius as “beloved”, which meant he was a believer in the TRUTH about the Person and Work of Jesus.
- John also gave Gaius two significant commendations:
 - Verse 3 – His personal testimony – ***“thou walkest in the truth!”***
 - Verse 5-6 – His personal witness – ***“thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers!”***
- John also gave Gaius a word of confirmation:
 - Verse 8 – **His personal support** – ***“If thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well – that we might be fellowshippers of the truth!”***

2. Diotrephes – the Divisive Leader – Vs 9 – *“I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.”*

Diotrephes was a man who had not only closed his own doors to the traveling evangelists, but he also had forbidden

anyone in the church from offering such hospitality.

- Diotrephes was so blinded by his pride that in protecting his place of preeminence, he was, in effect, replacing Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church.
- Diotrephes rejected ministerial leadership – Vs 9 – ***“I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes receiveth us not!”***
- Diotrephes criticized and falsely accused the Apostle John – Vs 10 – ***“He prated against us with malicious words”***
- This is the only place in the New Testament where the Greek Word translated “malicious” is used; it literally means “of the devil.”
- Diotrephes cast out of the church those who gave hospitality to traveling evangelists – Vs 10 – ***“Neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church!”***
- Diotrephes would have to be disciplined by the church for his evil behavior – VS 10-11 – ***“If I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth”***

3. Demetrius – the Godly Leader – Vs 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!”*

John counseled Gaius not to follow or imitate that which was evil, as manifested by Diotrephes, but to imitate that which was good, as manifested by Demetrius, who was affirmed by three witnesses:

- He had a good testimony of all men – *no one could accuse him of any violation of the truth.*
- He stood for the truth – *when he spoke, it was obvious that he had embraced the truth in and through his life.*
- He was highly esteemed by other leaders of like heart for the truth – *including the Apostle John.*

Application...

Three great truths stand out in these three epistles:

- True believers must **know the truth** of the gospel.
- True believers must **love the truth** of the gospel.
- True believers must **live the truth** of the gospel.