

3 John

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December 1, 2021



3 John 1:13-15

Vs. 13-14

- In the end, Christianity is all about relationships. It's all about the way we love each other and give ourselves in service to each other, all in the name of Christ. I remember one of my mentors saying when I was a young pastor that in a person's or family's time of crisis, they will rarely ever remember what you say, but they will always remember that you were there. A text, an email, or even a hand written note cannot convey the full message, for in communication between one Christian to another, the written word cannot adequately convey the tone, the feeling, of Christ's love. To be able to see into the eyes of another, to hear their heart, to understand that even criticism when given in love is a good thing, can only be done face to face.
- Paul had this same issue with the Corinthian church. In 2 Corinthians 1:13-14, Paul realizes that they only partially understood his previous letter. Moreover, they evidently had complained in a letter to Paul that he was somewhat two-faced: meek when with them but very bold in his letters. He spends a good part of 2 Cor. 10 addressing that issue. From chapter 1 on through 2 Corinthians Paul clearly wants to come see them in order to get everything straightened out. One more letter was only going to muddle things even more.
- For John here, there were perhaps practical issues at hand. In the first century it wasn't practical for people to write lengthy letters. Papyrus, the paper of the time, was expensive and often hard to come by. One did not simply run out and buy a ream of paper. So if John did have many more things to write to his friend Gaius, it simply wouldn't be practical or even good stewardship to fill up a great many more pages when they would be soon seeing each other. Recall that earlier we mentioned there was a tradition that John himself appointed Gaius to be Bishop of Pergamum, so perhaps this was on John's list of things to discuss. This is so much like John 20:30-31 and 21:25. What are you not telling us, John?! What did you not say?!

Vs. 15

- “Peace be to you”: For John, this is not some common customary closing a letter that one might find in every ancient letter. For John, the “Peace” he is sending is peace in the deepest sense. This peace is the gift of God to those who through faith and love live in the eternal life of God here and now. This peace lives in the hard reality of the world. It does not take a “Polyannish”

view, but a realistic, truthful view. This peace exists in the world as it is. It is birthed from the eternal life which is “from the beginning” (1 John 1:1). This is the peace found in Jesus at the Last Supper, who, knowing the agony of Gethsemane and the Cross was already at the door, still washed the feet of all 12 disciples, including Judas, and began the evening by saying, “My peace I give to you...Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful” (John 14:27). This is the “peace that surpasses all understanding” (Phil 4:7). Because of sin, the world is *always* an uncertain place, but in Christ we have peace, no matter what.

- “The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.”: In an age where communication was difficult and travel risky and infrequent, it seems amazing there was as much interconnection between the churches as there was. John is almost certainly writing from Ephesus. If Pergamum was the destination of this letter to Gaius, then the two were a good 100 miles apart. Yet, Gaius had friends in John’s church and John wanted each one of their mutual friends greeted individually in Gaius’ church. A quick reading of Romans 16 shows that Paul knew a great many of the people of the church in Rome, yet he had never been there. Again, its all about relationships. The amazing family connection we are given when we have Christ as our Savior is unique to the Christian faith.
- In summary, there are some clear threads running through all of John’s epistle, running from the loom of his gospel. There is the insoluble bond between faith and love. Those who have faith love God and love their brothers and sisters. Those who do not love their brothers and sisters cannot love God either and therefore have no real faith, have nothing that resembles the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Diotrephes here in 3 John cannot be said to be a real Christian because he does not show love to traveling believers, nor to his own church members who do. Another thread is the thread of Truth. Believers once they hear and know the truth are to obey it, (vs. 3). There is no gray area here for John. Either you obey the Truth and prove your salvation or you are disobedient, in sin, and your salvation is open to question. How can you claim to be saved and not love your brother or your sister? How can you claim to be saved and know the Truth and consciously and willfully choose to be disobedient? A third thread is finding Christ-like examples to follow and pattern your life after such examples (vs. 11). We see the same admonition in Hebrews 13:7 and 1 Peter 5:3 and Phil. 3:17. In John’s three short letters are all we need to know to live the life Christ called us to live.