RESOURCES

The Letters of John - John R. W. Stott

1-3 John - Robert W. Yarbrough

I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude - David Walls and Max Anders

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Calvary Chapel Lynchburg presents

Through the Bible

with Pastor Troy Warner

My Notes

3 John

As John, the last of the apostles, grew old, doubtless the Church would have wondered who would lead them. Who could take up the mantle of the disciples of Jesus Himself? In his third epistle, written to a man named Gaius, John helps answer that question. He commends Gaius for helping the Christian servants who traveled to the churches, and offers him one good and one bad example of leadership in the Church. Diotrepehes is the bad example: a selfish, bullying man who refused to accept even the words of the apostles. John plans to come deal with him personally. The good example is a man named Demetrius, who was said to have a good testimony. That is all we know of him. As far as we know he did no great works, nor write a theological treatise, but he was faithful, and that was enough for John. We learn from this not to follow celebrity or force, but those who are faithful and approved by the Lord.

January 23, 2019

About 3 John

Author: John

Date: ca. 90-95 AD

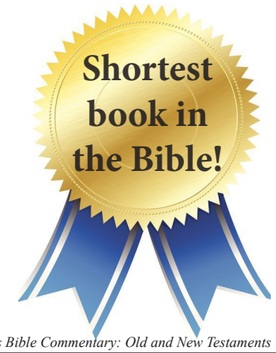
Genre: Epistle

Purpose: John writes to encourage Gaius in his faithful support of Gospel messengers and to follow godly examples in the church, such as Demetrius.

Characteristics: A personal letter written written with encouragement, exhortation, and with practical instruction concerning examples others are setting in the body of Christ.

Outline

I. Salutation **(Vss. 1-4)**
II. The Godly Gaius **(Vss. 5-8)**
III. The Dictatorial Diotrephes **(Vss. 9-11)**
IV. The Devout Demetrius **(Vs. 12)**
V. The Apostle's Plan and Benediction **(Vss. 13-14)**



Outline by William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*

3 Major Themes in 3 John

Hospitality

John wrote to encourage those who were kind to others. Genuine hospitality for traveling Christian workers was needed then and is still important today.

Faithful Christian teachers and missionaries need support. Whenever you can extend hospitality to others, it will make you a partner in their ministry.

Pride

Diotrephes not only refused to offer hospitality but also set himself up as a church boss. Pride disqualified him from being a real leader.

Leaders in the church must shun pride and its effects on them. Be diligent to honor the Lord in your position of leadership.

Faithfulness

Gaius and Demetrius were commended for their faithful work in the church. They were held up as examples of faithful, selfless servants.

Don't take godly leaders and servants in the church for granted. We ought to pray for and encourage leaders who serve Him so they do not grow weary.

Content adapted from *Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps*

Questions to Think About

1.) Whether we send or we go ourselves, the Gospel mission is dear to the Lord. Gaius was involved in supporting missionaries who faithfully preached the Gospel. What are ways we can support our missionaries? How are you engaged in being "fellow workers", as John says, of missionaries of the Good News?

2.) John encourages Gaius to follow good examples and not evil. In what way have good examples in the body of Christ bolstered your faith? How could following a bad example hinder your walk with Christ?

3.) Gaius was a man who was walking in the truth, and this brought John great joy. What does it mean to walk in the truth? What are practical instructions from Scripture for us to ensure that we embrace and walk in the truth?

John wrote his letters and the book of Revelation near the very end of the first century. This map shows how the gospel spread throughout the world during the first and second centuries. In under 60 years the gospel had been well-established as far as Rome. By the second century, churches had been planted and were thriving as far as Spain and throughout Africa. Through mission journeys like Paul's, and through the efforts of faithful brothers and sisters to support missionaries like Gaius, the gospel was effectively spread throughout the known world. The continuing ministry of John near the end of the first century certainly had an impact on the health and vibrance of the early church.

Two Disciples of John

Polycarp

Polycarp is recorded in early church history as a disciple of the Apostle John. He was a bishop in the city of Smyrna, one of the seven churches addressed by Jesus in Revelation. Tertullian records that John appointed him to be bishop over the church at Smyrna.[2] It is recorded in the early church writing *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* that when brought before a proconul to revile Christ, Polycarp resisted and stated, "'Eighty-six years I have served him and he has done me no wrong. How could I blaspheme my king who saved me?'"[1] It is generally held that Polycarp's death happened during early 155 AD.[1] According to this statement that he was 86 years old on this day of his martyrdom, we can surmise that he would have been born in 69 AD. John was faithful to pass on the teachings of Jesus, discipling faithful men like Polycarp, and like Gaius, mentioned in 3 John, to lead the church for years to come in Asia Minor.

Papias

Another of John's disciples according to some in church tradition is Papias, who was appointed as bishop over the church at Hieraplolis according to Eusebius.[2] Papias was a conteporary of Polycarp, a young man under the influence of John's leadership and instruction in the late first-century, early second-century church. He is the source in church history which first points to Mark's gospel being a recording of Peter's testimony of Christ: "'This also the elder [John] said: "Mark having become the interpreter of Peter wrote accurately everything that he remembered of the things that were either said or done by Christ.'"'"[2] Papias records hearing from John concerning Mark's gospel. Because of his contact with the Apostle John, his writings were one of the more sought-after; as a result, many of the manuscripts of his writings are lost and only fragments of his wiritings remain to this day.[2]

[1] *The Apostolic Fathers in English*, Rick Brannan, Editor.
[2] *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects, and Doctrines*, William Smith and Henry Wace, Editors.

Through the Bible – 3 John

Demetrius - Unsung Hero by Daniel Weeks

Introduction

Who led you to faith in the Lord? Do you remember their name? Many believers today will be able to attribute their coming to the Lord to some of the spiritual giants of the 20th century; men like Billy Graham and Chuck Smith. And yet, a good portion of believers throughout the world have been led to the Lord by those who will not be recorded in the history books. Truly, a large portion of our faith has been handed down to us by those whose names we can't remember. Such would have been the case for a man named Demetrius. Demetrius is only mentioned one time in the Bible: 3 John 12. We don't know anything about this man, save for this one sentence: "Demetrius has a *good* testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true." All we know about him is that he was a faithful man who had a good testimony. How many people throughout church history have there been just like Demetrius, the ones who faithfully serve the Lord regardless of receiving recognition? There are a number of lessons we can learn from this man of faith: The importance of having a character worthy of imitation and the importance of having a good testimony.

A Character Worthy of Imitation

John wrote his third letter to a friend named Gaius. He introduces Demetrius in the midst of warning Gaius about a man named Diotrephes. Apparently, Diotrephes was an authoritarian leader in the local congregation Gaius belonged to. Diotrephes rejected the apostles and kicked brothers and sisters out of the church. It's in this context that John encourages Gaius to "not imitate what is evil, but what is good."[1] He then immediately introduces Demetrius, as if to say, "Don't imitate the character you see in Diotrephes, rather, imitate what you will see in Demetrius."

Too often Christians are uncomfortable with the idea of being imitated for fear of becoming proud. While this reasoning is sound, and we should always be on guard for our own pride, the principal of imitating those of worthy character is something we see a number of times in the New Testament. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to "Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ."[2] John encouraged Gaius to imitate the character of Demetrius. Jesus said that we, His followers, are the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Who else should be set as examples to this world? If a man is walking faithfully before the Lord,

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[1] *The New King James Version*. (1982). (3 Jn 11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
[2] *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Co 11:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

as was Demetrius, his character ought to be worthy of imitation. If the apostle John had been writing about you, would he have been able to say the same thing?

A Good Testimony from All

So, what was it about the character of Demetrius that caused John to give him such a high recommendation? All John says is that he had a good testimony from all, from the truth, and from the apostle himself. As Warren Wiersbe said, "He had a good report from the saints and from the Word itself. You could test his life by the Bible, and it passed the test."[3] This is quite a compliment! Demetrius was a man of the Word who had proven character. Our culture needs more men and women like Demetrius, the ones who are willing to walk with the Lord in integrity regardless of recognition or applause. This would imply that we would walk uprightly before the Lord in secret as well as in public. 1 John 2:28 says, "Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." It was obvious that Demetrius was abiding. What a wonderful challenge and example for us today to do the same.

Conclusion

If John had not inserted v. 12 into this short letter, we would have never known about Demetrius. Even still, Demetrius is hardly heralded as one of the "heroes of the faith." Yet does this make his testimony any less important? We have every reason to believe that he was a man of God and served the Lord faithfully. Who knows how the Lord used Him? Who knows what kind of work he did unto the Lord? And it didn't so much matter if he was famous or recognized, because the Lord saw him.

Why do we serve the Lord? Is it for recognition or fame? How many other men and women are just like Demetrius whose names aren't recorded for us? Does that make their testimony less important? Absolutely not, they are the unsung heroes of the faith! The Lord calls each of us to walk with Him and to serve Him regardless of our own status among men. We should never think that our service to the Lord is anything less if we go unnoticed, for Jesus Himself said, "your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."[4] So, whether we're known or obscure, whether we're remembered or forgotten, none of this should have any bearing on our zeal and work for the Lord. We're here to make only one name great, and it's not our own, but Jesus'.

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[3] Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament* (p. 783). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

[4] *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 6:4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.