

3John v9–12
Willing to Suffer for Good

Thursday, September 12, 2024 • Read 3John v9–12

Questions from the Scripture text: To whom else has John written about hosting the missionary brethren (v9)? But who has the preeminence among them? And what is his attitude about that? How did he respond to the request for hospitality? Where might John go (v10)? What will he do if he goes there? How does John describe Diotrophes's deeds? How does he describe his speech? What does he do to the brethren? What does he do to church members who do differently? What is Gaius in danger of imitating (v11)? What do Diotrophes's actions show about him? Who has what (v12)? From whom? And from what? And also from whom? What does Gaius know about this last testimony?

What do believers need if they are to be godly? 3John v9–12 looks forward to the second serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these four verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **believers need awareness of who is a spiritual or theological threat, and of who is properly qualified and ordained, as part of God's means in making them godly.**

Naming names. As John continues urging Gaius to be hospitable to the missionaries that he is sending, he now gives Gaius counsel about how to think and act with respect to his local church. Here, the apostle does something politically incorrect. He names names. He names Diotrophes, the "lead" elder whose love for preeminence has gone hand-in-hand with refusing to welcome John or the missionaries (v9) and with gossiping nonsense against them (v10).

As those who love first place often do, Diotrophes engaged in identity politics in the church. Not only did he refuse hospitality to John, but also to anyone associated with him, and excommunicating anyone who did give them hospitality! It is important, for the theological and spiritual safety of God's people, to name the names of those who are theologically and spiritually dangerous.

Whom not to imitate. John now calls Gaius "beloved" again (v11), warning him that there is much more at stake than who will "win" in church politics. Diotrophes "has not seen God." He doesn't do good, because he has no birth from God. Charismatic leaders may be inspiring, but their selfishness exposes their true character and serves as a warning not to follow them, not to imitate them.

Whom to imitate (doctrine of ordination). Rather, the Lord gives us those whom we should imitate. Demetrius (v12) is actually qualified to be an elder. He has a good testimony "from all" (cf. 1Tim 3:7). He also has a good testimony "from the truth itself," meaning that his doctrine is sound according to Scripture, and his character is godly according to Scripture.

Finally, John and the other elders have borne witness to Demetrius; they have attested to his qualification and his selection by God in the laying on of hands of ordination. Here is one more important reason for us to follow the biblical doctrine of ordination: that we may have elders worthy of imitating.

The Lord protect His church from those who would be closed-hearted toward others and full of gossip and "identity politics." And the Lord give His church elders who are hospitable, generous, and full of truth and love, so that by their ministry and example, He might sanctify for Himself a people who are hospitable, generous, and full of truth and love.

How are you resisting the desire to have the first place among others? In what ways are elders sometimes selected in the churches? Whom do you know that are qualified and ordained according to 1Tim 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9? What are you doing to be hospitable to them and imitate them?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for those ministers who are careful enough of souls to name names about those who are spiritually and theologically dangerous. Forgive us for not being so careful of our own souls. And forgive us for when we like to have the first place, and when we gossip nonsense against others. Thank You for those elders who are properly qualified and ordained. Forgive us for not receiving Your testimony about them or imitating them in their godliness. Grant that our conduct would show that we are born of God, we ask through Your only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP15 "Within Your Tent Who Will Reside?" or TPH406 "Jesus, with Thy Church Abide"

"(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Third, John verses 9 through 12. These are God's words. I wrote to the church but deotrophies. Who loves to have the preeminence among them. Does not receive. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds, which he does. Prating against us, with malicious words. And not content with that.

He himself does not receive the Brethren. And forbids, those who wish to Putting them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate. What is evil. But what is good? He who does good is of God. But he who does evil has not seen. 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. So far the reading of gods inspired and and Aaron tort Number that this little letter is written not to a congregation but to an individual Gaius We find out now. Why it's not written to the congregation generally?

John is sending missionaries. Who are going to stop at this church for which he has some responsibility as an elder. And the missionaries are going to stop at that congregation. And then they are going to be sent on to another mission and they need Hospitality while they are there and they need support.

For the work that they are going to do and he has encouraged guys to continue as Gaius has done. And as John rejoices, to hear that Gaius has done to continue showing Hospitality by showing these men Hospitality to continue supporting the work, the ministry of the Gospel, by supporting these men, Of the gospel and in doing so.

Not only John who sends them and helps them from the church where John is. But then Gaius who will host them and help them and send them from that church that they all become fellow workers for the truth by receiving such welcoming such And supporting them like we heard in verse 8, but we find out now, why John had to write this to Gaius?

As one of the Good men in that church rather than the church generally. Indeed, he wrote To the church, generally. he sent And yet. The, there's a man. Maybe on their session, maybe not on their session sometimes. there are those who are in Rebellion in the church, although certainly, if they're having Elder elections, this geography sends Like, he probably would get himself voted in.

He loves to have the preeminence, literally, he loves to have the first place or the chief That's a very dangerous thing. Colossians 1 verse 18 says, Christ has the chief And in First Corinthians, the Apostle Paul says Neither he nor Apollos nor Peter or anything, but Christ. This is one of the reasons why the scripture gives us This plurality of Elders and the Council of Elders.

As a way that the church is governed and shepherded taught Preached to an earth because it's actually LED supremely by Christ. He's the one Called the first place in all things. Unquote, from Colossians, 1, 18. So there's this man that's in control. Of the congregation to, which John is writing.

Or to which John had previously written. And now he's writing to one man that he would do good, and he doesn't tell Gaius. You need to do something about this theotrophies. Perhaps Gaius is on session. With him or Demetrius. At least almost certainly is on session with him. We'll get to that.

In verse 12. He doesn't say to guys. You need to overthrow him, or you know that? That Dimitri's Demetrius. Being too weak and ruining the church. Now, he's he's writing

to Gaius that the good work of the Gospel may continue by his personal Hospitality since the congregational Hospitality is being blocked by this deotrophies.

as instructive to us that he names names. There are some who think that you should not name names. About those who are dangerous and harming the church and opposing the work of the Gospel. Now John has not written to the congregation generally. Naming deotrophies's name he says that if he comes, he will call to mind his deeds.

And so there will be there will be these charges these allegations. And, Judicial trial against geographies if John is able to come and he hopes to come. In fact, one of the things we'll find next week is, we take the close of the letter. Is that He, although he has other things, many things.

That he wishes to write about. He hopes to come and one of the things that he hopes to come for is we'll focus on especially next week. Is this renewed Fellowship With Gaius and probably Demetrius. And other believers in the church. But another thing that he hopes to do when he comes is to take care of the deotrophies problem.

But in this particular case, one of the things that One of the dangers or harms that geography is causing is that when Gaius gets this letter from John about these men, that John is sending a need to be. Shown hospitality and supported and sent on in their work. It is likely that deotrophies will either try to Gaslight guys into thinking that John Really this kind of cultic leader who thinks that everyone should listen to him.

Which of course is a ridiculous thing to say about an apostle who is literally writing Spirit inspired letters and yet they continue to say it even to this day. About ministers, who produce their theology from the scripture and who holds to the exclusive Authority. Of the scripture. and you can see how deotrophies could get gaius's mind all turned around.

especially if he has the first place in the church, and not only that, but there's an intimidation factor because not only has he preighted against John, and when John says us, you wonder does that mean us the apostles? Maybe not, John might have been at this point. The last living Apostle.

It probably means us the elders in the Presbytery and the many churches. John has some Elder responsibility. It probably means us more generally those who hold to the truth, who are of the truth. And walk in the truth as he rejoiced greatly when the Brethren came and testified. And so the The us here is probably John others who believe and teach the truth about Jesus Christ.

Being God, the son who came to Give us life and who makes us then to walk in the truth that by the life of Jesus in We live. Holy lives, especially demonstrated, and loving the Brethren. So all of these things that have made up the bulk of first John and that he is rejoicing over about Gaius and that the brothers who came from The Gaias geotrophies Demetrius Church to the church where John is have reported.

And so those Brothers quite evidently hold to the same Doctrine. Live the same. Holy life from Union with Jesus Christ. Love the Brethren and are willing to lay them lay their lives down for them. that's the And yet. Those who Take for themselves. The first place in church circles which doesn't always mean being on session.

You remember the the various places where there are prominent women who are warned against and and so forth? those who like the first place, praying the childish slander. and it's condemned condemning. Not only of them that they are childish and their slander. But we must be reminded here that it is a 2000 year tradition in the church for people to be foolish enough to get sucked in by childish slander.

Is one of the reasons why we must be careful to follow Proverbs. 18, 13 1817. and not based on. Childish report by one person talking in an ugly way about someone else. Allow our opinion to be changed or formed. About that person. The first one. set. States this case seems right until the other comes and asks him questions and he who answers a matter before he hears it thoroughly it is a Folly and ashamed to him and so we must be wary of doing that with our own minds and with our own hearts but do not be surprised when others do that with The Godly.

So deotrophies had done this childish insulting or childish slander this preying Against the real Believers. And, If you're going to have the first place, you're going to have to Somehow dismantle biblical Christianity in the church. Because in a church where there's biblical Christianity, no individual in the church, gets the first place.

That's, that's something that's, Palatable undesirable to our flesh. But praise God. We want that flesh to starve anyway. So we don't want to feed it. We want a church where Christ has the first place and no individual is exalted above. The others, whether in Social Circles, or in church, government or In any other way, Jesus has the first place in all of those ways.

praise God. But Gaius both, because That's the dynamic of the church and the intimidation. Not only did deotrophies get the official Church position. To be against. To be against John and the True Believers. And therefore, these workers for the gospel, who Are coming by. And need to be sent on, but deotrophies himself.

wouldn't receive them. So this isn't a case of a misguided Elder but still in Christ and loving and Desiring at least to try and Recall others to repentance, which sometimes A man is mistaken in his theology and yet, if he's a real Christian, his desire will still be.

Or if he's functioning as a consistent Christian, his desire will still be to retrieve the ones whom he thinks are in error. And his heart will be inclined towards him. But deotrophies, not only got the church position to be. Against them, but not content with that. He himself does not receive the Brethren.

Okay, so so he's refusing to minister the gospel to them which is the opposite, for instance of what Paul told Timothy That he needed to ins with all patients and with all instruction. minister to those who are in error although a divisive man. He said the opposite about those who are trying to divide the church and Who disrupt or speak against the the teaching of the church.

They're to be warned once in a second time and after that have nothing to do with them, it's not just That Paul says, You must excommunicate such a person, he says, You must excommunicate them speedily so it's exactly the opposite with the divisive person. But the atrophy's got the official Church position against them, then he himself refused them hospitality.

And then, He forbids those who wish to show them respon Hospitality putting them out of the church. Now, think about what John Is telling guys to do here. Saint Gaius. Please do these things for God's sake, in a manner. Worthy of God, he says, in verse 6. And participate to become a fellow worker in the truth with them.

Oh, and by the way, you're likely to get excommunicated for it. In verse 10. We must not expect doing the right thing. To. Pleasant and easy in Earthly terms. We need to have our pleasure in God so that it can't be taken away. like we heard about a little bit in Proverbs 2 last night, that knowledge which especially in that context is Knowledge of God himself, not just of the Bible.

That it would be pleasant to our soul. That we would draw Joy from God himself by use of his word. Like we're doing right now and it's late in the day and we should have done it earlier and each of us should have if we didn't. How we should have had our individual worship.

We should have been drawing from The Well of God's pleasure, so that we don't get thirsty in a way that we are willing to drink from something lesser, and maybe even something harmful. Instead guys are going to need to enjoy his fellowship with the two Brethren to enjoy, especially his fellowship with God, to desire, to be a fellow worker for the truth.

Because there's a letter that's in the Bible, asking him to do something, really commanding him in Christ to do something. That he's probably going to get excommunicated for. And yet, John here names names. Warns him, not to imitate the atrophies or others who have gone along with the atrophies, because there's more at stake.

Then just kind of saving your skin doing the comfortable thing, avoiding conflict. All the different reasons that we might not name names or that we might not stick our neck out and do what's right? Even though we may get excommunicated for it. There's more at stake. Than doing what is right and taking the right position.

What we do is an expression. Of who we are. And he says, do not imitate, what is evil, but what is good? He who does good is of God. But he who does evil. Has not seen. And so, he's reminding. Gaius operate out of your knowledge of God in Christ.

Those who are doing evil. Are not operating out of a knowledge of God in Christ. And if this is the pattern of their life, if this is the ordinary condition of their life, to do this evil, Than it is.

The condition of their life. That they have not. seeing God which is of course to see God by faith in Jesus Christ. To know him in Christ and to have Life in Christ, by his Spirit. And so, he's saying remember that how we live? Is a function of who we are, and And what we are.

So, don't imitate. Those who do not do. What is good. Because then you're imitating death. Operate out of your. Knowledge of God in Christ, your saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus. And imitate then others who are operating out of a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the fellowship that matters.

You may be disfellowshipped excommunicated by those who don't have fellowship with Christ, but you can't get Excommunicated from the invisible church, if you have life in Christ. And so, you know, this is another one of those instances where, you know, last night we're praying for the church.

The. Intercessory, the intercession portion of the prayer meeting and The prayer prompt and the basis of various scriptures was to pray for the Revival of primitive Christianity. Now, this was before evolutionary ideas and primitive that which is Primary that which is first, that which is pure and best as a return to a prompt to return to Apostolic Christianity.

And if you remember, one of the things that one of those who led prayed was We would not return to the condition of the church in the time of the Apostles. Because it was as bad, then in many ways, as it is now in many places. But that we would return to The Apostles Doctrine.

And the apostles own practice that which they themselves were writing letters. To see the churches restored to, and we take from letters like this one. That Jesus wants his churches to labor to be restored to the Apostolic Doctrine. To his own Doctrine, which he gives us. So don't imitate those who are doing evil, he says, but God has given you.

Those whom you should imitate almost certain here that this Demetrius who he should imitate as an elder. Paul presented himself as an example and he taught Timothy that he should be an example. Hebrews 13 7 and 13 17 and teaches us to follow. The example, and submit to those who God has Sent to speak the word to us, but what we have in verse 12 is the Fulfillment of Demetrius's Elder, qualifications.

Is interesting here. There are probably Elders in this church and Gaius's church. That he is not supposed to imitate. So rather than saying imitate your elders, he says, he says, don't imitate, what is evil, but then he presents this Demetrius and he presents him according to the biblical qualifications of an elder.

He has a good testimony from all. And so there are not just the character requirements for instance. In first Timothy 3. But that affirmation by all, who know him. That that he fulfills his character requirements. He also has a good testimony from the truth itself. So his Doctrine not only is his life according to what the scriptures command, but his teaching is according to what the scriptures, teach the the Bible and how much the spirit has worked in someone to conform him.

To the Bible. Is a testimony of the truth itself about that man. And then he also has excuse me. He also has the testimony of the faithful in the church. There's this ausp hour again, that we mentioned earlier. Would. Probably include also the Presbytery generally. And he says, and we also bear witness or give our testimony testify And you know that our testimony is true.

And so this is something for the church to pray for that, it would have qualified men as Elders. And, When we do when you have an elder about whom there's not just the affirmation by all who know him from his character and testimony. From the truth itself. His Doctrine.

As is what we confess from the Bible. And he has been duly ordained by. The recognition and ordination. The laying on of hands of the Presbytery which was of course. Paul reminded Timothy was how he received the the gift, the assignment for the sake of the church, to be an elder when we have an elder like that.

Is good to imitate him because he's operating. Out of the knowledge of God in Christ and he's been given to the church. As part of Jesus's means for making the Believers in the church. Encouraging and helping the Believers in the church to operate out of the knowledge of God in Christ, which Gaius is really going to need to do.

because he's going to get this letter first and he's going to have to Show, Hospitality to these. These brothers that. John is sending. For some time before John gets there and we don't even know if John has did eventually get there. When Gaius wouldn't know. Whether John's desire and intention was going to be fulfilled.

So may the Lord. Give us that confidence in him, that fellowship with him. Love for him, Delight in him. And may he give us to know that we're not just having fellowship with him? We're having fellowship with all those who have been in. Who have known God, who have seen God by faith and the knowledge of Christ.

There's, Six thousand years worth of Believers. With whom you have Fellowship. Even if in a particular congregation, someone who loves to have the first place, Has gained sway. And has made it ecclesiastically dangerous. To do what's right? And biblical. So God, give us that knowledge of him and that Conscientiousness.

From. Joy in him and love for him. And then, let's pray. Our Father in Heaven. We thank you for this little letter that often goes neglected. Because of the lack of good understanding of it and just its smallness, perhaps. But for whatever reason, oh Lord, we thank you that in your mercy, in your Providence, you've given us to spend a few weeks looking at it now and We pray that your spirit would write its truth on our hearts.

Do please take our delight and belonging to you. And increase it grow it by these worship times, grow it, even now as we call upon your name, How amazing. Oh God, that we come to you as father In your son by the help and sustaining of your Holy And so, we pray that you would give us a delighting in even now that sustain us and strengthen us especially when we do or when we have to do difficult things.

We pray that you would, Take down the deotrophies. Of the Who love to have the first place for the glory of your son? Give him before the eyes and in the hearts and in the practice of all that Christ would have the first place. And Grant to us to be willing not to have the first place to be willing even To be put out of the church for his sake.

If that is what must come to us. give us such Delight in you that we Cannot have it taken away. By any circumstance whatsoever. And we do pray that you would Not only help us to live in such a way. As would be exemplary to others, but that you would Give your church.

to be able to see that it has Elders, who would give it elders and who fit these? Three categories of qualification that. That we've seen here. Have mercy. O Lord there's so much that is out of order. in the physical. And so we pray for you to come in power by your spirit and bring Reformation bring Revival.

Just now O Lord. Quench, our thirst. By the pleasure and satisfaction. Of knowing you of being yours. And having you give yourself to us as ours. Before we ask it all through Christ in whom you have done. So Amen.