



One of the greatest tragedies of the Church that spans the historical life of its existence are men and women who claim to be called; but fail to live a life of love and of honor. Those who have committed such actions within the Church have done nothing but left a trail of pain and brokenness in their wake. From phonies who proclaim to be Prophets to Apostates claiming to be Apostles, the Church has definitely seen its fair share of those who would seek to

pervert the power of the Gospel into a means of financial gain or for attaining a position of power to manipulate people.

I have found that there are those who claim to be a part of the Body of Christ who believe that they are too good to serve but good enough to rule. And that is a significant problem indeed. The call to the Ministry of Jesus Christ, which every Christian is called to bear up, is not a call to ascend to a throne but rather a call to descend to the level of a servant in so that others may be called the sons and daughters of God.

Jesus said in Mark 9:35, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” We must remember that as Christians, we are not called to be served but to be the servant! Jesus, on the night that He was betrayed, removed his clothing, wrapped Himself in the clothing of a servant, and knelt at the feet of the men who would ultimately betray Him; in so that He might wash their feet.

Jesus was the very definition of a servant leader who served others with honor; even those who did not honor him! We must always remember that we are called to do the same.

Hear me well, if we are “too good” to wash someone’s feet then we are not “good enough” to be called a Christian because the very bedrock of our Faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, defined what it meant to have a heart to serve others.

I have seen the underbelly of Church but I have also met true Saints of God who loved their neighbors as themselves and truly loved God with all their heart! There is, regrettably so, always an underbelly to everything and Church is, sadly, no different. We have all met people who claimed to be Christians but their fruit is rotten.

The call of Christ is not a profession one chooses nor is it an

opportunity to gain power over other people. The Ministry of Christ is not about having power over people but rather to empower people to do the work of Ministry. If we are not empowering people then we are not leading people; and if we are not leading people then we are not in the Ministry.

With all the winds of doctrine and ideologies of what pure Faith and Ministry is, I would like to reference back to the first century Church and simply state that we do not have to strictly look at the modern age to see the spirit of dishonor and the evil hearts found within dishonorable people. We can simply look at Church history and find a few Villains of the Scripture that would definitely fit the mold of being someone who did not live a life exemplifying the life and

character of the Lord Jesus.

One such obscure character that fits this mold is a man by the name of Diotrephes, which can be found in 3 John 1:9. The famed “Apostle whom Jesus loved”, the Apostle John, is writing a short but concise letter in third John and there is a character that is introduced by the name of Diotrephes. This is the only point in the scripture that Diotrephes is mentioned but more can be learned about him when we study Church history.

The year is 90 AD and the Apostle John is in the city of Ephesus writing a letter to a man by the name of Gaius who is the recipient of the third letter of John. This beloved Elder is the last living Apostle of the original 12 and has a strange feeling that there is a season of shifting coming.

Unknown to him, he was in the preliminary process of ultimately being arrested and then to be exiled to lone island of Patmos where he

would ultimately receive the greatest revelation of his entire existence; thus subsequently penning the “Book of the Revelation”.

John, the Disciple whom laid his head upon the bosom of Jesus, is coming to the end of his road in just a matter of years and is seeking to tie up some loose ends before he steps into eternity.

John opens his letter to Gaius with such an appreciation and honor for him and for his heart towards the Church and the Ministry of the Lord Jesus. But then John makes a transition from focusing on Gaius to shifting his attention to a lone character, a pastor or leader of sorts, by the name of Diotrephes. Notice with me, in the text, what John has to say...

3 John 1:9-11, “I have written something to the Church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. 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. Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good.

Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.”

There were three things that John annotated about Diotrephes:

• He strives to put himself first.

- He is seeking to build his own Kingdom.

• Second, he is in rebellion against the spiritual authority of the Apostles.

- He is seeking to carve out his own authority separate from the Apostles.

• Thirdly, he isn't hospitable to those whom John is sending and even kicks Church members out of the fellowship for desiring for them to come.

- He is seeking to eliminate the influence of the Apostles and

the Apostles Doctrine in the local Church.

The Spirit of Diotrephes is an Anti-Christ Spirit!

In these three verses, we discover that there is a conflict that is being generated by this once mentioned character named Diotrephes. Diotrephes is a leader in the Church that has a great following and exercises an abundance of authority within the Church. As John points out in verse nine, “I have written something to the Church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.”

It is abundantly clear that Diotrephes is challenging the authority of the Apostles and is seeking to build his own Kingdom with its own teachings and its own views; contrary to the teachings of the Eldership.

In verse nine, we can easily ascertain that Diotrephes has declared a silent war with the Apostles thus thwarting even their letters from being read in the local assembly. He is in rebellion against the spiritual authority of the Apostles because he's striving to carve out his own authority.

Furthermore, Diotrephes is exalting himself above any other authority and is someone who and I quote, "likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority."

With this said, it would seem to reason that if Diotrephes doesn't acknowledge the authority of the Apostles then that would state that he does not acknowledge the authority of the Apostles teachings as well. Just within one verse, we discover that Diotrephes strives to put himself first and above others, he refuses to acknowledge the authority of the Apostles in any way, and will not allow the teachings

and letters of the Apostles to be read in the assembly.

If a man is going to build an organization or “Church” then he has to have his own teachings; thus it would seem to reason that Diotrephes is trying to start “another Church” with its own teachings, structure, hierarchy, and authorities to be centrally focused on him and him alone. To utilize a modern fad of writing within the Church world, please excuse the reference that I am about to use in relation to Diotrephes.

But the “Spirit of Diotrephes” is very much alive and well in this modern Church age. There are men and women who will strive against religion, denominations, organizations of Churches, doctrinal stances, certain Theologies, and even others who are in Ministry for the sake of obtaining a stance of power and authority. They have truly dishonored themselves amongst themselves. And just as the Apostle John was in a season of transition, we find ourselves in the same

season of transition where God is seeking to establish a new season for our Church.

As The Assembly West Monroe, we must strive to protect our people, our purpose and our position. And just as the Apostle John was striving to protect the people, the purpose and the position of the first century Church so must we now, corporately, stand together and not find ourselves in the place of dishonor like Diotrephes. So point #1...

1. We must not strive to put ourselves first nor seek to build our own Kingdom.

- a. We must be about building His Kingdom and not our own kingdom. We must make the decision to not live a life that strives to have power over people but rather to empower people to prosper in their calling as Christ Followers. It's

about building people; not building our own image. That's called Idolatry!

- b. Revelations 11:15, "Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."**
- c. Do not build a Kingdom that is an enemy of the Cross; Build the Kingdom of the Cross!**
- d. The Spirit of Diotrophes will not be tolerated in this House.**
- We will not put ourselves first nor seek to build our own Kingdom. Remember pride goes before a fall and if you are building your own kingdom then it is going to fall.**
- e. To further validate this point; How can we seek to build a kingdom that we did not die to build? Church is not about**

you; it IS you. (Repeat) You are the Church and the Church must be about the Father's Business in the Earth.

f. Let me make my point abundantly clear! If you seek to build your own kingdom then you are an enemy of the Cross!

Not only must we not strive to put ourselves first nor seek to build our own Kingdom; point #2...

2. We must not strive to carve out our own authority nor strive against those that are in the place of authority!

a. Hebrews 13:17 in the ESV records, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

b. The King James version says it this way, "Obey them that

have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

c. According to the Scripture, as your Pastor, I will have to give an account for you to Christ. The point of the Apostle Paul was to cause the Church to understand that the Pastors that Christ has set in place will have to give an account for you as your Pastor.

d. Like an annual employee review, Christ will be doing a Christian Service Review of your life and your Pastor will be requested to speak into how you conducted yourself as a Follower of Christ as well as his dealings with you as your Pastor.

e. And if you have made your Pastor's life difficult, for no

reason other than your opinions, then you must remember that your Pastor will have to give an account for you to Christ and if you have filled your Pastor's life with grief then that is unprofitable for you. As Paul said, "as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

- f. "Well Pastor, you are just trying to drive an agenda of control with all this submission teaching and you are just trying to scare us into submitting to you." – If that is what you think then you have not listened to a word that I have said.**
- g. Like a wife submitting to her husband, she will not submit if the husband is not worthy of submitting to. The same goes for the congregation and the Pastor.**
- h. The congregation will not submit to the leading of the**

Church by the Pastor if the Pastor is not worthy of being submitted to. But if the Man of God is upright and leads his family and the house of God well, then there is no justifiable excuse to rebel against his authority as the Pastor.

- i. And you are participating with an antichrist spirit and have deceived yourself if you believe that you can rebel against spiritual authority or attack and destroy a Pastor and still claim that you are born again and bound for Heaven.**
- j. According to the text in Hebrews, Jesus is going to ask your Pastor his opinion of you and to give an account for you one day. Let us do that with great joy and not with grief and sorrow because of how you treat your Pastor and support spiritual authority is going to have a direct impact on your eternal reward. And this includes how you talk about them in private; Gossip always comes disguised as concern. Some**

folks enjoy talking about their Pastor more than they value praying for their Pastor!

k. 1 Peter 5:5 records, “Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, ALL OF YOU, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

l. It is imperative that we remember that our Unity is the regulator of the Anointing. Acts 2 happened because they loved one another and were focused on the move of the Holy Spirit.

Not only must not strive to carve out our own authority nor strive against those that are in the place of authority; point #3

3. We must strive to be hospitable to one another and to love one

another in the Faith and not cause division amongst the family of God.

a. The Book of Proverbs chapter 6, Solomon records a statement that is very powerful, “There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”

b. In a day and age where Gossip and Backbiting seem to

plaster the page of every magazine and Facebook page,

where do Christians draw the line and say, “no more!”

When I ponder upon the lives of those who seem to sow

discord amongst the brothers, I am reminded of the

Proverbs of Solomon when he said, “There are six things

that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him... one who sows discord among brothers.” Is it possible for the Lord to hate? According to this scripture reference in Proverbs 6, it is apparently possible.

- c. Now with all of that said, how do we come to the place where we see the value in others and not speak evil of our brother?

The Book of Galatians states in chapter 5, “14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.”

- d. Notice that the subsequent response to a lack of love for one another is to devour one another. Thus it could be easily ascertained that a Gossiper is not a lover but rather a devourer. Notice the last part of verse 15, “watch out that you are not consumed by one another.”

e. We must strive to maintain the continuity of the Faith and not be found guilty sowing seeds of division that bring forth a harvest of judgment. Simply put, love one another and do one another no harm.

In closing, Church history says that John founded and built Churches throughout all Asia, and worn out by old age, died in the sixty-eighth year after our Lord's passion and was buried in Ephesus. Church tradition says that when John was evidently an old man in Ephesus, he had to be carried to the Church in the arms of his disciples. At these meetings, he was accustomed to say no more than, "Little children, love one another!"

After a time, the disciples wearied at always hearing the same words, asked, "Master, why do you always say this?" "It is the Lord's command," was his reply. "And if this alone be done, it is enough!" So

I adjure you with the same words of the Beloved Elder, do not fall into the dishonor of Diotrephes but rather, “Little children, love one another; for it is the Lord’s command and if this alone be done it is enough...”