

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“A Hygiene Checkup for the Body”

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): 3 John 1-15; 2 Jn 9-11; 1 Jn 3:7-8; Matt. 10:7-10; Jn 13:20; 20:21

Every so often, we all need a check-up. Not because something is necessarily falling apart, but because health has to be examined. We do this with our bodies, our homes, our finances, our vehicles, and honestly, we need it in the Body of Messiah too. Sometimes what looks fine on the surface needs a closer look. Sometimes there are signs of health, and sometimes there are symptoms that something is not sound.

That is part of what we see in 3 John. John writes to Gaius, someone he loves “in truth,” and he is overjoyed because he has heard that Gaius is walking in truth. But John has also heard of something unhealthy happening in the community through Diotrephes, a man who loves to be first, refuses to welcome the brethren, and even pushes others out. So this little letter becomes a kind of “hygiene check-up” for the Body: Are we walking in truth? Are we imitating what is good?

1. SPIRITUAL HEALTH IS SEEN IN WALKING IN TRUTH

John opens with affection: *“The Elder. To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth”* (3 John 1). Love and truth are wound together again, just like we saw in 2 John. John is not speaking of sentimental affection disconnected from truth, and he is not speaking of cold correctness disconnected from love. He loves Gaius in truth, and then he writes, *“Loved one, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul”* (3 John 2).

That phrase “go well” can be misunderstood if we reduce it to material prosperity. The idea is more like a good path, a good way, the journey of life going soundly. And the word for “good health” (ὕγιαίνειν, *hugianein*) is where we get the idea of hygiene, of being sound and healthy. John is saying, in essence, “I pray that everything in your life would be on the good path, just like your soul is.” And how does he know Gaius’s soul is healthy? Because he has heard the report: *“For I was overjoyed when some brethren came and testified of the truth in you—how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this—to hear that my children are walking in the truth”* (3 John 3-4). Spiritual health is not merely what we say we believe. It is seen in the way we walk – in the life we love.

2. WALKING IN TRUTH MAKES US CO-WORKERS IN THE TRUTH

John continues, *“Loved ones, you are acting faithfully in whatever you do for the brethren, and especially for strangers. They have testified to your love before Messiah’s community. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God”* (3 John 5-6). Gaius was not only loving the people he already knew. He was extending hospitality even to strangers, to fellow believers he didn’t personally know. That was not a casual thing in

the ancient world. Hospitality meant taking someone under your care, putting your name and reputation alongside theirs, and receiving them as a guest in the community.

But for believers, this was not about social advantage. It was for the sake of the Name. John says, *“For on behalf of the Name they went out, accepting nothing from the pagans. Therefore we ought to support such people, so we might become co-workers in the truth”* (3 John 7–8). Those who went out on behalf of the Name needed the Body to receive them, feed them, shelter them, and send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. And when Gaius received them, he was not merely being nice. He was supporting missions – participating in the work of the gospel. He was becoming a co-worker in the truth.

3. DO NOT IMITATE WHAT IS EVIL, BUT WHAT IS GOOD

Then the letter shifts, and John says, *“I wrote something to Messiah’s community, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, doesn’t welcome us”* (3 John 9). Diotrephes is described as one who loves firstness, one who loves to be first, to control, to put himself at the front. That stands in direct contrast to the way of Yeshua, who taught that the one who wants to be first must become servant of all. Diotrephes refused to welcome John’s messengers, slandered them with wicked words, refused hospitality to the brethren, and even forbade others from welcoming them, throwing them out of the community.

So John writes the only real command in the body of the letter: *“Loved ones, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God”* (3 John 11). John calls the works and the words of Diotrephes evil, and his actions testify that he has “not seen God.” Our actions speak louder than our words. Loved one, John says, don’t imitate that. Don’t imitate self-exaltation. Don’t imitate control. Don’t imitate the cutting off of people because you do not want to receive the word of correction. Instead, imitate what is good. Demetrius had a good testimony from everyone, even from the truth itself. His life bore witness. That is the kind of life to imitate.

CONCLUSION

Third John reminds us that the Body needs regular hygiene checks. **Are we walking in the truth, or only talking about truth?** Are we loving in a way that displays the gospel, or only loving when it benefits us? Are we receiving what the Lord sends, even when it challenges us, or are we resisting, controlling, and drawing lines in the sand? John’s concern is not theoretical. He is dealing with real people, real conflict, real rejection, and real testimony.

Today, let the Lord examine the health of your soul. Ask Him to show you whether your way is sound, whether your path is good, whether your love is tied to truth, and whether your truth is expressed in love. If there is any Diotrephes-like spirit in us—a need to be first, a need to control, a refusal to receive correction—then today is the day to lay it down. And if the Lord is calling us to be like Gaius, to walk in truth and support the work of truth. Loved one, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. John says he has no greater joy than hearing that his children are walking in the truth. What does “walking in truth” look like in 3 John?
2. Why is it important that John connects spiritual health with the way Gaius lives, not merely with what Gaius claims to believe?
3. In our modern lives, what are some ways we can practice hospitality and become “co-workers in the truth,” even if we are not the ones traveling or preaching?
4. Diotrephes “loves to be first.” Where do you see the temptation toward control, self-exaltation, or needing to be right show up in everyday relationships?
5. John says, “Do not imitate what is evil but what is good.” Who are some godly examples worth imitating, and what fruit in their lives bears witness to the truth?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkhenu, Our Father, Our King, we ask You to examine the health of our souls. Help us to walk in truth, not only in what we say, but in how we live, how we love, how we receive, and how we serve. Let our lives bear witness that Your truth is truly in us.

Lord, remove from us anything that loves to be first, anything that resists correction, anything that uses words to wound or control. Teach us to imitate what is good. Make us faithful like Gaius, trustworthy like Demetrius, and willing co-workers in the truth for the sake of the Name of Yeshua.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.