

LVI. Traveling Route 66: The Bible in Biblical Perspective
The Journey with Christ, the Promised One
“I, II & III John—The Books of John”
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We will be looking at I, II and III John in our series on Travelling Route 66 in this study. I John 1:1-4 says *[1] That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—[2] the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—[3] that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. [4] And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.*

We are in our series of Travelling Route 66 and I feel like I’m at an opposite end. When I was a kid growing up we’d take long trips in a car and I had three sisters. I never bothered my parents on these trips but my sisters were absolutely terrible. Inevitably from children on car trips comes that question that every parent dreads and that is ‘are we there yet?’ In our series on Route 66 we are almost there. After this study we’ll have two more – one on Jude and then one on the book of Revelation. We will have covered all 66 books of the Bible upon our completion which will be available by audio, transcript and outlines via our church website for any you may have missed.

In this study we will focus on I, II and III John and look at some key texts in them. My first congregation I pastored I had five elders and after I got there one went to be with the Lord, another one was transferred so I was left with three elders. The convenient thing was that all three of them were named John so in my first church I had first, second and third John as my elders there. Now we have arrived at I, II and III John and one of them is almost a treatise and two of them would probably best fall under the genre that we call epistle or letter.

One time kids were asked ‘what is an epistle?’ and the response was ‘a female apostle.’ No, that is not right for an epistle is a letter and it’s a letter that much of the New Testament is made up of written from the Apostles. John gives us three that we call epistles yet the first one is much more of a treatise that is dealing with particular issues that we want to note and that I think are extremely important. Let’s get started in this study by asking our first question.

Who wrote I, II and III John? It was John, John and John, the same man. Not always is he identified but he is known as John the elder and this John is responsible for five books in the Bible. It is pretty easy to remember them. They are the Gospel of John, I John, II John, III John and Revelation. Those are the five books he wrote for you. The literary language and style in I John and the Gospel of John are so obvious. When I read those opening verses it almost sounded like I was starting off in John 1 of the Gospels, where the Word became flesh. The Word was with God. The Word was God. All of that language is very Johannine as we like to say when we go to seminary. In other words, John is very consistent in the way that he writes and it shows up not only in the Gospel of John but also in I, II, and III John.

The next question is where did John write these books from? That is a good question. The guess is that he wrote them from Asia Minor. Some perhaps was written from the isle of Patmos. We don't know for sure but it's almost certain that he did not write from Jerusalem because of the issues he addresses. It is also known by the extra Biblical historians, preachers and theologians like Clement, Eusebius and others that John pretty well ended up his ministry in a pastoral role where he had the primary care at the church of Ephesus. I think it would have been interesting to have been a member at the church of Ephesus. Paul started the church. Timothy was the next pastor and later John was the pastor. That's not a bad line up of portraits to pastor a church.

This church at Ephesus was a mother church. It probably gave birth to about ten to thirteen churches. Six of them are listed in the book of Revelation, along with the church at Ephesus and these are the seven churches that make up the book of Revelation, as well as Hierapolis and others that aren't mentioned in the book of Revelation. So this is a key church and it seems as though John had primary care for this church at Ephesus and somewhat of a general care for all of the daughter churches of the church of Ephesus. Therefore that seems to be why he was charged by the Lord through the Holy Spirit to write the book of Revelation which was circulated among these seven churches that make up the trade route that is started by the little city of Ephesus and also a city named Miletus that was nearby.

So, John very likely could have written these letters in Asia Minor, at Ephesus or one of those churches. He was also exiled off the coast of Asia Minor to a small little island called Patmos. I have had the opportunity twice to visit that island. There is a traditional cave sight there and it is said that from there that he wrote the book of Revelation. We just don't know if any of his other books were written from there or not. So we can't say for sure where he wrote I, II and III John because he doesn't identify it in any of the books, but that area is where he ended up.

This Apostle John was given care of his aunt, Mary the mother of Jesus. We don't this for sure but the traditions in history tell us that she accompanied him and lived quite a length of time after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. She lived quite of bit of time under the care of John. John, as far as we can tell, is the only disciple that did not die a martyr's death. He was attempted to be killed, again if our historical records are accurate. The attempt was that he was to be killed in boiling tar or oil but miraculously survived it. He ended up dying of natural causes at the isle of Patmos and supposedly buried at Ephesus in Asia Minor. He cared for Mary up until her death and that she died under his care there while he was pastorally engaged at Ephesus and the churches in that area as well. Those are some of the things that we know about John.

He was probably the youngest but James the less could have been younger. Likely it was John who was the youngest though and his older brother James was martyred where we are informed of his death in the book of Acts along with Stephen. Their father was names Zebedee and their mother was Salome which according to John 19:25 she is the sister of Mary which would have made John and James cousins to Jesus. So you can see much of the reason why the Lord would have put John in charge. Of course the Lord is fully aware not only from His deity but from observing John's age of the likelihood of him living longer and be able to care for His mother so He puts His mother under his care at the cross when He says "Woman, behold thy son and son behold

thy mother.” At that point John is given charge of Mary. So those are some things to know about John and where he is.

When did he write I, II and III John? Again, we don't know for sure. It is probably that all five of the works of John (Gospel of John, I John, II John, III John, and Revelation) were written in the last two decades of the first century. In other words, it seems as if John, for whatever reason, inspired by the Holy Spirit, with his own evaluations, waited awhile to make his joy complete. In I John 1:4 he says [4] *And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.* Who is the 'we'? John is referring to himself and the other Apostles. It seems as if John is not only in charge of giving the last Gospel in the order of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), but some of the last books in the New Testament canon are his (I, II, III John and Revelation). The book of Revelation after it is given and the last Apostle writes in which the statement is made “Do not add or subtract to the words of this prophecy.” In other words, the very words that were said to Moses do not add or subtract. The first and the last writers of Scripture give us the bookends of Scripture and the Apostle John is writing these concluding words to us.

My guess is that I John was written sometime between 89 to 95 AD. II John was written about the same time. This is really speculation but III John was probably written perhaps a few years earlier, sometime between 80 to 95 AD. Revelation is likely written sometime from 95 to 105 AD. The Gospel of John we know is written after the destruction of the Jewish Temple which was after 70 AD. So more than likely the Gospel of John was the first of the five books he wrote and it was probably written sometime between 75 to 85 AD, but almost all of John's writings are toward the end.

I'd like to make a comment here that is purely editorial. I have been given responsibility to do some writing and I'm trying to get my time adjusted to do the writing that I'm supposed to do that I'm under contract to do that I'm late for. I have written a couple of things before but I had a friend of mine who was an early mentor whose name was Al Martin. He said to me early on when I asked him about writing as a pastor, “There are exceptions to every rule but once something is in pen and ink and published you can't go back and correct that so my recommendation is that you wait until you are at least 50 years old to begin to write. That would be at least prudent.”

I have often wondered if any of that had been working with John where he waited until later in his life on a human level. I understand he was inspired by the Holy Spirit as to what he was going to write and when but the Holy Spirit works through men as they are in situations and working through them. I sometimes wonder if that was true about John because he writes nothing until he gets to the end of his life and then he has this unbelievably productive period where he turns out the Gospel of John, I John, II John, III John and the book of Revelation where it all comes out right toward the end. I have often wondered if that is part of his thinking in it.

To whom is he writing these books to? It is a great question. I John seems to be almost a general treatise addressed to people that he knows but I can't say it's to any one church or any one group of people. He makes statements in I John like 'my little children' so there seems to be terms of endearment, intimacy and awareness. He uses 'my fathers' and 'my sons' and sometimes he'll use the Greek word *teknion* which means little children. Then sometimes he uses the Greek word *paidion* which means to have an intimate, close relationship and not just with children in general but the relationship you

would have with your own children. It is a very close word of endearment. So I believe he is actually writing to a specific group of people who are being beset by heresies and false teaching, two in particular which I'll cover in a moment. He doesn't make clear who he is writing to. Is it just a group, a section, acquaintances, a church, a number of churches in the Asia Minor area? He doesn't really ever say.

II John he writes to the elect lady. II John 1:1-2 says [1] *The elder (John the Presbyter) to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, [2] because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever:* Some say since the feminine is used in his reference to the lady that this could be referring to the church as the bride of Christ, so maybe he is talking to a church, but I think as you read through it, it is not a metaphor for the church. I think he is actually speaking to a very specific, leading woman and her children. Now it could be speaking of the church here because we do love the church as we love the Lord. Oh how I wish we could, without being caught up ritualism or organizational 'churchianity', recapture a love for the church which the Lord died for. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church, the church which He purchased with His own blood. So it could be that John is referring to the bride of Christ, a local church and that those who love the truth will love the church of Jesus Christ, but I really think he is aiming at a very specific lady and her children in the context of a church.

Now let's look at who he is addressing in III John. III John 1:1 says [1] *The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.* Here he is writing a very specific letter Gaius. II John he writes to a specific lady and her children, perhaps in the context of a church or to a church specifically and how it is to be functioning.

What is he writing about in these books? I want to give you an outline of each book. In I John 1:1-4 there is the prologue and then I have divided it up around the three attributes of God. There is God as light in I John 1:5-2:27. There is God as righteous in I John 2:28-4:6 and God is love in I John 4:7-5:12. Then there is the epilogue in I John 5:13-21. In II John you have the prologue in II John 1:1-3. The exhortation in II John 1:4-11 and then the epilogue in II John 1:12-13. III John follows the same pattern as II John in terms of the outline. The prologue is in III John 1:1-4, an exhortation in III John 1:5-12 and the epilogue in III John 1:13-15.

Now specifically what is John addressing in these three books? I want to develop this out of three thematic statements, one for each of the epistles. In I John he is confronting heresies in general and the heresy of Docetism in particular, by affirming the actual incarnation of Christ and the new birth of the believer in Christ with a particular focus upon the command of the Lord that we are to love one another. That is a mouth full but we'll work our way through this. There were a number of heresies by the end of the first century. There was the burgeoning heresy of Gnosticism that was beginning to take hold but a precursor of Gnosticism, a heresy that attempted to interpret Christianity through Greek philosophy, particularly platonic philosophy, is called Docetism. The word *doce* comes from the Greek word that means ghost or ghost like.

Here is what the heresy was saying. It said that Jesus was the Son of God and that He came in the flesh, but because of platonic philosophy which has a view of the world that says 'the spiritual is good and the physical is evil' then if the spiritual is good then God the Son could come in Spirit, but He couldn't have a body because a body is evil. So how could He possibly have a body? Now that would lead to the heresy of

Gnosticism which had all kinds of implications. For instance, believers would enter into immoral, illicit sexual sins and then they would tell their pastor in the second century that was just their body, not my spirit. That was just my body cohabitating with the prostitute but in my spirit I was just loving Jesus. Paul is aware of the tendency of that and that's why he keeps telling people that in view of God's mercies present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit? He is anticipating that.

Before you get to the heresy of Gnosticism, the attack went against the incarnation of Christ that the Son of God had come and it looked like the flesh but He couldn't have really been in the flesh. It was a 'ghost like' appearance of the Son of God. John attacks that in the Gospel of John where the Word has become flesh and here in I John he says the Word was manifested to us and in us. Who is this Word? It is Jesus and we saw Him. We handled Him and touched Him. In other words he goes to the primary senses to affirm that Jesus didn't come and look like He had a body but He actually had a body. John says that he and the other Apostles touched and handled Him and that's why we now write about Him so that our joy will be made complete. You can have fellowship with Him whom we had fellowship with, not only spiritually but physically because the incarnation is real. You could sense Him, feel Him, touch Him and dare I say reverently, smell Him. I'm sure Jesus had body odor when He was working in the fields or on the carpenter's bench. He had this fully, real body with all of the bodily functions and it wasn't just an appearance of Jesus.

There was another heresy at work and that's this. You can be born again but you don't bear the identity marks of your Father. If you're born again you're born again by the Spirit through Christ using the Word, but who authored your new birth? It was your Father. If you are born again, you are born of God, you have a new birth then you're going to have identity marks from His attributes.

One of the things I used to enjoy doing when I was in Chattanooga during my student pastorate, on Tuesdays I would go to the YMCA and play basketball with the lunch bunch which usually ended up with more bruised bones and bodies, but we had a lot of fun. Sometimes I'd take my son and I would always make the joke that my son not only bore my name, Harry L. Reeder IV and my nickname which was Ike but he looked a little bit like me. I used to go into the steam bath at the YMCA and sneak my boy in and then as he came out I would have him say "I must have stayed in here too long" because he would look just like me but just a smaller version.

When you're born again you bear the attributes of God the Father. We don't bear all of His attributes because God has some attributes that you and I do not participate in. Those are what we call the 'omnis' like He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and so the technical term is that there are incommunicable attributes of God we don't share. There are some attributes of God that only God has and you may have a reflection of it in a sense but you can't participate in that attribute. You can be immortal but you're not eternal. You can be ubiquitous in eternity, moving all over but you will never be omnipresent. There are certain things that identify God as God that you and I do not participate and are incommunicable attributes but there are attributes of God that are given to us when He gives us new life, when we're born of God.

John picks three of them. He says if you're born again here are the three marks of your Father that are going to show up in you and he expounds upon them. What are the

three attributes he expounds on? God is light. You will walk in the light. God is righteous. You will pursue righteousness. God is love. So you will love. I want to look in a couple of passages to show you this. So what is the message John is writing?

I John 1:5-10 says [5] *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that **God is light**, and in him is no darkness at all. [6] If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. [7] But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. [8] If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [10] If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

So on the one hand he says because my people walk in the light they do not make a practice of sin. He doesn't say they don't sin because he says if you say you haven't sinned then you're a liar and the light is not in you, but if the light is in you then you don't make a practice of sin. Here is Paul's language on this. Before you were converted you live in sin but after you are converted you live in grace, yet you still have sin living in you. John is saying the same thing. He is saying that if God has given you new life then God is light and you're going to not walk in darkness. You will walk in the light seeking to dispel and expel the darkness in your life. Will you ever do it perfectly on this side of eternity? No, but you will have this new desire that will dominate your life, not in perfection, but it will dominate and drive your life out of love to God who gave you His light.

Those are the people who are forgiven and cleansed by the blood of Jesus. When you sin and because the light shows you your sin, the light also shows you how to deal with your sin so that it doesn't bring forth death in your life. You sent back to Jesus the Lover of your soul and if you confess your sins, you don't come as a criminal but you come as a prodigal. I'm born again and to Jesus I went to the far country. You come back to the Father in the name of Jesus and in the name of Jesus the Father forgives you and cleanses you through the intercession of Jesus Christ. He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Now let's look at this a little bit more. I want you to see how John divides up the born again into three categories here. I John 2:12-14 says [12] *I am writing to you, **little children**, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. [13] I am writing to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, **young men**, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. [14] I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.* Notice how he divides up the people in their spiritual continuum by using 'little children,' 'young men,' and 'fathers' in the faith.

Paul has a two-fold continuum. He says fleshly or spiritual. In other words, you're born again and you still have a lot of flesh dripping off of you. You have a great zeal for the Lord but you don't the knowledge yet. So you're still "worldly" on your way to Godliness. Spiritual is his way of referring to those who are mature in the Lord which they have done over a period of time by the power of the Spirit and the Word of God. John does it by putting the church into three categories. Here are the newly born again

little children. Here are the young men who are winning victories. Here are the fathers who have known the victories and can guide the young men and the children within the church. Now let's look a little bit further down in this chapter.

What does this light do? I John 2:15-17 says [15] *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [16] For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. [17] And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.* I just hear James all over this passage in I John.

He is saying instead of these epithymia, these evil desires dominating you and bringing you to sin and by the way that momentary exhilaration in sin fades away. The believer over all because they are walking in the light and the love of God has laid hold of them they begin to say 'no' to the lust of the eyes, 'no' to the lust of the flesh, and 'no' to the boastful pride of life. It's interesting to note that as the first Adam gave birth to sin through their over desires in which they took that which God had brought as a trial and became a temptation to their sin, it is said that when they saw the tree was good for food (which is the lust of the flesh), a delight to the eyes (lust of the eyes) and it was desirable to make them wise to be like God but really to take God's place where they bought the lie (the boastful pride of life).

Then comes the second Adam, Jesus. Satan says to Him "Jesus, are You hungry?" Then take the test and make it a temptation and sin and turn these stones into bread. That deals with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the appetites. Then he said to Him, "Jesus, see all these kingdoms of the world, I'll give them to You if You will fall down and worship me." That is the lust of the eyes. As Satan takes Him to the pinnacle of the temple and says "If You are who You say You are (boastful pride of life) then cast Yourself down and prove it." So here is Jesus, the second Adam, confronted. The first Adam succumbed to the sin and brought death. The Second Adam brought the Word of God and said "Be gone Satan!" So we now know how Satan will work with us. He will appeal to the lust, the evil desires which may be valid desires that we want too badly. We learn to say 'no' to the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life because we have a bigger 'yes' and that's the love of Christ that fills our souls. It is He who has loved us. That is walking in the light but John doesn't stop with walking in the light.

He then goes to next attribute found in I John 2:28-29 which says [28] *And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. [29] If you know that **he is righteous**, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.*

So one attribute John has covered is God is light. The people who are born of God seek to walk in the light and are growing in grace. The second attribute is God is righteous. If He is righteous and you have been born of Him then now you are pursuing righteousness. It is not a righteousness that is going to get you to heaven, only the righteousness of Christ will do that. This righteousness will always have sin polluting it, but you are attempting to pursue righteousness because you're born again. John goes on to explain it further.

I John 3:1-3 says [1] *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not*

know us is that it did not know him. [2] Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. [3] And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

There is a pursuit of righteousness, not to be saved, but because you have been born again and want to love the Savior. He is righteous and so you desire to be. All of these heresies are out there so John gives you an exhortation.

I John 4:1-6 says *[1] Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3] and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. [4] Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. [5] They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. [6] We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

When the Holy Spirit brings the truth you can test it. So when people come to teach you need preachers and teachers and I'm not doing that for job security. You just need it, because faith comes by hearing. You want to be saved by faith and you want to live by faith and faith comes by hearing the Word of truth so you need teachers, but the teacher is never infallible. To quote our Reformers, 'churches, counsels, preachers and teachers do err' so you always compare truth with truth because the Bible cannot contradict itself and you test the one who is teaching. You certainly respect your teachers and preachers and I can say that because I have the great privilege to be encouraged by people like you, but you always test them. We are learners but we're not so open-minded that our brains are falling out. The Bible tells you to be renewed in your mind and you are doing that by what you are testing and learning, so you know when the Holy Spirit is guiding you in the truth through your teachers, faithful to the Word of God or another spirit from the world is guiding you, the antichrist into the lie.

Let's look at I John 4:7-11, 19-21 which says *[7] Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. [8] Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. [9] In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. [10] In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. [12] No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.*

[19] We love because he first loved us. [20] If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. [21] And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

It's very interesting when John takes these attributes of light, righteousness and love, the call to love one another filters in to all three of these sections in I John. When you get to light you end up loving one another. When you get to pursuing righteousness you get to loving one another. When you get to love is from God and you're born of God

you will love then he has this extraordinary treatise on love that ultimately says how great the love of God is and the love that is produced in your life. It is so great that it gives you courage because he says perfect love casts out all fear. The opposite of fear is not courage, it's love. The love of the Lord fortifies our soul.

After John develops this he ends with this glorious statement that we have learned here over the years as we have learned how to share the Gospel. I John 5:13 says *[13] I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.* There are two types of assurance in the Christian life. There is objective assurance where I have put my trust in Jesus and I know He is able. Then there is a subjective assurance where as you grow in grace there is a personal assurance that begins to develop. So there is an objective assurance where I know He has saved me and I have entrusted myself to Him but there is an experiential assurance where we say look at what He is doing in my life. I didn't do this. How did this ungodly, immoral blasphemer become a follower of Jesus, grow in grace and even be allowed to vocationally serve Christ? That begins to feed our personal, subjective assurance. Both of those work together in the life of a believer.

Let's look at II John and I'll give you the highlight. John basically tells this woman to take care of preachers and this was the one I wanted to spend a lot of time in. II John says to take care of preachers. John tells them how to distinguish between false teachers and true teachers and then how you're to help them along. II John 1:10-11 says *[10] If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, [11] for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.* In other words, do not support false teachers. The flip side is to encourage true teachers. There is the encouragement and the support that happens to those who are being faithful but he says in the text like he said in I John that many deceivers and antichrists are out there. Do not support them.

I want to confess to you that this is one of my great difficulties. I never want to be accused of inappropriately maligning anyone who lifts up the name of Jesus, but the fact is, at least through proper teaching, you ought to be equipped to understand that just because someone stands in a pulpit using Jesus' name and opens the Bible does not mean it is a faithful teaching of God's Word. You have to use discernment. Then as you make discernment always encourage, pray for and support those whom the Lord has called. Never support those whom the Lord has not called and who in fact are being in opposition to Christ, not just error but heresy. All of us who preach and teach have errors but do not support those who have embraced heresy. Errors can be exposed. Heresies if believed can damn the souls of men and women. So we don't want to engage in the support of that.

Finally there is III John. I want to quickly sum up III John for you. There are three men in III John – Gaius, Diotrephes and Demetrius. When you read III John I want you to be like Gaius, the beloved elder, who is doing well. He is faithful. III John 1:5-6 says *[5] Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, [6] who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.*

We will get a chance to do this next week at our National Mission Conference and in our World Missions Conference with our faith promise giving. We get a chance to send those whom God has called. We can not only welcome them, bless them and show

hospitality but then we can send them on with our support personally, prayerfully and financially as we send them out in a manner worthy of God. Why?

III John 1:7-10 says [7] *For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. [8] Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth. [9] I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. [10] 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.*

How many times in a church do you see this? There is a Gaius and then there is a Diotrephes. In the balance there is a Demetrius. III John 1:11-12 says [11] *Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God. [12] Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.*

I don't know all of what he is saying here but here is what I think is happening. Here is a church that has two very powerful leaders. One of them is self-centered, ego driven putting himself first and he will put away anybody and everybody that becomes a rival. Over here is Gaius who loves the truth, loves to support people who are preaching the truth and his only desire is that Jesus is first. Somehow Diotrephes is gaining the upper hand at various times. So John says when I come I'll deal with it but in the meantime you deal with him. There is a place for church discipline because there is a man that is coming named Demetrius and I don't want him to be a casualty of Diotrephes. I want him to get blessed and encouraged when he comes there. So see to it Gaius that Diotrephes has been addressed and dealt with. If he doesn't repent then he needs to be removed from influence because he is affecting the well-being of that church.

I'm out of time. There is a great little study book on I, II, and III John by John Stott in the Tyndall Commentary series. You would enjoy going to a whole other level than I have been able to do in this study. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the privilege we could be together in Your Word in all of its riches and majesty. Now Father, send Your Word to our hearts and send that Word from our hearts into the world as we walk in the light by grace, pursue righteousness by grace and learn to love by grace that the glory of grace would be seen in us and that people will be drawn to the Christ that they hear from us and see in us. Help us not to have the word Christian as a prescriptive term but please let the word Christian, 'little christs', be a descriptive word of us, for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.