

THREE MEN

3rd John

3rd John 1

THE ELDER

Almost everyone has certain characteristics, habits or special traits for which they are well known. John was well up in years when he wrote this short note to Gaius who was one of his spiritual children. Therefore, when he wrote, "the elder" was a term by which he was known and there was no question as to the fact the letter was from John. Earlier on his life he was known as "The disciple who Jesus loved." The source and nature of the apostle John's love was "the truth." His strong affection was rooted in "the truth." It was on account of the truth he lived, was imprisoned and wrote his epistles, the Gospel of John and the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

The truth is the body of doctrine that we know to be the true word of God. It is in that context our love for God and His people exists and is demonstrated today. Sincerity in the truth and the holding of "the faith once delivered to the saints," is evident in the lives of God's people who walk in the light. It is that kind of affection John, the elder, had for his son in the faith, Gaius.

This man Gaius, was one of several recorded in the Bible who had that same name. It was a very common name among the Romans of that day. One brother named Gaius traveled with Aristarchus and Paul in the work of the Lord. Gaius and Aristarchus were taken before the court at Ephesus at the time of the riot over the business of making idols of Diana. Gaius of Derbe, was one of a number of men from different places who travelled with Paul. Even though they were from different backgrounds and personalities, they would have learned how to adapt to, and work with others in the common purpose of preaching the Gospel.

Gaius of Corinth was one of the two Paul baptized. He refrained from doing the actual baptizing usually, "lest any should think I had baptized in mine own name." Gaius was also privileged to be Paul's host, and apparently was a man of means who could host the whole assembly, likely in his own home, as a meeting place. Gaius in 3rd John was also known as one who showed hospitality to traveling saints who were serving the Lord in the work of the Gospel.

The fact that his actual location is not mentioned is in keeping with the purpose of John's short letter. All of us have the privilege of showing hospitality to others. It is one of the most positive and effective ways of showing Christian love and values to others. This is like the welcome God gives from His heart of love and grace to those who cannot meet their own needs. It is a demonstration of the fellowship we have one with another because of our fellowship with the Lord.

How encouraging it must have been to Gaius when he got this touching note from John who in the twelve words of the first verse uses the word "love" twice, and the first word of the second verse. John did not use this form of address to the "elect lady" in 2nd John because it would have been inappropriate and could have been misconstrued. In this context, that of a spiritual father and son, it has a deep value, especially since it is qualified as "love in the truth." It is not a mere comment on his own appreciation for Gaius, but is the reason behind this genuine affection.

For those who love "the truth" there is a special common ground of fellowship in the Christian life. This is able to be nurtured and promoted by words of encouragement and support. It is never out of place to commend our brothers and sisters in Christ for their faithful service for the Lord in whatever their sphere of life is. Words of thanks and deserved honor always have a place in a conversation or letter when they are sincere, and come from Christian love.

*It doesn't always matter how much you have to say,
More important is what's behind them to help another on the way.
A word of encouragement or praise, a thought spoken from the heart,
Can make a lot of difference to one whose life is torn apart.*

*Sincerity and affection that finds their root in truth,
Is often expressed in simple terms, but are of priceless worth.
None of us can realize the full depth another is passing through.
But words that are "fitly spoken," mean much because they're true.*

*A little bit of time taken out of the busy stream of life,
Might be exactly what is needed by one who is in the midst of strife.
To write some words of scripture truth that is able to be used by our Lord,
He adds the essence of His Person to the great power of His word.*

*An older believer who shows interest in one just starting out,
Can be much more effective than a sermon or a shout.
The young in turn can show appreciation to an older one who cares.
Both in their own way and time another's burden bears.*

"I thank Thee, Gracious Father, for allowing me the great privilege of knowing many of Thy own children. It is always such a joy to be able to share our lives in Christ and communicate openly with them regarding "the truth" which we all love because it is Thy word speaking personally to us. I thank Thee for them and for it, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

3rd John 2

MY PRAYER FOR YOU

It is always a comfort and cause for gratitude when someone tells you they are praying for you and the work for the Lord in which you are engaged. What joy it must have brought Gaius to read the words of John, the elder. Again, John referred to him as "beloved" in the way we would address a dear friend. Openly expressed thoughts do not require a lot of "gushy" words. We use the word "Dear" at the beginning of a letter, usually without thinking of what the word really means. In its true sense it would help the recipient of a letter to know the value we placed upon them. A casual "hello" is quite different from "Dear so-and-so." A "To-whom-it-may-concern," attitude in written words is much different than the word "Beloved."

"I wish" and "I pray" are the same word in this verse, so this is not a casual comment but John is expressing his desire of God to bring a special benefit to Gaius. This intercessory prayer on behalf of Gaius was not a casual comment. Whether the verse indicates Gaius was in ill health or not isn't clear. It reads like it is a sincere desire that he would be in good health physically in the same way he was in good spiritual health. His "soul-health" was obvious and John wanted the best for his dear friend in every way. The prosperity of every part of our life affects other parts of our being. Our whole person is affected to a certain degree by our physical, emotional and spiritual wellness. However, illness, accidents and sickness can sometimes be used by God to bring a greater glory to His name than if everything is going good for us. It is the problems and pains of life that are used to mature us and bring us to where we really trust the Lord.

Gaius' life commended him to fellow Christians who knew him and had experienced his hospitality and grace. Whatever his physical state was, his spiritual state was exemplary.

"Whatever my lot,
Thou hast taught me to say,
'It is well, it is well,
With my soul.'"

The false teachers of that day taught the separation of the physical from the spiritual. Some taught the physical was only evil, so they would deny themselves of even necessities of life thinking that would make them more acceptable to God. The neglect of the body was considered a meritorious act. Since that time there are still those who think self-denial, isolation, and avoiding certain foods will make them holy and acceptable to God. Other people abandon themselves to sensual and licentious living thinking that because God is merciful, it makes no difference to Him whatever they do. Still others combine religious practices with ungodly pleasures to suit their own lifestyle thinking that whatever they choose to do is alright as long as they think it is alright.

A balanced Christian does not neglect what needs to be done for physical health and well-being, nor do they neglect what is needed for spiritual life to be effective and meaningful. On the other hand, a believer should not indulge in careless pleasures but should care for one's body that has been bought with a "price." Balanced living and personal discipline over body and soul enables us to be engaged in physical and spiritual things in the way our Lord intended. In our service for Him, we need to be at our best in every way possible.

Praying for the health and spiritual strength of the Lord's people has this biblical precedent we read of in 3rd John. In our prayer meetings, conferences, family prayers and personal prayers, we should be making intercession for those who are sick and injured as well as the salvation of unsaved people. The needs of others should move us to reach beyond our own comfort zone to seek to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The prosperity of the inner man as well as the outer body should be our prayerful concern. When there is love for the Lord's people, that is evidence of the state of one's own soul. In order to meet the needs of others in physical and spiritual ways, we need to "prosper" in those ways ourselves. It takes time, effort, labor and money to supply the actual demands of showing hospitality. The example of Gaius is one we can use as a template for our own ministry as God gives us the needed grace, and provides us the opportunity to serve Him by serving others.

*We may not always realize that at the throne of grace,
Someone is interceding for us in some far and distant place.
Perhaps when we meet together, we will then be able to trace
The path of service that was opened because another in an act of faith -
Took time to stop and pray.*

*Some know us very well - both our strengths and limitations.
They have followed our path of life to our many destinations.
So, they realize the value of their faithful intercessions,
As we have shared with them our ministry and its God-given intentions -
And they continue to faithfully pray.*

*In prayer meetings the saints gather to pray together for those to them unknown.
But they are made aware of those who labor and are far away from home.
Those who are seeking to take the Gospel to those whom Christ has not been shown.
Hopefully they will come to trust in Christ and salvation through Him alone -
As a result of those who gather together to pray.*

*I as an older man have many younger saints on my heart.
To me it has been a great privilege to help them make a start.
Joy rises up and thanks as they did for far fields depart.
Now I bow in worship and intercession seeking for them to do my part -
By making their tasks mine as I pray.*

"Father, the work and workers in El Salvador are especially strong in my heart today. They are truly "beloved" to me. At this time of loss and grief, please draw near to them in a special way to comfort, sustain and strengthen them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

3rd John 3. *"For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth."*

WALK IN TRUTH

Joy in a Christian's life strengthens them and through their influence it strengthens others. The apostle John had great cause for rejoicing when he heard from others the reputation of his spiritual "son in the faith" Gaius, was that "the truth" was real to him. Truth was in him and he practiced truth outwardly. He walked in truth. Truth by its very nature is the corresponding of a statement with a fact. If what I am and what I do are synchronized, I am walking in truth. The word of God in the mind can be learned by study. When the word of God is both in the mind and the daily practices of life, then it is real.

To Gaius truth was the indwelling power of his inner life. Spiritual truth was not merely a lesson to be learned, but it was a power that controlled his mind. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." When truth controls the mind, it will control our walk each day in life. The "truth road" Gaius walked led him to be the kind of man he was. He was kind, generous and hospitable. Even though hospitality is a duty we have towards others, it can be one of the most delightful duties of life as we are able to interact and enjoy fellowship with God's people.

It seems like the truth that was in this man was like the atmosphere he breathed. When that is true in one's life, everything we think and do has the truth as the standard by which we measure each action and thought. Gaius was known by the truth that was in him and the love he demonstrated toward others. These two things balance one's life in such a way that can please God and give joy to others.

John knew of Gaius' spiritual condition by the witness of "the brethren" who were so impressed with his attitude and acts of kindness that they passed that information on to others. We do not do what we do for the Lord to impress others, but to give glory to God and to bless our fellowman. Anything we can do to make life better for God's people is done unto Him. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Truth within has that characteristic.

Truth within is a wonderful thing. An act or word of truth passed on to others can also be of great benefit to the Lord's people. But to "walk in truth" means that this is a lifestyle that characterizes a person and is maintained consistently. This is not a hit-and-miss sort of thing. Rather it is Christ-likeness lived out, and because of that, people "take knowledge that [we] have been with Jesus." No wonder older believers rejoice when we see evidence of a sanctified life in those who have responded to the Gospel message and appreciate the grace of God to them.

*Truth by its nature is the standard of righteousness.
Truth that is lived by, produces fruits of holiness.
Truth passed on to others is an act of graciousness.
Truth received by faith brings real happiness.*

*When we walk in truth, we will not be ashamed.
When we practice truth, we will not be blamed.
Walking in truth gives significance to what we have claimed
And gives honor to our Lord whose name we have named.*

*Truth lived out means that others can testify
To the life of God in a believer who God did sanctify
And through whose teaching, the Spirit of God does purify
With the result that through their life, God they do glorify.*

"Father, it is a sincere desire of mine that there would be practical evidence of Thy grace, truth and love seen in me. Thy servant needs to be daily and hourly conscious of the fact that others are in need of my time and genuine interest in them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

3rd John 4

NO GREATER JOY.

John was the one God used to bring the blessing of the Gospel message to Gaius. God in saving grace uses clay vessels to present divine truth to those with whom He has been working in conviction by the Holy Spirit. Often, we hear of people with an inner desire to know who they are and why they are here. To some life seems purposeless until they hear the sweet strains of the Gospel message, and then their deep desire is constrained to pay attention to what is being preached. Some have been saved the first time they hear the word of God explained in ways they can understand.

God must have been working in the conscience of Gaius, and even though he was likely one who with most Romans, worshipped pagan deities like Mars, Jupiter and Venus, he could see through the falseness of that. The presenting of the truth of God changed him into a man of faith by the grace of God. Now after the power of saving grace was seen in him, God's grace was continuing to be seen through the life of Gaius and through him others were being blessed.

Some men seem to have made a good start in their Christian life. Gaius seemed to respond to the truth when he heard it from John. He was a Roman Gentile and yet this older Jewish man reached his heart and mind. An outstanding characteristic he had was he walked in the truth, lived the truth before other brethren and John truly valued him. I would really like to learn from him, how to be so single-minded towards the truth of God.

Another characteristic he had was hospitality. He was the same toward the strangers as he was toward the brethren who came to the assembly of which he was a part. He made sure these travelers had all they

needed to help them on their way. The men who came by were doing the work of the Lord and it wouldn't be right if they had to get help from those who were unbelievers. May I too learn that any help I can give to fellow-workers and the Lord's people in general, is a testimony as to how I love the truth and the God of truth.

*Joy is a lifting up of the soul when the news we get is bright.
It happens to us when we hear of one turning from darkness unto light.
To know God is working through His word to give their life new start,
Brings joy to those God used to bring His message to their heart.*

*Joy when one is born again is great - we watch as they mature.
Then hear their words of faith that makes their profession to us more sure.
What they learned when they said on the Lord Jesus they believed,
Is now more real to them and us because the Savior they have received.*

*Joy when years pass by and faithfulness to God is real,
Is even a deeper joy because there is obviously the Spirit's seal.
Their interests lie in spiritual things and for others they truly care.
They in turn now reach beyond with the Gospel they now share.*

*Joy continues when reports are given about their many acts of grace.
Our minds go back to when they started, and their upward path we trace.
People speak their names with great respect and real gratitude.
The work of God which they now do, includes words, deeds and attitude.*

"Heavenly Father: there are those I have watched who seemed a lot like this man. Father was one and his consistency still sticks in my mind even though he has been gone quite a few years. Linda's father too was similar in his outlook toward the servants of God and the Lord's work, I have had good examples. Help me to be one, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

3rd John 5

BE HOSPITABLE

It may be a phone call, an email or a knock on the door and you are suddenly faced with a situation that needs immediate action. Is this an opportunity or an irritation? Is it a potential privilege or a painful interruption? Whether we have given an invitation to a person to visit us or whether it is a surprise to us, whenever we have guests, the practice of hospitality reflects our reputation. This is one of the most effective ways we can demonstrate the love we have for Christ and His people.

What we value and consider important in our lives makes visible the value we place on the things of God. Hospitality is a visible, tangible expression of divine love seen through God's children. Are people mere objects that pass in front of me or are they of infinite worth? Are they inconveniences when they come into my home, or are they important to me as family members of the household of God? To Gaius it was a blessing to him to be a blessing to others. Hospitality was a habit in his home. We all have things in our lives that reflect our character. Hospitality in the home of Gaius was notable among travelers who stayed there on their way to their fields of service.

It is a fact that hospitality is a duty among God's people, but it can be a delightful duty or a grudging duty depending on where I place my true values. People are always more important than things. The costs of hospitality are real in time, labor and money, but the benefits far outweigh the expense and inconvenience. Our children may have to sleep two or more in a bed. Husband and wife may need to move to another room and sleep on a "blow-up" mattress, but the memories and friendship that result from showing hospitality are well worth the minor inconveniences. The fellowship, the interesting stories of far-away places and the impact of the Gospel on other people and cultures will remain in our hearts. We will be more personally involved in those laborers, people and places for which we pray as we learn more about the great harvest field of the world.

Our children are exposed to a large view of the world and the work of God through their parents' habit of hospitality. People who live insular lives listen in wonder as our children tell their friends of visitors at their home from Africa, Latin America, Europe and other places in the world they only know about from geography books. "How do you know all these people?" they are asked. "They stayed at our house on their way to the

place where they are missionaries or where they are going to preach." When this comes from our children to their friends and their friends' family, it gives significance to our own children and their church and family life.

John again addresses Gaius as "beloved" as he commends him for his faithful hospitality toward travelers both known and unknown. The Christian life of faith is seen in its great value when there is no difference made between those we know well and those who are strangers as we sit at the same table, sharing the same meal and talking of our same Savior and our "common salvation." John writes with fatherly affection and brotherly love as he comments in plain, simple appreciative words regarding Gaius' on-going ministry of hospitality.

The writer of the book of Hebrews told the saints who read his epistle to "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Friendship and faithful stewardship go well together. Some of the Lord's people in a local assembly may be wondering, "Does anyone know I am here? Does anyone even care?" A little extra effort and a short amount of time can be a great blessing to those who have been shelved to a certain degree by illness, age or the death of a spouse.

We become partners in the work of the Lord with other servants of the Lord when we have preachers of the Gospel, itinerant teachers of the word and missionaries stay with us. They can give us far greater insight into their labors for the Lord when they are at our table then they can give in a "report meeting." Widows may feel abandoned after their spouse passes away. Their reputation remains though when they have been given to "good works." A widow who has raised her children, lodged strangers and served God's people in her service for the Lord should not be left without recognition. She applied herself to serving the saints locally - "washed the saints' feet and relieved the afflicted." Now it is our turn to reciprocate.

Showing hospitality is never out of date. Young people need to feel accepted and there is no better place to show that than in your home. Older people living alone need comfort and assurance of their value to the Lord and His people. The best place to show that is in your home. Fellow laborers in an assembly need an opportunity and place to talk about things of common interest and concern. The best place to do that is at your table over a good meal. Visitors who are just passing through will often consider time spent at a hospitable home is one of the highlights of their journey. To provide a place of rest, fellowship and food for the Lord's people is a privilege when we do it in His name, for His glory and for their benefit.

*At first, they were not sure, but then on second thought
Both husband and wife agreed to do the best they could.
They could sleep in the basement, and Jamie on a cot,
And though they had nothing fancy, they had a lot of food.*

*The meal was over, the hours flew by, the children just sat and listened,
To words of faith in a faithful God, and of people in distant lands.
As the whole family were enthralled, warm tears in each eye glistened,
As unfolding from God's servants, they spoke of those who gave helping hands.*

*It wasn't long until they were gone in their service for the Lord,
In that home where they stayed, prayers were made for those who came to visit,
And at the family altar, it seemed new light shone on God's Word.
Now there was a different look at life, and how God intends us to live it.*

*If we had not been willing to bring those strangers home
We would have been in the same rut, and still with our life be bored.
Now a difference is here to stay since those special visitors to us had come.
Our life as a family has real meaning, and we too labor for the Lord.*

"Father, when I think of all Thy people who have shown us hospitality, I am moved to thank Thee for them and pray for them. Those who have stayed with us have been a blessing to us. Those also from the local assembly seem to appreciate the fellowship at our table and get comfort and joy from being at our home. Thanks for giving us the privilege of opening our home and showing hospitality to those of Thy family. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

3rd John 6

THE REPORT

It is not stated as to whether the brother named Gaius in this epistle was Gaius of Derbe, Gaius of Macedonia or Gaius of Corinth, but what is stated clearly is he was a man of "charity." His love was that special "agape" kind of love that sees value in others and what they do. Travelers who were likely involved in the work of preaching the Gospel and teaching the saints were impressed by the hospitality of Gaius. When these itinerant workers returned to their home assembly (likely to Ephesus where John was) to give a report of their labors the ministry of Gaius was mentioned in their comments.

The assembly Gaius was in might have not been very big but his support personally, financially, practically and spiritually was so important to them, they talked about it in their report meeting. It is a scriptural practice for those who labor in the Gospel to let the Lord's people know what they have been doing and where. Paul and Barnabas told their commending assembly of Antioch of their labors for the Lord and the results. The saints of God in an assembly often mention the names of those they know in their prayer meeting and private prayers. The Lord's people have a right to know what is happening.

Those who gave the report were witnesses of Gaius' love and hospitality because they had personally experienced it. They were simply declaring what they had seen, experienced and knew personally. A witness does that. Statements he gives are supported by evidence to establish proof of the facts. It is a privilege for us to give personal witness to the power of the Gospel, the progress of a work and to make a presentation of the facts for the purpose of edifying and encouraging the Lord's people.

The "report meeting" is a scripturally recognized meeting of an assembly that included some of the characteristics we learn here in 3rd John. There are factual reports of events and the results of preaching. There are also testimonies given about specific people that have had an impact on the work of the Lord. Both the good testimony of one who is a believer and a help, as well as the bad report of those who hinder the work are given. In the biblical accounts of reports given, more is said about the positive aspects of the work in which the Lord's servants have been involved than in the difficulties and opposition.

To "bring forward on their journey" indicates that hospitality does not end when the door is closed after a person leaves our home. It means they are sent forth with the provisions they need to take them where they are going and to assist them in their work. "A godly sort" is a way of saying that they deserve our financial support and any other kind of support necessary for their work to be successful. Some are able to go and help temporarily in a building or labor project that has to be done. Any way we can assist personally is the Christian system of supporting a work.

Trusting the Lord to meet needs is one of the ways we "walk by faith." A salary or guaranteed annual income is not seen practiced in the scriptures. On the other hand; "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn" is a scriptural principle that puts the onus of support on those who "stay by the stuff," rather than on the laborer to get financial commitments before going out in the field to work. The amount of financial support we need is determined by the "Owner of the vineyard" who determines whether a day's wages be paid for a day's work or an hour's work.

It is our privilege to serve the saints in whatever way we can. Whether recognition is ever given for our labor, or if it is never known is not up to us. The travelers who stayed with Gaius made it known to others, not Gaius making it known himself. If the Master thinks it should or should not be reported is up to Him. We are to do whatever we do as to the Lord, not just unto men. Whatever we are privileged to do in His service, all glory belongs to Him.

*They have come from afar to rest awhile, and to tell what God has done.
Some words bring tears to us, others a smile, as they report that there are some
Who have hearts full of appreciation, and want to do the best they can,
To make to God's work a full application, to meet the needs of their fellow man.*

*Some will look for ways, to effectively minister to other people's needs.
They listen carefully to what one says, and to the Spirit within give heed.
They count carefully their financial store so they can help what others do.
If possible, they will get some more, in finances and labor too.*

*There are various ways we may labor, some away and some at home.
It is a gracious God-given favor, to welcome visitors when they come.
Each act, each spiritual conversation, adds to the blessings we receive.
With daily and earnest consecration, we all serve Him in whom we believe.*

*The visitors are leaving, their distant calling beckons them on.
From our hand they are receiving, support for them when they are gone.
Food, shelter, fellowship, money; all are what they do deserve.
Joy, grace, faith and maturity; are some of what they to us leave.*

*We don't know, but far away, extended grace may be reported.
Others learn that giving does pay, and through you God's work is supported.
The "extra mile," the "coat" that is given, all these things pay dividends.
We may never know here but up in heaven, a "Well done" is how it all ends.*

"Father of love, mercy and grace: I thank Thee for Thy people who care enough for one another to learn what needs the others have and how to meet them. May all of us be consistent in our giving, helping and labor for Thee and Thy people. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

3rd John 7-8

HIS NAME'S SAKE

The servants of the Lord who have been called by Him to duty beyond the area of their assembly's activities have needs that are to be met only by fellow believers. It is true they have been called by God, commissioned by our Lord Jesus Christ and are led by the Holy Spirit. But there is also a sense in which they "went forth" - they chose to go and were glad to have the privilege of going and doing this special work. False teachers also go forth but with different motives. Some seek a following of people over which they can exercise authority. Often there is a percentage of income they demand of their followers. Others have "fund raisers," for either people or events in their efforts to raise money for their projects and purposes, and they are willing to get money from every possible source. It is not uncommon for false teachers to become wealthy from the solicited funds they get.

For those who go out for "the sake of the Name," they do not solicit money. This is one of the most obvious contrasts between that which is scriptural and that which is carnal. Some unbelievers contribute money to religious causes as a means of seeking favor with God. Some Christian groups promote giving and will ask for money from anyone who will contribute to their "mission" and/or other projects. Those who follow scriptural teaching and practices, give what they give "as unto the Lord." They go forth in faith in our Lord, knowing He is "able to supply all your need." They labor in His name and for His glory. They give what they have been given to further the work in their hands to which they have been called. They will accept unsolicited gifts from believers who give what they can as partners in the work. It is often called "fellowship in the work of the Lord." As partners we share in common what we have for the work God gives us to do for Him.

"As laborers together," believers are able to participate in the outreach of the Gospel and the building up of God's people when they give of their resources and substance to a work in which they have interest. They are in the work but in a different way than those who are the public voice and public representatives of that part of the Lord's work. The believers in the assembly at Philippi supported Paul and his fellow-laborers "concerning giving and receiving." Their gifts were "fruit that abounded to your account." They were also "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." Those who give in a scriptural way, for scriptural reasons from glad hearts ("hilarious giving"), will find themselves receiving from God's hands abundance that surpasses what they need.

Behind this giving is a superior and supreme motive. "For His name's sake," the servants went forth and it is for his name's sake we support them. One asked the wise man who wrote the Proverbs, "What is His name, and what is His Son's name?" We know His name as the only name "whereby we must be saved. We know "That at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." There are a number of scriptures that emphasize His name as the motivation for our labor for the Lord whether going forth or supporting those who do so.

*When we first heard His name, perhaps it didn't mean too much.
But Gospel preaching came, and His name our hearts did touch.
The only name that's given, is His alone by which we're saved.
In the identity of baptism, we testified to His life He gave.*

We are set apart to Him, by the authority of His name.

*In spiritual songs and hymns, we praise the One who came.
And in His name, we pray, when we intercede for others
Who for His name hazard lives each day, that the lost may be our brothers.*

*By the preaching of the Gospel, the Lord's name is magnified.
It was for the name of Jesus, martyrs suffered and they died.
We call upon His name, when in fellowship we meet.
His presence we do claim; in His name we each do greet.*

*Believers are one in Christ, in His name is our gathering center.
In Him we put our trust, when into the holiest of all we enter.
We are in that name justified, cleansed of every guilt and stain.
In His name we are sanctified; we give thanks in Jesus' name.*

*All we do is in His name; faith, works - even discipline.
Disorder - any blame; it is in His name we deal with sin.
In His name wrongs are made right, bringing joy to the justified.
After darkness comes the light, and His name is glorified.*

"Father, at the end of almost all of my prayers to Thee is the authority of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am very grateful to Thee for hearing and answering my prayers in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know this is possible because of Him who "Does all things well" and has always brought pleasure to Thee. Thanks so much for accepting me in the Beloved. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

HIS NAME:

Acts 2:20; Rom.10:13. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.
Acts 4:12. We are saved by His name.
Acts 2:38. (baptized) identified by His name.
Mat.18:20. We are separated by His name.
Acts 4:18. We are to speak in His name.
Acts 9:27-29. We are to preach in His name.
Jn.14:12-13. We are to pray in His name.
Acts 15:26. Hazard lives for the name of the Lord.
Acts 19:17. Name of the Lord was magnified.
Acts 21:13. Die for the name of the Lord Jesus.
1Cor.1:2. Call upon His name in fellowship.
1Cor.1:9-10. Appealed for oneness (no divisions) in His name.
1Cor.5:4. Grounds for assembly discipline in His name.
1Cor.6:11. Sanctified, justified in His name.
Eph.5:20. Giving thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus.
Col.3:17. Everything to be done in His name.
2Thes.1:12. His name glorified.
2Thes.3:6. In His name withdrawal from disorderly walk commanded.

Because of "His name's sake" we receive those who come to us and support them while they are with us and as they go forth to their areas of service, we supply their needs so they can give themselves to their work. When we help those laborers in this way, we are partners with them in that service. Not everyone is called to go into a mission field in a physical, personal way. However, we become "fellow-helpers to the truth" right where we are by providing for them in tangible ways. Our money, our prayers, our interest, our hospitality and our time are all ways in which we can support the work they do and be meaningfully involved in that work for the Lord.

The words, "the truth" in this place, is more than just the written words of scripture. "The Truth" here is personified as God. It means that we are not merely pointing to the truth but are with the truth as we would be with a person - in this case, our Lord Himself who is "The Truth." His word, "sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth;" His Person, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," and the body of truth revealed in "the faith," are all that with which we are participants. Gaius, and those who are engaged in these various ways of furthering the truth are working with God. This is indeed a high privilege.

3rd John 8. *"We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth."*

RECEIVE SUCH.

*The soul of the brother beloved by John,
Was the part that concerned him most.
The work of the Lord was important to him;
He was known as, "Gaius, mine host."*

*When the brethren came by on their journeys for God,
He received with a glad heart, these men.
He knew the truth that they preached from God's Word;
He could show fellowship with when he took them in.*

*He walked in the truth himself every day.
It's what he lived for, and he wanted to share
With others the truth of God's Gospel, that they
Where they went, would truth openly declare.*

*We are not all able to go where we want,
Or do what we have wanted to do.
But when we support others, we can have a part,
And like them are fellows-laborers too.*

*The name's sake of the Lord, is incentive enough,
To give of our bounty for Him.
We don't want the lost to think that their stuff
Will help pay the price of their sin.*

*Those who God called to far distant lands
Have a right to expect much from me.
After all, what I have has been placed in my hands
From God, and was entirely free.*

*May I never hold back, or not use what I have
To further the work of the Lord.
In the hands of the workers, I place what I give;
Giving to God all the glory and reward.*

"I have been extremely blessed, Father, by knowing many who have been called by Thee to take the Gospel to all the world. In my home area, in my country, in North America, I have been privileged to participate with them in the work of the Gospel. Young men and women, we have prayed for and worked with, are now going to other parts of the world. May I never forget these wonderful people that are using their time, talents and lives to further the work of the Lord. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

3rd John 9

THE SECOND MAN

The first of the men written about in 3rd John was Gaius, a man who in his spiritual life was a Prosperous Christian. His soul was prospering and as a result he was able to be a blessing to others who came to visit the assembly of which he was a part. The second man written about in this epistle was a Proud Christian who had a most unchristian-like attitude toward others. Diotrephes looked out for himself and his self-centered ambition. He had many of the characteristics of the false teachers both Peter and John had warned the Lord's people about in earlier epistles.

Diotrephes did not accept the written word of the apostles as the word of God. He actually rejected what John wrote. By rejecting the written word of the apostle John, he was rejecting and not receiving both John as a person and his writing as the word of truth being passed on by the Holy Spirit through him. He "loveth to have the preeminence," means that he loved the first place and wasn't going to yield that even to an apostle who was in the foundation of the church.

One needs to ask himself: am I looking out for those things that reflect our Lord Jesus Christ and what He practiced and taught? Do I truly love the Lord's people? Would they consider my home a place of hospitality where they can find good fellowship in the things of God? Are those who pass through our city in their service for the Lord supported and encouraged by my attitude and actions?

Or: is it a bother to me to have people come to visit? Is it inconvenient to me when one of the Lord's servants asks me to pass on a letter to the saints to be read at the prayer meeting? Do I consider it a challenge to me and my authority when a suggestion is made to have some Gospel meetings? Am I the boss here in this assembly, "the main man," "the leading elder," or am I a servant of the church? Are those passing through to some other part of the world as missionaries and those old preachers to be our responsibility or not?

The contrast between Gaius and Diotrephes was very pronounced. The one was a man who demonstrated Christian love in showing hospitality and support for others. The other man demonstrated pride, arrogance and self-centered importance. He set himself up as "the leader." He considered himself to be the final word about anything and everything. He misused his position of leadership and his pride disqualified him from being a representative, let alone as leader of the saints of that assembly. He was actually taking the place of the Lord.

It is the Holy Spirit who raises up overseers who are to "feed the flock of God," not brow-beat others nor use his place of leadership as a position of dominance. A shepherd is one who not only feeds but cares for those for whom he has responsibility. It was from the same kind of attitude of self-importance that Diotrephes had, that ultimately led to the "clergy - laity" condition a couple of hundred years later and from which we still suffer today.

Leadership has its obligations and responsibilities which the Holy Spirit enables us to fulfill. But the misuse of the role of leadership because of one's desire to control the lives of other people is wrong. These men were likely in the same assembly and yet were very different. How is it that two people hearing the same messages and sitting in the same prayer meetings and listening to the same Gospel preaching can be so different? That difference is motivation and commitment. We choose what we do with what we hear. We all have influence of one kind or another. One of these men demonstrated love, the other pride. One showed hospitality, the other self-importance. One helped strangers, the other refused strangers and those he didn't like personally. One was beloved by the apostle John, the other rejected John and spoke against him.

The contrast of a prosperous Christian and a proud Christian is not an uncommon sight among the people of God. How careful we must be to have the mind of Christ which shows His love and care for His people. Pride is "the condemnation of the devil" and that has the potential of not only putting a damper on the warm fellowship of believers, but also of dividing God's people and bringing about the disintegration of an assembly and its demise.

*Not everyone is exactly the same, though we are in the family of God.
Even among those gathered to His name, there are different attitudes to His word.
Some want to show evidence of Christ's love, others declare they're "standing for the truth."
Some listen to those who are teachers, others consider them of little worth.*

*Pride has various ways to be seen; the main one is "I want my own way."
It exalts one and it preens: it demands "You listen to what I say."
But those with pride will someday find, God resists those who stand so tall.
Pride's many tendrils that bind, are sure to bring about their fall.*

*A person with wisdom will think, "Is this God's will or is it mine?"
When choices must be made, he won't act until God's will he finds.
Then he goes forward with confidence, "This is the way - we will walk in it."
That person knows God can bless; he wants to take advantage of every minute.*

*Each of us needs to evaluate, each activity has to have a reason.
Whether it be a dramatic work, or a simple "word in season."
There are consequences that inevitably follow each decision that I make.
The outcome is God's blessing or correction depending on which path I take.*

"Father, I am asking Thee today to please help me keep from ever being a person who thinks I have all the answers. Give me wisdom that is needed to bless others. And please give me a child-like spirit of humility and grace whenever I pass on that which Thou dost give me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

3rd John 10

TALKING NONSENSE

In the universal body of Christ in which the Holy Spirit places each believer, there are no false Christians. Only divine Persons know without a doubt those who have been born again and who has the new nature implanted by the Spirit of God. Not everyone who says they are a Christian is a child of God. To a certain extent, "by their fruits" we know them. In the local assemblies of God's people there are those who we believe to have divine life and a testimony of salvation and a desire to follow the word of God. But there are also some who had the right words to say and seemed to be genuine, but later they begin to demonstrate a different character. They reveal evidence of carnality and a desire for the things of the world or an ambition that is not spiritual at all. This is not characteristic of a genuine child of God.

Others may have divine life, but pride, jealousy and ambition are allowed to flourish and continue and are not faced as sin. Unconfessed sin that is not forsaken changes the way a person lives and soon even the way they think about spiritual things. Compromise and inconsistency in their spiritual life soon makes it difficult to know if they are away from the Lord or are unconverted. Sometimes these same people find a kind of satisfaction in trying to control other people. Whether one is not saved, or one is away from the Lord, they both have a need to feed their ego and cover their lack of spiritual joy by being recognized as being in authority over other people. Diotrephes was that kind of man. He found some kind of personal significance by controlling other people and making them do what he wanted. That attitude and those actions have all the signs of the devil himself.

This self-opinionated, self-centered and selfish man who loved first place, spoke against the authority of those who had a higher position of responsibility than he had. He not only rejected John's letter but by doing so rejected John himself. He wanted to control the assembly of God's people. He wanted to be the leader who "called all the shots." He went so far as to denounce true spiritual leaders. "His deeds" were active opposition against those he considered a threat to his self-appointed position of authority. His "prating" was talking nonsense by making baseless spiteful charges against those who did not submit to him. His senseless, wicked false talking and refusal to have anything to do with spiritual leaders exposed the kind of man he was.

Any who mock the truth of God and slander those who faithfully teach it, have the features of the devil. Malicious words and foolish babble reveal the inner character of one who is a false teacher/leader. At the very best they are a bad example of one who is a child of God, and their words and actions must be stopped. When one who is in the place of leadership creates an atmosphere of discontent and discourages that which is right; when that person encourages sin, he must be stopped and dealt with. An uncontrolled, dictatorial spirit cannot be allowed to have its way among the people of God. Some may say, "What can we do?" The biblical teaching is that sin is confronted by one person, then two or three witness and ultimately the church in that order. If it is not confessed and forsaken than that person is to be "as a heathen man and a publican." "A little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump."

Diotrephes was a back-biter who talked nonsense against John. He would not receive the Lord's servant who "labored in word and deed." He was inhospitable himself and tried to prevent those who were real Christians from showing Christian love toward others. In his spirit of animosity, he even took it upon himself to excommunicate those who supported the workers in their work. Likely he would charge them with "rebellion" because they did not do what he said. He commended inhospitality and cast out those who were hospitable. The more John wrote about this man, the more evidence there seems to be that he was a false teacher who had found his way into an assembly of God, and was not even a child of God.

It is sad but true that some believers do have some of these characteristics. But when there is so much about a person that there is no sign of spiritual life, then likely there is no life in them. An old adage says, "If it looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, swims like a duck, has feathers like a duck and associates with ducks - likely it is a duck." If one speaks slanderous, nonsensical talk, opposes that which is right, has a vindictive spirit toward towards those who want to do what is right and demands that people follow him and his wrong dictates - he is likely of his father the devil.

*Position is just that - a position
To use that in open opposition*

*That promotes strife and creates division
Indicates one's spiritual condition -
Is not that of a child of God.*

*When doing right is by a man condemned
And he insists on his word you depend
And this position he will not amend
But forces his own way right to the end -
There's no evidence he is a child of God.*

*When he insists others must yield to his opinion
And he thinks over others he has dominion
So they cannot carry out the exercise in them
Or he puts away those who disagree with him -
Such a person is not a child of God.*

*We are to receive believers to our place
It is our privilege to demonstrate grace
When the joy of the Lord is in one's face
And the righteous course of his life we can trace -
Those are characteristics of a child of God.*

"Holy Father, when there arises among Thy people who gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ those who exhibit the characteristics of Diotrephes, please give to those who lead the assembly the courage to confront that person, to stop his nonsense and to deal with him in a scriptural way. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

3rd John 11

FOLLOW - FOLLOW NOT

None of us is completely immune to the influences and pressures around us. Believers are conscious of evil when they see it because the Holy Spirit has given us a new nature that responds to divine influences. The reading of the Bible, personal and public prayer, fellowship with Christians and assembly gatherings are all positive influences on us. When these things are consciously attended to, we experience "the joy of the Lord" and our spiritual strength matures. But because we are living in the world there are other influences that affect us negatively if we are not careful to "yield not to temptation." Billboards on the highway, groups of people who dress in suggestive ways, a news broadcast and the attraction of financial success all have an appeal that is not good. Our senses are all being influenced by that which is constantly bombarding them. The inward peace and spiritual strength to guard against this is plain - "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee."

One of the most difficult influences with which we have to contend, is that which is cast by those who profess to be Christians but do not commit themselves to the practice of biblical Christianity. John knew that when he inserted a warning to his "beloved" child in the faith while writing about Diotrephes and the practices of evil generally. He again addresses Gaius with the word "beloved," indicating that even he was not immune to evil. This faithful man with a generous spirit toward others may have been pressured to support the "casting out of the church" of some people for totally unscriptural reasons. When this happens, a person in whom grace is a characteristic will often back away from confrontation in order "to keep the peace."

Any form of evil cannot be yielded to. We dare not allow or follow any self-opinionated man, nor should we submit to the influence they seek to impose on the people of God. The charge John makes to the beloved Gaius is to "not follow that which is evil." That means do not copy evil; do not mimic those who do practice evil - and in this case, spiritual evil that is couched in religious terms. A truly born-again child of God knows what is good and by virtue of the new nature, will seek to do that in spite of times of failure that may occur. Sin is not the practice of believer's life because we have the root of divine life in us.

The acts of good in the service of Gaius, and the good report of Demetrius and his consistency to the word of God, are in contrast to the evil practices of Diotrephes. The fact that the bent of Diotrephes' life and practices were evil, lets us know that even among the assemblies of those gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are those who have never been born again. When for some reason they take the place

of a leader, they are a special danger to the people of God. In a small company of saints, there is often the need of an articulate person to help in a local testimony. It is then that one who has a charismatic personality, or a dogmatic way of speaking so that he overpowers the gracious words of other, gains control and a "following."

Habitual goodness is not hard to see. It may not always be out in the open but those who practice doing good leave an impression that we can follow by doing the same things with the same attitude. The pattern of good and grace that one demonstrates is the template by which we should serve. Those things that are "good" have the impression of our Lord stamped upon them. He is "the Bread of God" on which we feed. One who follows Him will have spiritual food to give that builds others up in their faith. Our Lord is "the Light of the world" who reveals truth and righteousness. When we follow Him, we will have "the light of life." He is "the Good Shepherd" and those who follow Him will be true caring shepherds of God's people. In many ways those who "follow that which is good" will exemplify the life and ministry of our Lord.

There is really no evidence given to indicate Diotrephes was a Christian. Doing evil is not of God and John wrote that such a person "hath not seen God." They are a stranger to God. They do not know God because they have never met Him by faith. It is not in their nature to do "God-like (godly)" things. No matter how articulate, how persuasive and how dogmatic such a person may be - we are not to follow him or her.

The beauty of grace and divine love shed abroad in one's heart cannot be hidden. Even when correction of any kind has to be given, there is evidence of these spiritual attributes that can be seen and faith is demonstrated when the word of God is applied to even the most difficult of situations. A biblical characteristic of a true spiritual leader is that he recognizes his role is that of a servant of the church. He is not an autocratic boss over those for whom he professes to care. The "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" exemplifies this. "Though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

The light of life is not obscure, its evidence is easily seen.

*He who was rich for us became poor, that we might also reflect His beam
Of grace and truth, of faith and love; that was there for all to see.
Now these character traits He did have, should be seen by others in me.*

*Godliness is not hard for us to discern; it has a glory that is all of its own.
When on display, to it people turn; following good is easily shown.
Opportunities abound, good works reveal, a nature that has God as its source.
Following good has a basic appeal, when allowed to follow its chosen course.*

*When choices are made, the rule to follow, is for me to imitate that which is good.
Whether in teaching or practices which we allow, I need to commit to giving good spiritual food
That will enable those who are looking on, to know we follow that which is right.
It may not appear that we are especially strong, just that we live and walk in the light.*

*There will be times when we have to rebuke the bad, in order to correct some wrong action.
However, the outcome will make others glad; evil unchecked has a very bad reaction.
Doing good may not be easy but it is always right, goodness is a characteristic of our God.
"The path of the just is as a shining light," it is a practice supported by God's holy word.*

"Father, I know there are those who have strong opinions about other people and various subjects that seem to me to be fairly trivial in the light of eternity. However, I know I do not have the right to pass a condemning judgment on them because of differing opinions. But when there is a person who does not have any evidence of being a Christian and he is leading the people of God astray, then I ask Thee for wisdom, grace, love and faith to seek to stop their bad influence on Thy people. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

3rd John 12

THE THIRD MAN

Letters of commendation often have contained in them words of encouragement and instruction as well as information regarding the work in which one has been engaged. Character traits are sometimes included to give a well-rounded recommendation of a person. Phoebe was a servant of the church in that she helped many. The commendation Barnabas made concerning Paul included his testimony of salvation and his fellowship with believers since that time. Commendation of Demetrius to the assembly Gaius was a part of may not have been the reason John wrote this letter, but it clearly is a commendation of him as a person. It

was important that the man who opened his home to "the brethren and to strangers" would have reason to show hospitality to Demetrius.

Gaius was a prosperous Christian as far as his spiritual life was concerned. Diotrophes was a proud "Christian," although he may have been a Christian in name only. Demetrius was a pleasant Christian who had a good report of all. He seemed to be one whose life was tested by the truth of the word of God and he obviously passed that test. People can follow a person like that. Their reputation is that of those who actually live what they teach. The truth they live out is a witness in itself to their character and genuine faith.

There is hardly any higher recommendation a person can have than to personify the truth. Our Lord Jesus is "The Truth" so He certainly puts truth into personhood. What He said and did were consistent with each other. It is of great worth to have "the truth itself" testify on behalf of a person. Not only is there a general observation of the integrity and spirituality of a person that established one as trustworthy, but when a well-known person like John adds his recommendation, that person can be received gladly.

To speak on behalf of others is a very responsible activity. We should not pass on lightweight generalizations when we recommend a person to a place or a position of responsibility. Any time we are asked to write a letter that will be used as a character reference, we should be as precise as possible. John reported on Demetrius' reputation as one who was known for the truth he taught and practiced. When we make a character reference regarding another person, both their reputation and our own are at stake. John could write of the good opinion Demetrius had of all men, of the truth, of the apostle and of other Christians.

In a community, a church and a family, the testimony of a person can have a far-reaching effect. Demetrius had a good report among the Lord's people and the unsaved people who knew him. It is important for us to maintain our integrity both in spiritual things and secular life at home. Our children and grandchildren who may not be saved may find themselves in the "valley of decision" because of conviction of sin before God. The reality of our testimony as a child of God, may be the reason they want God's salvation in the first place. Neighbors, fellow workers and casual acquaintances all watch for evidence of a consistent Christian testimony to the truth.

Our life in the assembly of the Lord's people gathered to His name also is a representation of how we respond to the truth of God. A casual, careless commitment to the assembly meetings and objectives is a poor testimony to one's own truth-life. A take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward the house of God, is indicative of a careless attitude toward God and His truth.

Living life by the word of God under the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit is how the truth itself bears witness to our character. Truth written and spoken has a way of being demonstrated in the life of one who "lives godly in Christ Jesus." Consistent living, careful and wise speaking, acts of grace and kindness all bear witness to the reality of a living faith in a child of God by which we live.

When a well-known man like John adds his personal witness based on his personal knowledge of another person like Demetrius, we can be thankful for that "true record." The judgment of a wise person is not to be taken lightly for any reason. All of the reports: of "all men," of "the truth," and of John, gave Gaius the assurance he would need concerning Demetrius. Acceptable commendations we receive concerning others preserves us from the dangers of falsehood. "Lay hands suddenly on no man" is not a concern in this case because of the testimony of others who we trust.

*"A word to the wise" is a phrase we hear, that gives us reason to pause.
A word from one trusted, a letter one bears, is full and sufficient cause
To reach out in kindness to one unknown, that we Christ-like love can show.
Hospitality and interest shown, is because of words from those we know.*

*To hear one speak, to see one's life, is a testimony, as to what they believe.
When consistent with the truth this sheds some light, when a stranger we do receive.
Faith and truth go together and when in a person combined, this establishes one's reputation.
So, we can extend to them our hospitality; without fear we give a sincere invitation.*

*People of good report bring blessings along, we help them, and they us, on the way.
They need our support so in their work they remain strong; we learn from them what they say.
Truth and grace also go well together, our Lord Jesus brought both when He came.
Now we can show grace and the visitor gives truth; like our Lord, we can do the same.*

*Who knows what the ends of a new friendship will bring, perhaps it will last all our life.
God's word given in truth and its context correct, can serve like a two-edged knife.
When kindred spirits are found and grace does abound, blessings "flow over the wall."
How little the cost yet how much would have been lost if we had not answered their call.*

"Father of traveling saints and those at home: it still amazes me at the blessings we experience when Thou dost guide us to homes where we have never been before and yet they have showed us hospitality, Thank You for moving Thy dear people to receive us and welcome us. May we always have something from Thee to give to them in Thy name. Amen."

3rd John 13-14

PEACE

When there are difficult circumstances in an assembly of God's people, it usually takes some time to get things sorted out and come to a reasonable and scriptural solution. Gaius and Diotrephes obviously had very different views of receiving people and of leadership principles. Demetrius was a peace-loving man who had the same balanced and kind ways as did Gaius. During times of assembly unrest, some people even dread coming to the meetings of the church for fear of what an officious, domineering and arrogant man might say or do.

To address the whole problem area with "ink and pen" is very limiting and the time it takes between two parties to communicate and come to a conclusion does not make for a real solution. It is more a way to show interest and fellowship. To deal with a false teacher effectively, or even to give real support to those who are faithful to the Lord, needs a face-to-face meeting where two can speak mouth-to-mouth with each other. This brief letter was to let Gaius know that John supported him and Demetrius, and to assure them that he appreciated them and their commitment in times of difficulty.

Times of stress, disappointment, sickness and trouble, call for our expressions of interest in others in whatever way we can. If we are at a distance, a letter or email, a text message or a phone call are ways in which we can communicate our concern and fellowship. As good as these are, they do not take the place of a handshake, a touch on the shoulder, the expressions on one's face and words spoken to encourage, comfort, correct or exhort. The physical presence of a caring person has a way of lending more weight to the same words that are spoken as were written. The benefit of written words is that they can be read and reviewed over and over again and they say exactly the same thing each time. Spoken words have the added benefit of tone of voice, body language and facial expressions to give greater emphasis and power to what is said.

The letter from John would have given a measure of peace to the hospitable, kind and generous Gaius. He likely would have shared the message with Demetrius who had the confidence of the Lord's people and could be counted on to teach and practice that which is scriptural. The experience and authority of John was needed to deal effectively with Diotrephes. Even receiving this short letter would lift the spirits of those burdened down by the self-proclaimed leadership of one who knows nothing of valuing that which God values. The evidence of "love for the brethren" was missing from this man who was "doing evil."

When we sense a need in those who are at a distance from us, it is incumbent on us to encourage them to "keep on keeping on." Friendship has that kind of interest. Gaius would have been strengthened to continue practicing hospitality in spite of what Diotrephes was doing. Demetrius and Gaius both would still commit themselves to practicing truth and doing what was right, even though "malicious words," evil deeds, "forbidding" and "casting out" were practiced by one man. One man does not have the right nor the authority from the Lord to dictate the teaching and practices of an assembly.

How good it is to have friends. Faith, feelings and friendship are closely linked. To have faith in a person means I trust that person. There is evidence to believe he/she is trustworthy and we make the moral judgment to take that person into our confidence. Our feelings do influence our decisions and they do influence others. In order to have the support of others we should be pleasant, real, careful and warm in our attitudes, actions and words. Friendship involves loyalty, acceptance, commitment and being available to another person at our own expense.

John exhibited genuine friendship by writing this brief note to a brother who was under the pressure of a false teacher and leader seeking to control the whole assembly. By taking the time to do this before coming in person when he could, indicated his intimacy and affection in the same way the Lord Jesus Christ showed His disciples His friendship shortly before His death. A friend is one whose need I can meet, not just the one

who meets my need. A friend encourages his friend in God. A friend is someone who is committed to helping his friend realize God's purpose and potential for his life. In true friendship there is a declared loyalty and commitment. David and Jonathan had that kind of friendship. The Lord Jesus stated that kind of friendship when He told His disciples that from now on, He called them friends.

John concludes this epistle with a hopeful note of his intention to come and be with them. He makes peace a real thing to be experienced even in the midst of conflict. He indicates there were believers where he was who considered Gaius to be their friend, and he reminded Gaius that he had friends where Gaius lived. The family of God is a remarkable work of grace among very divergent people. We become friends with those of different nationalities, cultures and races simply because we share the common blessing of the new birth, new creation, new nature and new life in Christ. These are comforting and strengthening reminders of some of the blessings we have because of our life in Christ.

*The time seemed long as the days passed by.
We missed them and our personal conversations.
With letters and phone calls at times I did try
To establish significant communication.
As valuable as they were, they did not meet
The need of the present distress -
But when I saw him and could personally greet
That special friend - why, that was the very best.*

*It was best because I could see before me his facial expression.
In that way I knew he could understand -
It was there to be seen - he had real sincere compassion.
I could feel it personally in the pressure of his hand -
He didn't have to say a lot to communicate -
His body language, the tilt of his head and his eyes -
All did eloquently and visibly state -
He knew; he cared - that friendship I greatly prize.*

*In those hard times when we wonder what is next,
We need a friend with whom we can share the load.
Especially when there are those who deliberately vex -
Trying to force us to walk on another road.
That is when a friend with a Bible in hand
Is so valuable to help bring a conclusion
To the troublesome problem against which we stand
Without compromising or bringing confusion.*

*Above all friends is One who stands out,
He has called us His friends by His choice.
There was nothing in me that could bring that about,
But it is true, He said it, they had heard His voice -
And He made the declaration when He gave salvation -
We are His servants and friends in the family of God.
Now from earth's billions there is a separation
Of those in God's family He bought with His blood.*

"Father, I thank Thee for the lessons learned from this short letter. May I be a willing communicator of grace by being hospitable. May I learn to express sincere Christian love without being inappropriate. May I be willing to communicate to those who are in difficulties, true care and concern in written words. May I make the effort of leaving my comfort-zone to bring peace to a brother and demonstrate true friendship. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

