

II & III JOHN

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II John as we continue our study through the Word of God.

We will be looking at both II & III John tonight, two short letters that I believe were written to individuals and yet they can truly apply to the church as well.

Keep in mind that this letter was written around the same time as John wrote I John. And like with I John, he probably wrote I John from Ephesus around 80 to 95 A. D., prior to his banishment on the island of Patmos, where he received the Revelation!

As you can see, II John is not a very long letter, 13 verses in our Bibles and thus, it could fit on a standard sheet of papyrus, which was about 8 by 10.

Let's take a quick overview of this letter before we get to our text this evening.

As we will see, John wrote this second letter differently than his first letter. In His first letter or epistle John wrote to the church in general, but here in II John he is writing to a godly woman and he is warning her of some of the dangers that are out there, the false doctrines that were outside the church and they were threatening to enter the church and infect the church with these doctrines of demons!

Now let me also say this, because there are some who believe that this is written to the local churches as well. You see, they feel that the "elect lady" is speaking of the church and it is the bride of Christ.

Also, "and her children . . ." II John 1:1, are speaking of members of the church, according to this line or reasoning.

And lastly, at the end of this letter, John says, “**The children of your elect sister greet you . . .**” is speaking of the congregation of a sister church that he was currently visiting, and they are giving their greetings to them. (II John 1:13)

It could be, but III John is written to an individual, “**To the beloved Gaius . . .**” III John 1:1. So I tend to lean in the direction that II John is also written to an individual, this godly woman. And most commentators also feel that this was written to an individual and not a church.

And, as we will see, this godly family opened up their home for church services. Keep in mind that the church gathered together in house churches and didn’t gather in formal church buildings until the 4th Century!

John wrote this letter, even though he wanted to talk with them in person but there was such an urgency to get this message out that he wrote this letter to warn them of some of the heresies and heretics that were coming into these house churches and they were sowing false doctrine. And John’s warning, as we will see, is to shut the door, don’t let them in to fill the church with their false teaching.

One writer put it like this, “*Having left the fellowship of believers (1 John 2:19), the heretics were traveling from church to church, taking advantage of Christian hospitality as they spread their venomous lies. The lady to whom John addressed this letter may have inadvertently or unwisely shown them hospitality. John cautioned her (as a model for all believers) against participating in false teachers’ evil deeds by showing them hospitality.*”

We will talk more about this as we get into this letter.

In saying that, I have broken this letter into four main points. They are,

1. *JOHN COMMENDS THIS WOMAN – II JOHN 1:1-4*
2. *JOHN COMMANDS THIS WOMAN – II JOHN 1:5-6*
3. *JOHN CAUTIONS THIS WOMAN – II JOHN 1:7-11*
4. *JOHN COMFORTS THIS WOMAN – II JOHN 1:12-13*

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in II John chapter 1, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

II JOHN

VERSES 1-2

Here in II John 1:1-4 we see John commending this woman.

And I like the way that John opens up this letter. He does so by calling himself, “**the elder.**”

Now keep in mind John is not speaking of the office or position of an elder but of his advanced years, maybe 90 years old at this time.

John was the oldest living apostle and the only one to die of natural causes, the rest were martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Thus, his years of experience, of walking with the Lord, of continuing in the faith were important and he is trying to pass those things down to others, that wisdom he has gained in the Lord over the years.

Think about it, if you have walked with the Lord for any length of time, look at the wisdom you have gained, the things He has taught you. Share it with others that they may grow!

Now why doesn't John mention his name or the name of the woman he was writing to?

We don't know for sure.

It is possible that he left them out because if unbelievers intercepted the letter, it might bring her trouble; she may face some intense persecution by them.

Even though we don't know for sure, it really doesn't add or take away from this letter.

What I do want you to notice is the love that John has for this woman and how that love is based in the truths of God found in the Word of God.

It is not based upon experience, but facts! That is what binds us together, the truths of God, in Jesus.

We may disagree on the Rapture or the gifts of the Spirit, but the foundational truths of God we agree upon and that is what unites us together!

And here is a problem and what some in the church have allowed into the church. We see that the unsaved world believes truth changes, it just depends on the period of time you are living in or the situation you find yourself in.

Some even go to the extreme and say that there is no absolute truth, and they will tell you they are absolutely sure there is no absolute truth, which I think means there must be truth!

But John is telling us that God's truth does not change, it abides forever and thus, there is absolute truth!

You see, God's Word doesn't need to catch up with the times, it endures, but we need to catch up with God's Word.

Let me give you a few Scriptures to show you what I mean because there are many who will challenge you on this and say that the Bible needs to catch up to the times we are living in! Not so!

In Matthew 24:35 Jesus said, **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”**

Also, in I Peter 1:22-25 Peter tells us, **“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the Lord endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.”**

And lastly, in Isaiah 40:8 we are told, **“The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.”**

Many have tried to destroy the Word of God and they are gone but God’s Word remains and the promise to us, is simple. God says that His Word will last no matter what and it does not change because God is the same yesterday, today and forever!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this. He wrote,

God has revealed truth in the person of His Son and in the pages of His Word. He has given us “the Spirit of Truth” to teach us and to enable us to know truth (John 14:16-17; 16:13).

But the truth is not only an objective revelation from the Father, but also a subjective experience in our personal lives. We cannot only know the truth, but we can “love in the truth” and live “for the truth’s sake.”

The truth “lives in us, and shall be with us forever.” This means that “knowing the truth” is much more than giving assent to a body of doctrines, though that is important. It means that the believer’s life is controlled by a love for the truth and a desire to magnify the truth.

John opened his letter on His note of “truth” because there were false teachers abroad who were spreading error. He called them deceivers and antichrists (2 John 7). John was not one to say that all religious teachings are true in one way or another, and that we should not be critical just as long as people are sincere.

To John, there was a great difference, in fact, a deadly difference, between truth and error, and he would not tolerate error.

Since the truth will be with us forever, we certainly ought to get acquainted with it now and learn to love it. Of course, all truth centers in Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God, with whom we shall live forever (John 14:1-6).

It is wonderful to contemplate the fact that we shall spend eternity surrounded by truth, growing in our knowledge of truth, and serving the God of truth.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 1010

Exactly.

VERSE 3

Think about this for a minute.

Can you experience grace, mercy and peace apart from the truths of God and the love of God?

Of course not! But why can't you?

Because they are linked together and centered upon Jesus Christ.

Grace is undeserved favor given to us by God; we get heaven.

Mercy is not getting what we deserve, death.

And peace is obtained as we make peace **WITH** God through Jesus Christ and then we can experience the peace **OF** God in our lives!

For the Gnostics, they denied the Incarnation and John exposes their error by saying Jesus is **“the Son of the Father.”**

This is of course an important issue in regard to our salvation!

Warren Wiersbe picks up on this as he tells us,

How did this elect lady and her children come to know the truth and become children of God? Through the grace and mercy of God (2 John 3). God is rich in mercy and grace (Eph 2:4,7), and He has channeled His mercy and grace to us in Jesus Christ. We are not saved by God’s love, but by God’s grace, which is “love that paid a price” (Eph 2:8-9). God loves the whole world, yet the whole world is not saved. Only those who receive His abundant grace experience salvation from sin.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 1010

Now John is going to speak of this elect lady’s children.

VERSE 4

Look at the joy John had in knowing that this woman’s children, the ones that he knew, were walking with God. We see Warren Wiersbe put it like this,

John’s joy was that the elect lady’s children were walking in truth. John did not know all of them, however; the literal translation is “some of thy children.”

Somewhere in his travels, John had met some of her children and learned of their obedient walk with the Lord. “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4).

We have no reason to believe that John was hinting that others of the children had gone astray after the false teachers.

If by “children” John was including the members of the “house church,” then it is possible that some of them had left the fellowship and joined with the deceivers.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 1011

Again, John is commending this godly woman as she raised godly children, children that walked in the truths of God.

John tells us in I John 2:24, “**Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.**”

Yes, it is important that you know the truth, but it doesn’t end there. You must also walk in the truth or apply the truths of God to your life.

It is as Paul said in Philippians 3:12-14, “**Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**”

May we press on, may we walk in His truths, the truths of God found in the Word of God! And may we pass the truths of God found in the Word of God to our children, our grandchildren, our family and friends because there is no greater joy than to see them walk with the Lord!

VERSE 5

Here in II John 1:5-6 we see John command this woman to love.

We saw this theme throughout I John and it is obviously important for John repeats it here in II John.

Back in I John 4:20-21 we were told, **“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”**

I truly believe how your walk with God is can be measured by your love towards people! It is a good barometer or gauge!

Now what is John talking about when he speaks of this being **“new”**?

Think about it, God has commanded His people to love others, even in the Old Testament, so what is the point?

The idea here is that this love is different in that it is a love of God that is not a natural love but a supernatural love.

And when things heat up, when people are looking to themselves, when they lose focus, we tend to see this love diminish and people fight and are angry at each other and hold grudges and so on!

John is pleading with them to continue in this love that only can come from God and don't get in the way!

John is going to expound on this and tell us what this true love looks like.

VERSE 6

Now as we read this you may be thinking, "*What does this have to do with loving one another?*"

Remember what John opened up with in II John 1:5, he spoke about the new commandment, which, like I have said, is just an upgrade you might say, a supernatural upgrade that comes from God. It is that **AGAPE** love or unconditional love and this love is not natural, not at all.

And now, here in II John 1:6 he speaks about what love is all about and he says, "**. . . that we walk according to His commandments . . .**"

You see, as we obey what the Lord has shown us, we will manifest that **AGAPE** love towards others and when I say obey God it just shows that we love Him. We don't do this for salvation, but it truly is out of love.

Remember what John wrote in I John 5:1-3, "**Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.**"

Thus, our love for God is seen in our obedience to Him. And, like I have said, out of that we love others as God desires us to love them!

Now, as we read on, in verses 7-11 John gives this woman a warning or a caution of the dangers of these false teachers that are out there trying to get in.

VERSES 7-9

Warren Wiersbe warns us, ***“The word deceiver implies much more than teaching false doctrine - it also includes leading people into wrong living. John has already made it clear that truth and life go together. What we believe determines how we behave. Wrong doctrine and wrong living always go together.”***

Remember that John just finished writing that we need to be walking in the truth; we need to walk in obedience to God, but why?

Because of the deceivers that are out there who are trying to rip you off with their false doctrines!

These false teachers denied the Incarnation, that God became flesh and dwelt among us.

And John is warning us that those who believe that lie, that Jesus did not come in the flesh, are deceivers and they have the spirit of Antichrist working in them. Harsh, but true.

Remember in I John that he was dealing with Gnosticism and they denied that Christ came in the flesh because they saw the flesh as evil. Thus, Jesus was just a spirit and hovered over the ground!

Also, remember back in I John 2:18-23, John gave us a similar warning denying the deity of Jesus, that He was God.

John wrote, **“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”**

Not only did they deny His deity, but, like we have seen, they denied His Incarnation, **“By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”** I John 4:2-3.

And I think many Christians think they are immune from spiritual deception, but we are not!

I know, that is shocking to some of you but if you don't guard yourself from the error, from the deception by knowing and walking in the truth of God's Word, you will be deceived!

The enemy is very clever, and we can fall prey to those lies, those deceptions and we won't lose our salvation, but we can lose our rewards.

But also keep in mind that those that taught these destructive doctrines were not saved and they were trying to poison the minds of others.

Remember that John said in I John 2 that they went out from them, they did not remain in the fellowship of believers, but they sought those who they could deceive with their doctrines of demons!

Interestingly enough, that word “**transgresses**” in verse 9 speaks of “*going beyond a boundary.*”

Let me make this point. When you have to have other materials to understand, to explain the Bible, be careful.

Like with the Mormons, you could never come to the conclusions they come to unless you read their material. You would never get that from the Bible, not even close!

You see, they went beyond the boundary of God’s Word!

Thus, don’t just start out right, finish the race, fight the good fight, keep the faith and receive the ***FULL*** reward!

VERSES 10-11

We do need to be careful with these false teachers, I know that some feel that what John is saying is that if someone has these false doctrines and they claim to be a Christian, don’t let them into your house, don’t fellowship with them. I don’t think that is his point.

I think what John is saying here is that this woman had the church gathering in her home and John is telling her not to allow these false teachers to come into the church and bring in their destructive doctrines.

Now, if you feel that you should not allow them into your home, that is fine. Some won’t even talk with them when they come to the door.

But we are to be witnesses of the Lord to the lost, and they are lost, no doubt!

Like we saw here several years back with the Hebrew Roots movement that someone was bringing into the church, I closed the door on that one and on the person that was bringing this in and causing division. I think that is what John is speaking of here.

Today we see a proliferation of false doctrine and false teaching streaming into the church. Some churches, for their Bible study will read books. That is a book club and not a Bible study!

We see the Emerging Church, the Seeker Friendly Church, the Purpose Driven Church and others compromising on the truths of God found in the Word of God and I think we are to avoid them because how far away from God's Word are you going to go before you think it is too far?

And the reality is, by the time you reach that point you will be so indoctrinated that you won't leave, you won't let it go, but it has pulled you in!

Let me share with you these words about the rise of Liberalism and not just a few years ago. We are told,

In the late 19th Century, the rise of theological liberalism brought forth generations of Christian pastors, leaders, and theologians who denied many of the fundamentals of Biblical Christianity.

Though it was a broad and varied movement, at its root theological liberalism thought that Christianity had to re-evaluate all its doctrines in the light of modern science, philosophy, and thinking.

They rejected the idea that a doctrine was true simply because the Bible taught it; it also had to be proved true by reason and experience.

They believed that the Bible was not an inspired message from a real God, but the work of men who were limited by the ignorance and superstitions of their time.

For them, the Bible was not either inspired or supernatural. The importance of the Bible and its message was not in its literal or historical truth, but in its changing spiritual message.

- David Guzik

And today, we are reaping what was sown!

As we finish up this letter, in II John 1:12-13 we see John comfort this woman with these words.

VERSES 12-13

John comforts her by telling her he wants to see her again, instead of just writing more words in a letter.

I would rather talk face-to-face with someone than write a letter or send an e-mail or talk on the phone, but I am thankful for the letter that God has given to us here.

Also, we see that John speaks of this woman's sister's children, believers, and they send their greetings.

How awesome it is as family members are saved and many know their love for the Lord.

Yes, this is a short letter and yet in this you see the heart of John for people, his love for them and by his example he wants us to reach out in love and not be deceived by the false teachers that are out there.

Now let's look at III John and dig into the third of the five books or letters that John wrote.

The writing of this letter is the same as before, the same as I and II John, somewhere around 80 to 95 A. D., prior to John being banished on the island of Patmos.

And again, this letter was probably written from Ephesus.

In our English Bibles we see that III John is 14 verses but, in the Greek, it is the shortest letter in the New Testament, shorter than II John.

In II John we saw that John was writing to a godly woman and her family. He warned her of the false teachers from outside the church bringing in their destructive heresies.

Yes, they may have much love, but they denied the truth. Thus, they use deception to bring in their false teaching!

Now, here in III John we see John writing to a godly man, Gaius, about his church.

His warning was about the false teachers, like Diotrephes who came from within the church.

Yes, they spoke many of the truths of God, but there was no love, they were like the Pharisees.

And John concludes this letter by saying to Gaius that he hopes to see him soon, so he wrote this short letter instead of a long one. He was going to see him face-to-face and speak with him more, at least he hoped to do that.

We can break this letter down as follows,

- 1. THE ENCOURAGING OF GAIUS – III JOHN 1:1-4**
- 2. THE COMMENDING OF GAIUS – III JOHN 1:5-8**
- 3. SPEAKING THE TRUTH WITHOUT LOVE – DIOTREPHEs – III JOHN 1:9-11**
- 4. SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE – DEMETRIUS – III JOHN 1:12**
- 5. THE COMFORT OF GAIUS – III JOHN 1:13-14**

So with that said, let's begin reading in III John starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us in this letter of John's.

III JOHN

VERSE 1

As John opens up this short letter or epistle, he identifies himself as the "**the elder,**" not the position, as I said earlier, but it speaks of his years walking with the Lord, he is around 90 years old or so at this time.

So again, his words of wisdom are important.

And he is writing to Gaius, which was a common name, and it is difficult to say which Gaius he is writing to, one who was mentioned in the Scriptures or someone not mentioned in other parts of the Scriptures.

You see, in Acts chapter 19 we read of a Gaius who accompanied Paul and was with Paul in Ephesus. You may remember the story, the people in Ephesus were getting saved and they were not buying their idols anymore and the silversmiths were upset and caused a riot. Gaius was one of the men who was brought into the amphitheater because of what they did.

We see Gaius of Derbe mentioned in Acts 20:4.

Also, in Romans 16:23 Paul mentions Gaius with a greeting. This Gaius is from Corinth as we see in I Corinthians 1:14, as Paul said, "**I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius.**"

Most scholars don't believe it was any of these men that I have mentioned. Now we do see, not in the Scriptures but early tradition in the church tells us that this Gaius that John is writing about was sent by John to be the overseer of the church in Pergamos.

And that is interesting because Pergamos was not too far from where John wrote this letter and where he was ministering from, Ephesus!

And as John opens up this letter, listen again to the wonderful words he says about this man Gaius. He wrote, **“To the beloved Gaius . . .”**

Kenneth Wuest has these interesting words to tell us of this man named Gaius and what John had to say about him. He wrote, *“John calls him “beloved,” four times in this brief letter, here, and in verses 2, 5, and 11. The adjective describes this man as being well-beloved by his fellow-saints, an outstanding member of the local church to which he belonged. The word “beloved” is agapētos (ἀγαπητός), the word used of divine love.”*

Make no mistake about it, John did love this man! And that love was based in truth!

I like that. This relationship was built upon Christ, the truth. It was not about feelings or emotions, but first and foremost, the truths of God found in the Word of God and out of that we see the emotional response of John towards Gaius.

How important that is for us and the relationships we have. That it is based in the truths of God found in the Word of God!

VERSES 2-4

Once again, in III John 1:1-4 we see the encouragement that John is giving to Gaius. And it is important for us to encourage each other in our walk with the Lord, it helps to spur us on.

Now as some read this, they feel that John is setting forth a doctrine that everyone should be healthy, wealthy. But that is not what John is saying.

When John says, **“ . . . I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health . . .”** he is not setting forth a doctrine like that. But, sadly, many will run with that and in the end, they will get sick, and they will die!

What John is doing is giving a New Testament salutation or greeting, a kind of introduction that precedes the body of the letter!

In fact, the word “**prosper**” literally means, “*to have a good journey.*”

In other words, John is saying that he is praying that Gaius would be blessed outwardly and inwardly as he walked with the Lord.

But also understand that godly men and women get sick, they may be sick much of their earthly life, and they will eventually die, we all will die unless the Lord comes back first.

One author put it like this. He wrote, “*Both verbs [for prosper and be in health] belonged to the everyday language of letter writing . . . This phrase was so common that sometimes it was condensed into only initials, and everyone knew what the writer meant just from the initials.*”

And here is the thing. As we look at the Scriptures, there is no support that you are going to be healthy and wealthy, none at all. And if that is what John was saying, then there would be Scriptural support for it.

Let me give you just a couple examples to show you what I mean.

In I Timothy 5:23 Paul wrote, “**No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.**”

Timothy had some stomach issues and Paul said to add a little wine to the water. Why did he say that? Because the alcohol would kill the bacteria in the water, and it would help his stomach issues!

Why didn’t Paul just pray for him to be healed? Maybe he did but we don’t see a healing and thus, in a sense, we see Paul say, “*Try this medicine, it will help you!*”

There was no healing because we are not healed of all our infirmities, and one day, these bodies will go back to the dust of the earth!

And in Matthew 6:19-21 Jesus said, **“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

I think that is clear. Where is your treasure, because that is where your heart will be also? All these things on this earth will fade away, but Jesus won't. Thus, why would God be interested in our physical wealth? He wouldn't. That does not mean we are not blessed or there are no rich Christians, but that is not the focus, Jesus always is!

And notice what John is rejoicing in. John is rejoicing in the witness that Gaius has left wherever he goes.

That must have blessed John because it seems that Gaius was a convert of John and like any father, a spiritual father also has joy to hear that his spiritual children are walking with the Lord.

He was not walking aimlessly through life with no direction or doing as he pleased, but he was walking in the truths of God found in the Word of God. And so were the others that came to saving faith through John's witness.

Here's the thing. To walk in the truth means to walk consistent with the truths of God, to live what you say you believe, and they were!

For me, one of the saddest things is when I hear that someone who has attended this church is no longer walking in the truth or they have bought into some heresy. That breaks my heart because I love them and to see them walk into the darkness once again is not easy.

John said, **“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.”**

Amen to that!

VERSES 5-8

In these verses we see John commending Gaius for his faithful walk in the ministry.

I find it interesting that man measures success differently than God does. Man looks at success in regard to how much money a person makes, the job position they have, the number of people who are under them, the size house they have and-so-on.

We even see this in the church. The question that is often asked, ***“How many people go to your church?”***

In reality, it should be, ***“How are your people walking? Are they growing? What are they being taught?”*** and-so-on.

You see, God doesn't look at things like man does. He looks to see if we are faithful in what He has called us to do, are we serving? The results of that service are up to Him, they are in God's hands.

A great example of this is the prophet Jeremiah; he served the Lord for over 40 years and not one convert during that time. In man's eyes he would be a failure, but not in God's eyes, he was faithful in his service to the Lord in spite of the results that occurred.

That was Gaius; he was faithful in service, in serving others, even strangers! Let me share with you how he did this.

Back then these itinerant preachers would go house to house as they shared the Gospel and Gaius was one who housed these people. His actions were a witness to others of the love of God not only touching his life but also flowing through his life and touching the lives of others.

You see, the church needs to support God's ministers or servants, not the unsaved. You don't go to the unsaved to support your ministry, God is not broke, nor does He need their help.

It is a terrible witness and just as it was back then, it still is today, and John says that we should not practice it. If God has called you, He will give you the resources you need.

Pastor Chuck has said, and I truly believe it, "*Where God guides, He will provide!*" And if He doesn't provide, then maybe He isn't guiding you down that path! The problem was, not all these men were honest, some were deceptive. They would try to take advantage of the situations and make a profit off of God.

So, to help stop this, the apostles came up with the Didache.

Listen to just a short portion of what they wrote regarding false prophets and how to recognize them. This is what they wrote,

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Whoever, therefore, who comes and teaches you all these things mentioned, receive him. But if the one teaching changes what has been taught to another teaching in order to destroy these things, do not listen to him. However, if his motive is to add righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, receive him as you would the Lord.

Now concerning the apostles and prophets, act according to the requirements of the Gospel. Every apostle coming to you, welcome as you would the Lord.

And he should not remain more than one day, and if he has a need also another. But if he remains three days, he is a false prophet.

And when the apostle goes forth, he should take nothing except a loaf of bread, until he arrives at his nights lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet. Also, you should not test or judge a prophet speaking in the Spirit, for every sin will be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven.

But not everyone speaking in the Spirit is a prophet, but only if he should have a lifestyle of the Lord's character. Therefore, by his lifestyle you will know a false prophet from a true prophet. And any prophet ordering a meal in the Spirit should not eat of it; otherwise he is a false prophet.

And every prophet who teaches the truth but does not do what he teaches is a false prophet. . . .

But whoever should say in the Spirit, "Give me money or something else," do not listen to them. . . .

CHAPTER 12

Receive everyone coming in the name of the Lord. Later, by testing him, you will find out about him, where he deviates from the standard. If the one coming is just traveling through, help him as much as you can. He should not remain with you more than three days if that is necessary.

But if he desires to settle among you and has a trade, let him work for his bread. But if he has no trade, you should provide for him according to your own discretion. In no way should anyone live among you unemployed as a Christian. And if he is not willing to do this, he is making a trade of Christ. Beware of this kind of person.

- The Didache or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,
Tim Sauder, Translator, www.scrollpublishing.com

The problem today is that in the church we see a lack of discernment. We have the truth, we have the resources to expose the lies of these false prophets, but tragically many embrace them instead of exposing them and fleeing from them.

It was an important issue in the first century and it is just as important today in the twenty-first century! We need to be aware of the false teachers who come with flattering words bringing in their false doctrines. You see, the truths of God will expose the lies of the Devil!

Now one more point before we move on. Those who are on the front lines and those who support them are all fellow workers for the truth – all are important.

It is as we are told in I Samuel 30:21-25 as David and his men are involved in a battle, **“Now David came to the two hundred men who had been so weary that they could not follow David, whom they also had made to stay at the Brook Besor. So they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him. And when David came near the people, he greeted them. Then all the wicked and worthless men of those who went with David answered and said, ‘Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except for every man’s wife and children, that they may lead them away and depart.’ But David said, ‘My brethren, you shall not do so with what the LORD has given us, who has preserved us and delivered into our hand the troop that came against us. For who will heed you in this matter? But as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike.’ So it was, from that day forward; he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day.”**

Those who were at home, those who could not be involved in the battle, those who were guarding the stuff were just as important as those on the front lines and they all were blessed with the spoils of victory, they all were rewarded. Please do not forget that!

Now, as much as Gaius was a good example, Diotrephes is a bad example, he may have spoken the truth, but it was not in love. And in III John 1:9-11 we see this man who is speaking the truth but not with love. Listen to what is said of this man.

VERSES 9-11

Paul, in Colossians 1:18, as he is speaking of Jesus, wrote, “**And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**”

And, in saying that Jesus has the preeminence, here comes Diotrephes and he is taking the role of Jesus as he is saying that he has the preeminence.

Warren Wiersbe put it like this,

Diotrephes was motivated by pride. Instead of giving the preeminence to Jesus Christ (Col 1:18), he claimed it for himself. He had the final say-so about everything in the church, and his decisions were determined by one thing. “What will this do for Diotrephes?” He was most unlike John the Baptist who said, “He [Jesus Christ] must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

The Greek verb indicates that it was the constant attitude of Diotrephes to promote himself.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 1017

Now, because of this we see John rebuke this man for his actions.

Let me ask you this?

How can this apostle of love speak such words as this, rebuking this man by name?

It is out of love that he spoke these words and he is in line with the Scriptures.

Paul, in Romans 16:17-18 tells us, **“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”**

And listen to what Paul says in II Timothy 4:14-15, **“Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.”**

Now, it is possible that this man was the head of the church that Gaius attended. And since he wanted all the attention, he did not want people like John to come in, he even kicked out from the church those that housed these people! He wanted the attention and if these others came, it would draw the attention away from him!

Obviously that is not good, his heart was not like Gaius. He was very prideful!

Thus, to come against those who came against him, Diotrephes prated against them. It is a word that comes from a root word that was used of water boiling and throwing off bubbles.

What does that mean?

Simply, these bubbles are useless, they are empty and so were the words of this man.

There may have been a lot of steam but no substance.

Of this Boice tells us, “To begin with, a man named Diotrephes had assumed an unwarranted and pernicious authority in the church, so much so that by the time of the writing of this letter John’s own authority had been challenged and those who had been sympathetic to John had been excommunicated from the local assembly. Moreover, due to this struggle, traveling missionaries had been rudely treated, including probably an official delegation from John.”

And because of what this man was doing, John exposed him for what he was. But I think he also was hopeful that he might repent and get right with God.

You see, he was using his power like a sword instead of showing the love of God. Thus, John tells us to follow the example of Gaius, which was good and not the example of Diotrephes, which was bad.

That should just make sense. If you are not walking in love, then your relationship with God is going to be off. If your relationship with God is off, then you will treat others as you think is right, your words about God will be self-centered, and that is what John is coming against.

His focus was so much on himself that he left God right out of the picture!

Notice now how John compares what Diotrephes was doing and what Demetrius was doing!

VERSE 12

Here is the one who bore the truth and he did so in love, he didn't need to be some dictator.

Demetrius was a good man and John recommended this man to Gaius; he would be helpful in the work.

And it may be that Demetrius was the one who carried this letter to Gaius. Which would make sense, since John knew him and sent him.

Warren Wiersbe compares these two men, Diotrephes and Demetrius. He wrote,

According to the dictionary, an exemplar is "an ideal, a model, an example worthy to be imitated." Demetrius was that kind of a Christian. John warned his readers not to imitate Diotrephes. "If you want to imitate an example, then follow Demetrius!"

But is it right for us to imitate human leaders? Yes, if they in turn are imitating Jesus Christ. “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example” (Phil 3:17). “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). You and I cannot see God, but we can see God at work in the lives of His children. The godly life and dedicated service of another believer is always an encouragement and a stimulus to me. By our good example, we can “consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Heb 10:24).

Demetrius was a man worth imitating because he had a “good report” (witness) from the church fellowship. All the members knew him, loved him, and thanked God for his consistent life and ministry. While it is a dangerous thing when “all men shall speak well of you” (Luke 6:26), it is a wonderful thing when all the believers in a local church can agree to commend your life and testimony. If all men, saved and lost, good and evil, speak well of us, it may mean that we are compromising and masquerading.

But Demetrius not only had a good witness from the believers in the church, he also had a good witness from the Word (truth) itself.

Like Gaius, Demetrius walked in the truth and obeyed the Word of God. This does not mean that either of these men was perfect, but it does mean that they were consistent in their lives, seeking to honor the Lord.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT*, pp. 1018-1019

As we finish up, we will see John give comforting words to Gaius.

VERSES 13-14

Again, John would rather speak face-to-face with Gaius than write to him a long letter. Thus, he hoped to see this man, this son in the faith soon.

We have seen that a letter that is filled with conflict and confrontation ends with peace.

How can that be?

It can only be accomplished as we surrender our will to His and then the peace that we have made with God will then give us the peace of God in our lives no matter what we are going through!

As you can see, John ends this letter with a warm blessing of peace and greetings from friends, brothers and sisters in the Lord.

I love the fact that I can go anywhere in the world and I have family and we can sit down and start talking and it is like we have been friends for years. It is that love of Christ that binds us together and even though miles or distance may separate us, we are still friends!

As one writer put it, *“As friends Christians should show hospitality to and should support one another, the specific expression of love that John urged in this letter.”* *“As friends Christians should show hospitality to and should support one another, the specific expression of love that John urged in this letter.”*

As I close this evening, as short as these letters are, and often neglected, there is much for us to glean from them.

I pray the Lord helps us to apply these lessons to our lives as we grow in Him.

And for me as a pastor, it is as John said, and this is from The Amplified Bible, **“I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my [spiritual] children are living their lives in the Truth.”** III John 1:4.