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**A0506 -- Feb. 06, 2005 – 3 John 5-8 – Gaius Encouraged**

Last week we looked at the introduction to 3 John and v. 1-4. The major theme of this book is “Partakers with the Truth by Supporting It’s Representatives”. The book also touches on the biblical form of church government.

The **author** of 3 John is John the elder who is none other than John the apostle. John uses the title elder rather than apostle because he is writing to friends (v. 14 or 15). His friends know he is an apostle. There is no need to use the title to assert his authority. He therefore uses the title elder in the sense a grandfather would address his grandchildren.

The **recipient** of the letter is the beloved Gaius, clearly a very dear friend of John. Gaius was a very common name in the ancient world so it is hard to identify him with either of the three other Gaius’ mentioned in the NT.

John wrote this little letter around 60-65AD from Jerusalem and sent it to Gaius who was located in Asia Minor. He may have sent the letter by Demetrius who is mentioned in v. 12.

The **situation** that prompted John to write the letter was a report he had received back from **the brethren** of v. 3. This group of **brethren** was a formally recognized institution in the early church (known as the *wandernde Glaubensboten*). They sold themselves strictly to the gospel ministry, abandoning all for Christ’s sake. To avoid misrepresentation they took nothing from the Gentiles—no food, no lodging, no money (v. 7). The traveling evangelists report had two aspects: good news and bad news.

The good news was a man named **Gaius** whom John clearly knew. **Gaius** had obviously shown heart-warming hospitality to the traveling evangelists on their visit and was therefore commended for setting a good example by walking in the truth and demonstrating faith and love.

The bad news was a man named **Diotrephes**. **Diotrephes** was dominating the church by insisting on having everything his way. He set an evil example when he rejected a previous letter from John the apostle that endorsed these traveling evangelists (v. 9). **Diotrephes** rebellion and selfishness caused him to refuse to help the traveling evangelists and to forbid others from doing so. His threat was excommunication to any who help these traveling evangelists (v. 10)!

Because of **Diotrephes** rebellion John writes this letter to **Gaius** and commends a man named **Demetrius** (vv. 11-12) who would be coming soon as a traveling evangelist. John wanted **Gaius** to know that **Demetrius** was an orthodox man of truth whose character reflected the truth. Therefore he should be supported.

So, there are two examples here for Christians to follow today. Are you going to be a **Gaius**, steeped in Bible doctrine, submissive to authority, and walking in truth? or are you going to be a **Diotrephes**, lacking knowledge, rebelling against authority, and walking in evil?

Review vv. 1-4.

Today we will look at vv. 5-8 where we hear the glowing report John had heard about **Gaius**, in vv. 5-8 John encourages **Gaius** to continue to support orthodox traveling ministers. Are we going to follow the example of **Gaius** and the authority of the apostle John? or are we going to commit evil like **Diotrephes**. If we follow the example of **Gaius** and support orthodox traveling ministers then we will become fellow-workers in the dissemination of truth. If not we become fellow works in the dissemination of evil. On a cosmic scale, if we follow **Gaius**' example we become fellow workers in carrying out God's plan. But if we follow **Diotrephes** we become fellow workers in carrying out Satan's plan which is to frustrate the plans of God, destroy men, and advance a satanic kingdom. Choose ye this day whom you will serve.

## **B. Gaius Encouraged to Support Orthodox Traveling Ministers (5-8)**

*Greek Text 5 Agapete, piston poieis o ean egrase eis tous adelphois kai touto zenous,*  
**Translation 5 Beloved, faithful you are doing if you invest into the brothers and especially strangers,**

**Beloved.** John begins with a gentle address since he is writing to his friends. He loves them in truth. John's point is that when **Gaius** does support traveling brethren and traveling strangers he is being faithful to God. The principle is this. To be faithful to a child of God is to be faithful to the Father of the child. So, when we are faithful to fellow believers we are being faithful to God. The phrase “**for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers**” is very difficult in the Greek. What John is saying is that **Gaius** is faithful whenever he supports known traveling evangelists and unknown traveling evangelists. **Gaius** would have likely known many of the traveling evangelists in Asia Minor. But if some traveling evangelists came from outside of that region they may have been strangers to **Gaius**. John is encouraging **Gaius** to support all orthodox ministers as they traveled through his town. John is saying, “support the orthodox ministers you know and those you don't know.” Because whenever you are faithful to God's children you are being faithful to God.

*Greek Text 6 oi emarturesan sou te agape enopion ekklesias, ous kalos poieseis propempsas*

**Translation 6 who testified to your love before the church, who well enough shall produce having been sent on a journey in a manner worthy of God:**

Not only did **Gaius** demonstrate faithfulness to God but verse 6 shows that he also demonstrated **Gaius'** love. This is an encouragement to continue to not only love in word, but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18). So far it is clear that **Gaius** had done this. His home was a hospitable place where tired traveling evangelists and teachers could come and rest and be helped on their journey for Christ. Now John was encouraging him to continue to do this even in the midst of the evil **Diotrephes**.

There is no doubt that **Gaius** had considered not supporting future traveling evangelists for fear of **Diotrephes** excommunicating him from the church. So, there is a lot of pressure on **Gaius** from the domineering **Diotrephes**. **Gaius** was probably tempted to just wait it out. “I won't support any traveling evangelists for awhile and when the persecution lifts, then I'll start supporting them again. It can't really hurt to stop supporting them for a little while.” Can you hear how **Gaius** may have rationalized his behavior? Sure you do, you're tempted to rationalize your behavior all the time. John is encouraging **Gaius** to forget about the evil **Diotrephes**, don't worry about being kicked out of the Church. For greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). If **Gaius** remains faithful to orthodox teachers he will remain faithful to God, and those who are faithful to God are rewarded by God.

Application: When the pressure is on do you hide and play into the hands of evil men or do you remain faithful to the Lord? What did Christians do when abortion was legalized? Did they remain faithful or did they hide because they were outnumbered? What did Christians do when feminism became rampant in America? Did they stand up and do something or did they re-interpret Scripture to fit the feminist agenda? When your college professor tells you he can't recommend you to medical school because you are a creationist how will you respond? Will you shrink back and let our religious freedoms be wiped from the constitution? Or are you going to stand up and let your voice be heard? When America turns so anti-Christian that the Bible is considered hate-literature and is banned how are you going to respond? Are you going to be faithful or are you going to hide until the persecution lifts? This is the kind of pressure **Gaius** had to work through faithfully. If you are a Christian lawyer out there then you are on the front lines. Today we need lawyers who are strong in the hermeneutics/interpretation of the law because that is where the battle is being waged. Are we going to interpret the law in terms of the original founding fathers intent (authorial intent) or are we going to interpret the law in terms of our pre-conceived bias'. Re-interpretation of the law is how the judicial branch is re-writing the constitution of the United States of America. And if this continues to go on all our rights will be washed away. This is a power struggle people. It's the non-Christians who are attacking you in the legal arena. Someday I fear the Bible will be outlawed in America. And the basic reason this will happen is because Christians won't stand up under the persecution. They won't be a **Gaius**. The temptation to stay low and hide out is too great and they will do anything just to avoid being persecuted. So, first, Christian lawyers need to be sound in interpreting law. This means they need to interpret the constitution in terms of the original authorial intent of the founding fathers. Secondly, they need to apply that same hermeneutic to interpreting Scripture. And third, they can't compromise Scripture. If we can get more and more young Christian lawyers who understand these three things then there will be some help for the many persecuted Christians. Christians are being persecuted daily in America for their beliefs in grade school, high school, in the job market and particularly on university campuses.

Like **Gaius** you need not fear the persecution of evil men like **Diotrephes**. You should never hide out until the persecution lifts. I encourage you to be faithful to God through the persecutions. Until we do America will continue on the downward plunge. What will be your response to daily persecutions?

John then tells **Gaius** "**You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.**" To send the traveling evangelists on their way in a manner worthy of God means that **Gaius** would be challenged to provide appropriate lodging, food, and provision for

their following journey. He was not to do this *half-heartedly* or *grudgingly* but *willingly* and *lovingly*. That way the service can be deemed **worthy of God**. One author writes, “Since they are God’s representatives...treat them as you would treat God...Since you are God’s representatives, treat them as God would treat them.”<sup>i</sup> There is a one to one correlation between how we treat other believers and how we treat God. If we really love God then we will love those begotten of God (1 John 4:18-5:3). When we love those begotten of God we are loving God. Therefore, we do well when we send those begotten of God on their way in a manner worthy of God. Why should we do this?

***Greek Text 7 uper gar tou onomatos exelthon meden lambanontes apo ton ethnikon.***

**Translation 7 because, in behalf of the name they went out, receiving nothing from the Gentiles.**

The reason we should send them out in a manner worthy of God is because these traveling ministers went out on their mission without seeking any assistance from Gentiles. By **Gentiles** John means “unbelievers”. They refused to receive any assistance, food, lodging or otherwise from unbelievers. This is the main reason our giving policy reads the way it does in the bulletin. Take out your bulletin and let’s read the statement on giving. It’s just below the Order of Worship on the inside of the first page.

Christian Giving is a part of worship. It should be done privately as unto the Lord, not under compulsion, but as a personal response to God’s grace. Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, according to his ability, for God loves a cheerful giver. Giving is a privilege for Christians. If you’re not a Christian we want you to partake of the word of God freely.

We don’t want money from unbelievers. We’re not interested, like many ministers are, in taking money from unbelievers. Many ministries solicit their congregations, by radio, and by television without making this clear. These traveling evangelists “apparently refused to *accept* such help, which is more than simply not *asking* for it.”

You know why we don’t want money from unbelievers? Because unbelievers often give to organizations to relieve their guilty conscience. Their self-centered guilty conscience starts eating away at them. And these people aren’t interested in Christ or spiritual things and so they set out to try to relieve that guilty conscience some other way. And one of the biggest scams unbelievers pull to relieve that guilty conscience is to give money to some organization, often some Christian organization. But we are not in the business of relieving guilty consciences. We are in the business of teaching the word of God. And if they’re not

interested in the word of God then we're not interested in their money. This means if some unbeliever comes in my office and tries to give me \$1,000 I'll tell him to take his money somewhere else. We're not interested in relieving guilty consciences. This person needs to accept the gospel of Christ. That's the only thing that will relieve a guilty conscience once for all. This petty giving of cash should never be accepted much less asked for by Christian groups. So, I don't like the fact that many ministries solicit for financial assistance from anybody and everybody, believer or not, right over the radio waves. There may be, and I can guarantee there are, many unbelievers out there who send money to these organizations to simply relieve their guilty consciences. So, that's why we have that written in on our bulletin. It's a serious thing and it turns people *away from* Christ and *to* their own good works.

These traveling evangelists went out strictly **for the sake of the Name**. This is the only NT book that does not spell out the name of Jesus Christ as Esther is the only OT book to not spell out the Tetragrammaton (YHWH). In the early church, the phrase "this name" was used to refer to Jesus Christ (Acts 4:10, 17; 5:28; 9:21; 1 Pet. 4:16). If someone goes out seeking financial assistance from the unsaved it would have been unworthy of the **Name**.<sup>ii</sup> Think about this for a moment. If Christians are to rely on the Lord for everything then what are we saying when we resort to relying on unbelievers for support? We're saying that the Lord doesn't supply all our needs or He can't supply all our needs. This is why, as long as I serve as the pastor of this Church, we will never add any building program or any other program that we don't have the money for. We are never, as long as I'm here, going to go in debt, or borrow from unbelievers. When the Lord supplies that's when we'll do and not before. We're going to follow the Lord's leading and not try to get the Lord to follow our leading. If God wants us to add something or start something then He'll provide ahead of time so we can follow Him. It's just a sham when people say, "oh, the Lord is leading us to build this building. We're going to have to borrow 5 million dollars to build it. We're just going to step out by faith." That's not faith. That's rebelling against God. Faith is trusting in the Lord's leading and following the path He's already charted out. If God wants you to do something He will have already provided the money in the bank account before you even have the idea. The Lord never leads believers into being indebted to unbelievers.

*Greek Text 8 emeis oun epheilomen upolambanein tous toioutous, ina sunergoi ginometha te aletheia.*

**Translation 8 Therefore, we ought to support similar kinds so that we might become fellow-workers in the truth.**

In light of these traveling evangelists refusal to receive money from the unsaved **we** Christians ought to support them. The word **support** means “to receive hospitably”, “to welcome” into one’s home. When we support orthodox traveling ministers **we become fellow workers with the truth**. What do we mean by orthodox. We mean they hold to the fundamentals of the faith. We find out if they believe in the full deity of Christ. We find out if they believe in the perfect humanity of Christ. We find out if they believe in the virgin birth. We find out if they believe in the substitutionary blood atonement. We find out if they believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. We find out if they believe in the Trinity. Then, if they believe in those things **we ought to** receive them hospitably. We ought to provide lodging for them, food for them, and provision for their further travels. When we do we become *sunergoi* with the truth. We become fellow-workers with the word of God! We become facilitators of orthodox teaching and preaching of the word of God. Any time we or you can help support **the truth**, no matter how humble or mundane your abilities, it has eternal significance before God. You are building up rewards in heaven.

In conclusion, we might say that there are three qualifications that a traveling minister must meet in order to be supported. 1) He must be orthodox in theology. 2) He must refuse to be supported by the unsaved. 3) He must go out solely for the sake of the **Name**. If we support these kinds of traveling ministers then we are being faithful to God. Whenever we are faithful to the children of God, whether we know them or not, we are being faithful to the Father of those children. **Gaius** had been faithful in the past and now John was challenging him to remain faithful in the future. **Diotrephes** was an evil force to be reckoned with. A force that was intimidating and threatening. **Gaius** would be challenged not to fold under the pressure. The way he could demonstrate his faith would be to continue to support qualified traveling ministers even under the threat of excommunication. May we not fold under the persecutions that we as American Christians are now undergoing in our generation. Follow the good example of **Gaius** and **Demetrius** whose faith towered above the threatening people of their day. Christ said “*in the world you will have persecution, but take courage, I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33). Christ has overcome the world and if you have believed in His Name you also are an overcomer (1 John 5:4-5). You become a world-conqueror at the moment you believe in Christ. If you have not believed in Christ I do not know why you have not. He created you. He gave you life and breath and all things. He is constantly sustaining you and provides for your every need under common grace. You know that He is there and you know that He is a holy and righteous God. You know that He cannot allow sin in His presence. You know that He must judge sin. That’s why He became a substitute for you on the cross. Sin and Satan have already been judged on the cross. This demonstrated His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. He loves you so much that He gave Himself for you. But you must appropriate

this message by faith. You must trust in Him for your eternal salvation. There is only one way to the Father. Jesus said “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me*” (John 14:6). Do you know Him today, He won’t turn you away. Trust in Christ, trust in Christ alone.

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<sup>i</sup> Nicol, Robertson, *The Expositors Greek Testament; Volume Five* (Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 206.

<sup>ii</sup> See 1 Pt 4:11

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