

That You May Know That You Have Eternal Life

A Consistent and a Caring Christian

3 John 11-15

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Scripture

This is the concluding message of our study in the Apostle John's letters that I am calling "That You May Know That You Have Eternal Life." John wrote three letters toward the end of the first century. He was responsible for the churches around Ephesus. He loved the believers in the churches for which he was responsible. Some false teachers were making the rounds of the churches, teaching that Jesus was not the Son of God. So, John's letters were written to encourage Christians to know that they have eternal life.

The Second and Third Letters of John were each written on a single sheet of papyrus. The common theme in each of these letters is *hospitality* shown to traveling teachers. The Second Letter of John is concerned about *withholding* hospitality from false teachers, whereas the Third Letter of John is about *extending* hospitality to true teachers.

The Third Letter of John tells us about four men and their reputations. The first man, Gaius, had a reputation for being a commendable Christian. The second man, Diotrephes, had a reputation for being a conceited Christian.

Today we are going to examine the reputations of the third and fourth men: Demetrius and John. We will learn how a consistent Christian and a caring Christian lives.

Let's read about a consistent Christian and a caring Christian in 3 John 11-15, although for the sake of context, I shall read the entire letter, beginning at verse 1:

¹The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

² Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. ³ For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

⁵ Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, ⁶ who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

⁹ I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. ¹⁰ So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God. ¹² Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

¹³ I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. ¹⁴ I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

¹⁵ Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name. (3 John 11-15)

Introduction

John Wooden's UCLA basketball teams won ten NCAA championships in 12 years. No one speaks more eloquently about Wooden than Bill Walton, who played for UCLA at a

troubled time in America, a time of Vietnam and Watergate, a time when young people were asking hard questions, when dissent was in style.

For Wooden, the answers never changed. “We thought he was nuts,” Walton said. “But in all his preachings and teachings, everything he told us turned out to be true.”

“His interest and goal was to make you the best basketball player but first to make you the best person,” Walton said. “He would never talk wins and losses but what we needed to succeed in life. Once you were a good human being, you had a chance to be a good player. He never deviated from that. He never tried to be your friend. He was your teacher, your coach. He handled us with extreme patience.”

John Wooden lived to be a few months shy of 100-years old. Walton talked with the elderly Wooden frequently.

“He has thousands of maxims,” said Walton. “He is more John Wooden today than ever. He is a man who truly has principles and ideas. He didn’t teach basketball. He taught life.”

Walton concluded, “When you’re touched by someone that special, it changes your life.”¹

I have already mentioned that the Third Letter of John is about extending hospitality to true teachers. In those early days of the expansion of the Gospel, Christian teachers would travel from church to church. Because the inns in those days were not only expensive but also were houses of ill repute, itinerant teachers generally stayed in the homes of Christians.

John wrote this Third Letter to a man named Gaius. Gaius apparently frequently housed itinerant teachers in his home and John commended him for his generosity.

However, in the church of which Gaius was a member,

¹ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2001/march/12937.html>.

there was also a man named Diotrephes. Diotrephes was clearly a man with authority in the church, though we don't know exactly what position he held in the church. Diotrephes refused to allow visiting preachers to stay with church members. Diotrephes was so conceited that he disfellowshipped anyone who opposed his leadership.

Thankfully, there were other examples for believers to imitate in that church. It is to these final two men and their reputations that we now turn.

Lesson

Third John 11-15 shows us how a consistent Christian and a caring Christian live.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Example of a Consistent Christian (11-12)
2. The Example of a Caring Christian (13-15)

I. The Example of a Consistent Christian (11-12)

First, let's look at the example of a consistent Christian.

The example of a consistent Christian that John affirms is that of a man named Demetrius. We learn two truths about a consistent Christian in the example of Demetrius.

A. *A Consistent Christian Pursues a Godly Example (11)*

First, a consistent Christian pursues a godly example.

John wrote in verse 11, **“Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.”** The **“Beloved”** to whom John is addressing this section of the letter is Gaius. This is

now the fourth time in this short letter that John calls Gaius **“Beloved”** (vv. 1, 2, 5, 11). John urges Gaius to **“imitate good.”** Believers need to choose good models to follow, to imitate. All genuine good originates from God and so a maturing believer will demonstrate God’s goodness more and more. And that is what John wants Gaius to imitate.

When I was a preschooler, my Dad was quite involved with the city soccer team. He would take me with him to practices. At that young age, I wanted to play goalkeeper, perhaps because I really liked the goalkeeper of our team. I watched him. I did the same practice drills that he did. I tried to imitate him. Interestingly, the goalkeeper had a slight limp. One day, my parents noticed that I was now walking with a slight limp too. I was not even aware that I was imitating him to that extent! That is the power of a good model. John wants his readers to imitate good models.

Yesterday, we had a Memorial Service for one of our members, Christine Probes. The Graveside Service was held on Thursday. My wife shared that Christine was a model to many in the church, so much so that some women have been heard to say, “When I grow up, I want to be like Christine.”

It has been said that a growing Christian has someone more mature than himself whose godly example he can imitate. And he also sets a godly example himself so that younger Christians might be able to find a consistent Christian whose godly example they can imitate.

Paul wrote to Timothy about this very issue. Paul was a consistent Christian who pursued a godly example for Timothy. When Paul wrote to Timothy, Timothy may have been in his mid-thirties. He was considered young in that culture. Nevertheless, Paul said to him in 1 Timothy 4:12, “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in

speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”

If you see a Christian, a consistent Christian, who is demonstrating these traits, then learn from that person.

So, let me ask you: Is there a consistent Christian whose godly example you can follow? And are you a consistent Christian who is pursuing a godly example for others to follow?

B. A Consistent Christian Possesses a Good Testimony (12)

And second, a consistent Christian possesses a good testimony.

John writes in verse 12, **“Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.”** Demetrius is introduced without explanation, which suggests that he was well-known. It is possible that he was a traveling teacher who was known to Gaius and the congregation. He may also have been the one carrying the letter from John to Gaius. John warmly commends Demetrius as one who has **“received a good testimony from everyone.”** Demetrius must have been a man of integrity whose life was adorned with the truth of the gospel.

When I was a student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL, I lived my first year in the dormitory on campus. One of my classmates who lived in the dorms worked overnight at UPS. He said to us that UPS liked to employ seminarians because they were good workers and could be trusted. I remember thinking how encouraging it was to hear that Christians had a good testimony in a work environment like UPS. That is the kind of testimony that should be true of all believers in every environment.

Many of you know of Chuck Colson, who went to jail for

his part in the Watergate scandal. He then became a Christian and founded Prison Fellowship, a ministry that serves prison inmates. One time, Chuck Colson was standing in a long line in the airport in Jakarta, Indonesia. He and some Prison Fellowship colleagues had been traveling all night. It was now early morning. The terminal was hot and steamy, and they were tired. As Chuck relates in his book, *Being the Body*, “Passport in my sticky hand, I was exhausted and exasperated at the long, inefficient line snaking ahead of us. I was worried we would miss our next flight and the ministry friends who were waiting for us.” But, Chuck adds, “I was also determined not to let my frustration get the better of me. I talked with my friends; we laughed and made the best of the situation.”

Two years later, he received a letter from a businessman who lived in Singapore. The man had been a follower of Confucius, but he sent his children to Sunday school at a Presbyterian church for moral training. One Sunday, as he picked up his children, he heard the end of the sermon. A visiting missionary held up a copy of Chuck’s first book, *Born Again*. On the cover was a picture of Chuck Colson.

A few months later, this businessman was stuck in a long line in the steaming Jakarta airport. Glancing over into the next line, he spotted the same face he’d seen on the cover of *Born Again*. He was so impressed by Chuck Colson’s calm demeanor and cheerfulness that when he got back to Singapore, he got the book, read it, and committed his life to Christ.²

Friends, that is the power of a good testimony. So, let me ask you: How is your testimony? Do you possess a good testimony?

² <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2003/june/14467.html>.

II. The Example of a Caring Christian (13-15)

And second, let's look at the example of a caring Christian.

Our fourth reputation belongs to the Apostle John himself, the author of this letter. As John closes his letter, we learn about the example of a caring Christian.

A. *A Caring Christian Desires the Presence of Fellow Believers (13-14)*

First, a caring Christian desires the presence of fellow believers.

John concludes his letter to Gaius with these words in verses 13-14, **“I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.”** This is similar to the conclusion of his Second Letter. John said that he had much more that he wanted to write to Gaius but he would rather speak to him in person. If Demetrius was the one who carried the letter to Gaius, he would have confirmed John's sentiment to Gaius. John longed to see Gaius and the rest of his beloved flock once again. God has made us not only for fellowship with himself but also for person-to-person fellowship with one another.

I recently read a brief article in which the author asked the question, “Which methods of personal communication work best in the church?” He mentioned social media, text, email, and phone call, and discussed the best way in which each method might be used. However, the best form of communication is in-person communication. You can see and sense tone and context. You can communicate powerfully in non-verbal ways. Of course, it is not always possible to meet with

someone in-person. But, whenever possible, especially when dealing with a difficult situation, it seems best to communicate in-person.

So, a caring Christian desires the presence of fellow believers.

B. A Caring Christian Desires Peace for Fellow Believers (15)

And second, a caring Christian desires peace for fellow believers.

John's final words to Gaius are these, **"Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name"** (3 John 15). John wishes **"peace"** for Gaius. This is not merely the absence of conflict or strife but is instead an invocation for God's blessing to be with Gaius. John also lets Gaius know that the friends who were with John send their greetings to Gaius. Moreover, John wants Gaius to greet each of the friends who were with him **"by name."** John had a very good knowledge of the church of which Gaius was a member. John had a personal and pastoral affection for each of the members.

We don't usually wish friends "peace" when we separate from each other. We typically say, "Goodbye" to each other. That is about as close in our culture that we get to wishing someone God's blessing because "goodbye" is a contraction of "God be with ye." So, when we say "goodbye" to someone, we are saying that we want God to go with them as they continue on life's journey.

A caring Christian not only desires peace for fellow believers but works to make it possible. He will seek to live at peace with all men. He will seek to be a peacemaker as far as it is in his power.

So, let me ask you: are you a caring Christian? Do you

desire the presence of fellow believers? And do you desire peace for fellow believers?

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed 3 John 11-15, let us imitate the example of a consistent Christian and a caring Christian.

Did you know that the footprints put on the moon will probably be there a long, long time – maybe almost as long as the moon itself lasts. Unlike on Earth, there is no erosion by wind or water on the moon. Nothing gets washed away.

Since the Moon has no atmosphere, it is exposed to the solar wind, a stream of charged particles coming from the sun, and over time this acts almost like weather on Earth to scour surfaces on the moon, but the process is very, very slow. The footprints left behind by astronauts on the moon could last until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.³

We all leave behind lasting “footprints” in life. Where you go, what you do, what you accomplish, what influence you have on others are the permanent legacy that you leave behind.

Today, we have learned about the examples of a consistent Christian and a caring Christian. We can certainly learn from them.

However, our supreme example is Jesus Christ. Our first duty is submit to him as our Lord and Savior. We do so by repenting of our sin and trusting him for the gift of eternal life.

And then we spend our entire lives seeking to imitate his example of consistency and care. Let us commit ourselves to doing that today. Amen.

³ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2021/august/how-long-do-footprints-last-on-moon.html>.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons.
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp.
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