

**EPISTLE OF 3 JOHN**  
**WARNING ABOUT CHURCH BULLIES**  
**3 JOHN 9-14**

**Introduction**

Last week we saw how this little epistle was written to a faithful member of a Church—A layman by the name of Gaius... **a beloved man** who is said to have been **a man of hospitality** to servants of the Lord. He is described as **walking in truth and love** and as being **a fellowhelper to the truth!**

Folks with the character such as Gaius are **an asset to the Churches in which they belong and minister to!** **I have been blessed by folks who were like Gaius in every Church that I have been a part of.**

Next we find that the Apostle John warns Gaius of a man who was on the opposite end of the spectrum as Church members come. A man by the name of **Diotrephes**. I've heard some call him a **"Church Boss"** and some call him a **"Church Bully"**.

*A. T. Robertson, who was a Southern Baptist preacher back in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, once wrote an article on "Diotrephes, The Church Boss", which was published in a Christian magazine. As a result there were 20 deacons who wrote to the editor of that magazine canceling their subscriptions because of what they viewed as a personal attack that he had made on them.*

**Unfortunately Diotrephes and his kind are to be found in many Churches also. Not everyone loves God's servants. Not every Church member wants to invest in the ministries of the local Church. Not every member is willing to receive the ministry of those whom God has called.**

There is no other reference to this man other than what we find in 3 John.

**What do we know about him? What was his problem?**

- I. DIOTREPHESES LOVED TO HAVE THE PREEMINENCE. (Vs 9)**  
*"...who loveth to have the **preeminence**" means "to be fond of being first, i.e. ambitious of distinction".*

**Wanting to have PREEMINENCE in the Church is taking a position that the Apostle Paul says belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ ALONE!**

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*Colossians 1:18 – "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; **that in all things he might have the preeminence.**"*

**"PREEMINENCE"** there means **"to be first in rank or influence."**

**Here is a truth that we must make clear...Churches belong to God! Particularly to the LORD Jesus Christ! They are His Body! His Bride!**

**When someone hurts the Church...what they do to the Church, they do to Christ!**

When the Apostle Paul was lost, his name was Saul! As Saul he was a persecutor of Churches and the Believers that make them up! When he was confronted by Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road, the Lord Jesus said to him in **Acts 9:5**, **"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"**

**His persecution of the Churches was seen by the Lord Jesus Christ as a persecution of Christ Himself!**

Also, Paul wrote this in his first epistle to the young preacher Timothy. *1 Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in **the house of God**, which is **the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

*(e.g. I heard a story about a man that came into a particular town where unfortunately the Churches of that town were known for having people like Diotrephes in them who controlled the Churches. The man saw a fellow working in a ditch and asked him "Sir, can you tell me where the Church of God is?" The worker scratched his head and said, "Well I know there's a Church on the north side run by the Jones Family, there's one on the south side run by the Johnsons, there's also one on the east side but it's run by the Thomases, and then there's one on the west side that's run by the Smiths...If God has a Church around here I don't know anything about it.")*

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Unfortunately, there are Churches that are not only run by folks like Diotrephes, but also ruined by folks like him! And sadly, sometimes this particular likeness of Diotrephes can be found even in some Pastors. Central Baptist Church is not to be about me, it is about Christ!

**Again, those who love the PREEMINENCE, whether they be layman or pastors, are taking that which belongs to Christ and Christ alone! That is what Diotrephes was about!**

**II. DIOTREPHESES WAS NOT HOSPITABLE TO THE APOSTLE JOHN OR MISSIONARIES THAT MINISTERED WITH HIM. (Vs 9-10)**

**In the latter part of Vs 9, the Apostle John said, “...receiveth us not” and in the middle part of Vs 10, “...neither doth he himself receive the brethren...”**

**“Receiveth” and “receive” there means “to admit as a guest or teacher.”**

It even appears here that he may have destroyed a letter that John sent to this Church! Diotrephes, it appears, refused to submit to the Apostle John’s authority!

When one who would take the position that belongs to Christ alone, it is easy to see how they might refuse to submit to other authority.

Which for him could be a dangerous and deadly place to be if John had not been as gracious as he was!

The Apostle John said in the first part of *verse 10*, “**Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth.**”

Again, Diotrephes was on the opposite end of the spectrum as Gaius was **as it relates to hospitality!** Gaius was **full of hospitality...** Diotrephes was **inhospitable!**

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**III. DIOTREPHESES SPITEFULLY TREATED THOSE WHO DID RECEIVE JOHN AND THE MISSIONARIES THAT MINISTERED WITH HIM. (Vs 10)**

**“...and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the Church.”**

He not only forbade them to show hospitality to John and the others, but would actually cast these folks trying to be kind to God’s men out of the assembly!

**IV. DIOTREPHESES WAS A SLANDERER. (Vs 10)**

**“...*prating against us with malicious words.*”**

The phrase there “*prating against*” means “*to be a babbler or trifler, i.e. (by implication) to berate idly or mischievously*”

**“Malicious” words means they were “hurtful, evil”**

*Ephesians 4:31* “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*”

Diotrephes had a **spiteful, malicious tongue** that he used to **prate against** the Apostle John. That was not a Christlike attribute to have!

His speech **was not helpful, but rather was hurtful** both to those whom he was **speaking against** as well as to those he was **speaking to!**

Be careful when someone comes to you with slandering words against others, especially those who are in authority!

**V. DIOTREPHESES (AND ANYONE LIKE HIM) WAS NOT TO BE FOLLOWED! (Vs 11)**

**A. That Kind Of Behavior is Evil!**

It is ungodly, while we as the Children of God are to be Christlike.

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*Psalm 34:14 – “Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.”*

*Romans 12:9 – “...Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”*

*Proverbs 8:13 – “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.”*

**B. That Kind Of Behavior is Not To Be Followed!**

Don't sink to their ungodly behavior, but continue doing good!

*1 Thessalonians 5:15 “See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.”*

**Conclusion**

So, what should we take away from this tonight?

Be as Gaius was in the Church...

He was beloved,  
He was walking in truth and charity,  
He was faithfully serving God by showing hospitality  
He was a fellowhelper of the truth!

Don't be as Diotrephes...

Don't seek preeminence...  
Don't be inhospitable having a wrong spirit...  
Don't spitefully treat God's servants and those who are helping them...  
Don't be a slanderer...

Abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good!