

Study 11: Summary of John's Letters

Introduction

Gnosticism underpins all of John's letters. They were written very late in the first century to support the Christians in the face of the false teaching by the Gnostics who had invaded the church. The recurrent theme is for Christians to love one another with the same kind of selfless love that Christ showed to us.

Body of the Study

(Study 1) The Recipients of the Letters

The Author of the Letters

Gnosticism: Backdrop to the Letters

(Study 2) Introduction

Fellowship with God

Dealing with Sin

(Study 3) Obeying God

Reasons for Writing

The Warnings

The Test of the False Teachers

(Study 4) Righteous Living

Loving one another

The Example of Cain

The Example of Christ

(Study 5) Testing the False Teachers

The Test of True Love

The Test of the Spirit

Love is the Outcome, not Fear

(Study 6) Loving God, and Faith in Christ

Spirit, Water, and Blood

Conclusion to the Letter

Dealing with Sin within the Church

(Study 8: SECOND LETTER) Loving God, and Faith in Christ

Walking in Love

Warning Against False Teachers

Fellowship with False Teachers

(Study 10: THIRD LETTER) Salutation and Greetings

Commendation for Gaius

Condemnation for Diotrephes

Commendation for Demetrius

Homework and preparation for next week:

Read the notes as a review of the study

Read the letters again right through

Notes for study 11: Summary of John's Letters

(Study 1) The Recipients of the Letters

Although they are not specifically identified, the letters were written to a church, or a group of churches, most likely in the region of Asia Minor. Quite likely the same churches addressed in Revelation. John had a close association with the brethren, since he describes them as “My little children” and he intended to personally come and visit them.

The second letter is addressed to “...*The elect lady and her children...*” (2:1:1) which may be a reference to a specific person, but more likely a reference to the churches in Asia Minor.

John must have had a close association with the brethren, since he says “...*I do not wish to write with paper and ink, but I hope to come and speak face to face...*” (2:1:12), and he also describes how he has “...*found some of your children walking in truth...*” (2:1:4).

The third letter is addressed to “...*my dear friend Gaius...*” (3:1:1 NIV), or “...*beloved Gaius...*” (NKJV). The letter is a personal letter, written to an individual. We do not know if this was the same Gaius mentioned in other places, but we know that there were at least two others.

The Author of the Letters

The writer gives no claim as to who he is, and in the second and third letters simply claims to be “the elder” (2:1:1; 3:1:1). The authorship of the first letter is almost without dispute, with both the internal evidence and external evidence pointing to the apostle John. There are great similarities between “John's letters” and the fourth gospel. By the early second century the authenticity and authorship of the first letter was strongly accepted, although there were some questions about the second and third letters.

Gnosticism: Backdrop to the Letters

Gnosticism grew strongly in the second century, but the beginnings of it were evident by the mid first century. The Gnostics believed they had “special knowledge” which gave them *special enlightenment*, and put them above God's laws. They also denied the incarnate position of Christ (that Jesus wasn't really who He said He was).

(Study 2) Introduction

In response to the Gnostic philosophy of having some sort of *special knowledge*, John reminds the readers that the apostles have *genuine—first hand—knowledge* of Jesus. John makes four claims that attest to the genuineness of what he says, with three of them providing witness collaboration (heard; seen; and touched):

- **It was from the beginning.** The Gnostic doctrine had come along later. John claims that his evidence goes back to that original truth.
- **We (the apostles) have heard it.** They had been with Jesus and had heard His teaching.
- **We have seen it with our eyes (and have looked upon it).** Not only had the apostles heard Jesus teaching, but they had also observed – *seen* – how He acted in various situations, and had seen the events of the crucifixion and the resurrection.
- **We have touched it.** Jesus' resurrection was not an apparition.

There is a strong parallel between what John writes here and his gospel. This is in contrast to the Gnostics, who were teaching that the original message was incomplete, and they denied the humanity (bodily incarnation) of the Messiah.

Fellowship with God

After introducing his credentials, John presents the key to the message “...*This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all...*” (1:1:5 NIV). John uses several descriptions for God, which emphasise His nature:

- God is light (1:1:5)
- God is Spirit (Jn 4:24)
- God is love (1:4:8)

Describing God as light has allusions to the Old Testament Psalms, and also to the fourth gospel “...*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life...*” (Jn 8:12). Darkness is the absence of light, and darkness and light cannot co-exist. “...*If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth...*” (1:1:6 NKJV). The Gnostics claimed enlightenment, and did not consider themselves part of darkness. However, they are not in fellowship with God, and are therefore in darkness.

In direct contrast, we must remain in God’s fellowship without compromise. “...*But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...*” (1:1:7 NKJV). The New Testament concept of fellowship is not a superficial social interaction, but a deep participation with our fellow Christians as we walk the Christian life together, and help each other along the journey.

Dealing with Sin

Our salvation is conditional upon *walking in the light*. We cannot continue to live a life of sin, and claim to be God’s people – it’s just darkness claiming to co-exist with light! As Christians, we have changed, because we have been redeemed by Jesus. This does not mean living a perfect life in order to be right with God. That is impossible, and we continue to stumble and fall “...*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...*” (1:1:8 NKJV). We cannot do this on our own – our only hope is God’s mercy. The remedy is “...*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness...*” (1:1:9 NIV). As Christians, our place in God’s family is secure – but it is conditional! We must acknowledge our sins! And with that acknowledgment is acknowledgment of our dependence on Him. Conversely, we cannot deny that we sin “...*If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us...*” (1:1:10 NKJV).

(Study 3) Obeying God

We must not conclude that sin is inevitable and acceptable, and we should continually fight against it. Sin offends God, and we – who belong to Him – must not tolerate such offensive behaviour in our lives. Nevertheless, there are times when we do sin, and John provides an assurance “...*But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense-- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One...*” (1:2:1 NIV).

Jesus is our advocate with the Father. He has been through all of the (types) of trials and struggles that we face in our lives, and He makes intercession for us, and *speaks in our defense* to God. More than that, He actually paid the price for our sins. “...*And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world...*” (1:2:2 NKJV).

John addresses the false teachers with the description “He who says ...” In contrast to the Gnostics – who claimed enlightenment, but didn’t put their faith in God into practice – the Christian is exhorted to follow God faithfully. “...*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments...*” (1:2:3 NKJV). The true test of our faith is demonstrated in obedience.

The exact opposite is true of the Gnostics “...*He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him...*” (1:2:4 NKJV). They were professing to belong to God, but by their actions they denied Him. True knowledge comes from a heart motivated towards God by love, and responds in obedience to the things that God says.

The second statement is directed towards the Gnostics: “...*He who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk just as He walked...*” (1:2:6 NKJV). The Gnostics (apparently) claimed some sort of special experience that helped them on their way to enlightenment. John points them back to the experiences of Jesus. To have a relationship with God we need to behave – live – the way that God would have us to do. Jesus was the perfect example of how we ought to live our lives, and one that as Christians, we need to follow!

The third assertion John makes against the Gnostics is “...*He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now...*” (1:2:9 NKJV). We show our love true for God in how we relate to our brethren. We cannot claim to love God who we have seen, but hate our brethren “...*He who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes...*” (1:2:11 NKJV). This person has *night blindness*, and has no idea where he is, or what he is doing.

Reasons for Writing

The letter is written to encourage faithfulness (1:2:12-14). He changes tense “I write” to “I have written”, and addresses three groups of people “children”, “fathers”, and “young men”. The first group have a total and basic faith. The second group are mature in the faith, and have a true, deep and meaningful relationship with God. The third group have gone beyond a basic level of faith, and have struggled with and overcome Satan, and are growing towards maturity.

The Warnings

The application is about putting our faith into practice. “...*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him...*” (1:2:15 NIV). We must not put our trust (our faith), hope, and love in the temporal things of the earth, that will pass away. Our total faith and trust must be in God. We cannot serve God and money. The “worldly things” are described by three parameters “...*For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the p[ride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world...*” (1:2:16 NKJV). These three things are *exactly* in line with the temptations that Jesus faced.

The first group of warnings concern denying Jesus, and he literally calls these people *Antichrist* and openly directs his comments to them. The false teachers had been members of the church, although they were not committed to Christ “...*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us...*” (1:2:19 NKJV).

The Christians who remained must have been feeling deflated, and John assures them “...*But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth...*” (1:2:20 NIV). The Gnostics claimed an anointing, which gave them their enlightenment. John contrasts that claim with the anointing that the Christians have, which comes from God, which is a reference to the miraculous gifts.

The Test of the False Teachers

The false teachers are pointed out by a rhetorical question “...*Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist--he denies the Father and the Son...*” (1:2:22 NIV). The specific issue the church was dealing with was the Gnostics proclaiming themselves as self-righteous, and denying deity. It was an easy test to determine who they were.

The warnings are clear and specific, and aimed directly at the false teachers “...*These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you...*” (1:2:26 NKJV). Their motives were deceptive and deliberately trying to lead the brethren away from the truth they had learned from the apostles. We can have absolute confidence in the foundation of our faith when (and only when) we remain in the word – the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

Whilst we need to be concerned about false teachers, we also need to be concerned about God’s children remaining faithful. John addresses his final exhortation to the brethren “...*And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before*

him at his coming....” (1:2:28 NIV). The test of faithfulness is how we act in what we do. We demonstrate our faith by putting it into practice.

(Study 4) Righteous Living

John presents three tests of our assurance: Our actions in doing the what is right; Loving one another; Testing the false teachers. As Christians, we need to carry Jesus’ characteristics by doing what He says, and behaving the way that He behaved. If we say that we belong to Him, but then don’t act that way, then we are liars (1:2:6). A life characterised by sin is not compatible with a life of fellowship with God.

The Gnostics claimed to know God, but denied Him by their actions, whereas Christians truly serve Him. John assures them “...*The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him...*” (1:2:1 NIV). This is an exact parallel of the situation where the world did not recognise Jesus! In the end, approval by the world is something to be shunned, rather than desired.

We are called to righteous living. We cannot profess to belong to God and live in darkness “...*Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure...*” (1:3:3 NIV). This is not a statement of conditional reward (ie, that God will reward us if (and only if) we live a righteous life). Rather, it is a statement about where our hearts are. No-one who (truly) belongs to God would want to live a life that is tarnished by sin. We are purchased and washed clean by the highest price that has ever been paid. Why would we want to continue in sin? The only feasible answer from those who claim to belong to God is to live the same kind of life that Jesus lived (1:2:6) “...*No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known him...*” (1:3:6 NIV).

Jesus came with a ministry of reconciliation – He came to re-unite man back to God, by destroying the sin that separated us from Him “... *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil...*” (1:3:8 NKJV). Whilst the Gnostics might claim to have come from God, in fact they come from Satan. John sums up by saying “...*No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God...*” (1:3:9 NIV). If God lives in us, then sin is incompatible with our lives. God’s concern is with how we put our faith into *practice*, and how we show it by *loving our brethren*.

Loving one another

The second theme of the chapter is the fulfilment of our relationship with God “...*For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another...*” (1:3:11 NKJV). This was *the message from the beginning* – which is another way of saying that it is the original gospel, and not something introduced by the Gnostics. They were disregarding the message of love for one another by their actions. Jesus said that love for one another was the thing by which all men would know that we are His disciples, and was something that He commanded us to do.

The Example of Cain

Cain is used as an example of what not to do “...*not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother...*” (1:3:12 NKJV). Cain had no love for Abel – for if he did, then he would not have murdered him! Abel was righteous, and was persecuted by the evil Cain. A parallel to the situation where the righteous Christians were being persecuted by the evil motivated Gnostics. By murdering his brother, Cain was cut-off from God. In a similar way, if we hate our brothers in Christ, we are not living as a child of God, and are therefore cut-off from Him.

The Example of Christ

Christ is given as a positive example “...*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us...*” (1:3:16 NKJV). If we want to know what true love is, then we just need to look at Jesus. It is a deep and intimate love that He has for us, and it is the same kind of love we need to display for others “...*And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren...*” (1:3:16 NKJV).

If our hearts are truly placed with God then we have no need to be afraid of God “...*Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God...*” (1:3:21 NKJV). We can face Him with confidence because we truly walk with Him. Our faith in Jesus is the key driver (but this doesn’t mean “faith” in the sense of belief only). Our faith is expressed in our obedience, just as it was in every case in faith’s hall of fame (Heb 11). Our faith causes us to obey God. We need to put our faith into practice by demonstrating our love to our brethren.

(Study 5) Testing the False Teachers

The third test of our assurance with God is comes from testing the false teachers. We need to test the things that people say, to see whether they are the truth or not (1 Thess 5:21, Acts 17:11); and the test is whether or not they stand up to the scrutiny of conformity with the scriptures.

These people had a resemblance of christianity, and what they said sounded plausible – but their motivation was to deceive the brethren (1:2:26). Their was something “new” that they claimed to have from God by special revelation. John says “...*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world...*” (1:4:1 NIV). They were not just claiming to be christians, but were also claiming inspiration by *the spirit*.

John encourages the brethren to continue to resist the false teachers “...*You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world...*” (1:4:4 NKJV). Their faith was tested when they were confronted with the false teachers. They had to make a choice of standing in the *orthodox* belief and practices that they had been taught, or going with the *new teaching*. They stood for the truth, and John commends them for their stand, and reminds them that God is all-powerful.

The false teachers “...*are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them...*” (1:4:5 NKJV). They must have been having some degree of success, since they had been heard (ie – “followed”) by those who did not truly love God.

The Test of True Love

In the third section of the letter, John expounds the subject of love – *agape* love – the same “unconditional” love that God has for us. As christians, we are to express that same kind of love (*agape* love) to our fellow brethren. As the recipients of God’s love (because of our faith and obedience to Him), then we need to show the same kind of love to our brethren. “...*He who does not love does not know God, for God is love...*” (1:5:8 NKJV). *Agape* love is the fulfilment of God’s character in our lives and it is as just important as righteous living (1:2:29).

The strength of true *agape* love is contrasted to that shown by the Gnostics “...*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins...*” (1:4:10 NIV). They might have claimed to love God, but by their actions they denied Him.

True love is shown when we put the same kind of love into practice in our lives “...*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another...*” (1:4:11 NKJV). Christianity is a “team game” not an “individual sport”. We cannot walk with God in isolation – we need fellowship with one another to survive and to stir each other up to go on to love and good works (Heb 10:24-25). God knew what He was doing when He established the church, to provide exactly the right conditions for us to grow and prosper spiritually. We are here to serve one another, but we first need to love one another with the same kind of love that God demonstrated towards us.

The Test of the Spirit

The final test of true fellowship with God, is shown by the Holy Spirit “...*We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit...*” (1:4:13 NIV). In the first century church (to whom John wrote) it was manifest by the miraculous spiritual gifts. But the same statement is also true of the indwelling manifestation of the Holy Spirit, who lives in every christian. Paul says that this is given to us as an assurance of our relationship with God.

Love is the Outcome, not Fear

What will we do when we meet God on the day of judgement? The Jews had such a fear and reverence for God that they would not even say His name. When we stand before Him, we have every reason to be afraid and concerned as to what God will say to us. But rather than fear, we should have the confidence to approach Him, because through *agape* love we exhibit the characteristics that God wants us to have, and become the people that He wants us to be.

Agape love towards God cannot exist unless we demonstrate it in our lives by the love of our brethren. If we fail to show our love to our visible brethren, then we cannot claim to have the same kind of love for the invisible God.

(Study 6) Loving God, and Faith in Christ

We can't love the parent without loving their children, and the child John has in mind is not Jesus, but we who are adopted as His sons "...*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well...*" (1:5:1 NIV). John describes our faith in the broad sense – faith and all that it encompasses, including our obedience.

Those who keep God's commands can be seen if we look around us (he has only those in the church in mind – not those of the world), "...*for everyone born of God overcomes the world...*" (1:5:4 NIV). The idea is that we have been justified (made right) by Jesus' sacrifice, and our faith in Him (and our obedience to God's commands). When we have this faith (the same kind of faith that Abraham had) then we will not walk in darkness, but walk in the light (1:1:5-7). "...*This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith...*" (1:5:4 NIV).

Spirit, Water, and Blood

The false teachers denied Jesus' deity, but John assures the readers of the historical accuracy of both His humanity and deity "...*This is the one who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood...*" (1:5:5 NIV). Jesus was the Christ come in the flesh (human form). He was both spiritual (hence born of water when He was baptised), and physical. Jesus' physical (human) nature was shown in His death – typified by the blood sacrifice.

A testimony cannot stand on the evidence of one person (or witness) alone – it must be supported by other accounts (*by the testimony of two or three witnesses shall every word be established*). The credibility of the deity and humanity of Jesus is supported with exactly the rigorous evidence required "...*For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement...*" (1:5:7-8 NIV).

The testimony of the apostles is also not given by one of them alone, but a consistent and coherent message is given by all of them, and also by the witnesses who saw the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor 15: 5-8). But we have a greater and more-sure testimony "...*We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son...*" (1:5:9 NIV). John tells us what this testimony is "...*Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart...*" (1:5:10 NIV). It is the assurance that we have because of our faith in Him, and the love and trust that we have in our heart for God.

Conclusion to the Letter

John re-emphasises his purpose in writing "...*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life...*" (1:5:13 NIV). His purpose is to give us assurance of our salvation, and to stir us up to continue to serve God "...*and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God...*" (1:5:13 NKJV).

Having the assurance of our salvation, we can approach God with confidence rather than timidity (1:4:17-18) "...*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us...*" (1:5:14 NIV). We know that God hears our prayers, and that God answers our prayers. As Christians, we need to conform our will to God's will, and the things

that we ask for will be the things that will help accomplish His will. “...And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him...” (1:5:15 NIV).

Dealing with Sin within the Church

Following on from the confidence that we have in prayer, John addresses the ministry of prayer. Some of the brothers are sinning, and need to be brought back to repentance, whilst some of them are so encompassed in sin, and have progressed so far away from God that there is no possibility of bringing them back to repentance. John does not forbid us from praying for them, but he recognises that it is unlikely to achieve anything.

With a final exhortation, John closes the letter with an affectionate instruction to the Christians “...Little children, keep yourselves from idols...” (1:5:21 NKJV). Idolatry is the outcome of the false teaching that he has been addressing right through the letter. We either worship the true God, or we worship the false gods set up by men!

(Study 8: SECOND LETTER) Loving God, and Faith in Christ

The statements of *love* (*agape* love) and *truth* are both used and repeated in the introduction section of the letter, which tells us that these are important issues. The false teachers (Gnostics) had no real concern for the brethren, as their motivation was to deceive (1:2:26), and they did not belong to God (1:2:19). John has a very deep relationship with the brethren, which is based on deep and intimate love (*agape* love) – the same kind of love that God showed in sacrificing His son for us. The relationship is also built on truth. But truth is not just “facts” that we know are “correct”. It is something that is part of us. We have it in our hearts, love truth and hate falsehood “...because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever...” (2:1:2 NKJV).

John’s greeting is typical of the writings of the New Testament “...Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love...” (2:1:3 NKJV). His personal relationship with the brethren is shown as he continues the greeting with a personal comment. “...It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us...” (2:1:4 NIV). Walking in the truth is not optional. It is where God is, and it is who God is.

Walking in Love

Whilst walking in the truth is important, love (*agape* love) has precedence, and is also a commandment of God. Love is the true manifestation of our relationship with God. We can make false professions of our faith, and we can pretend to live our lives as Christians. But love (*agape* love) is something that cannot be feigned “...this is love, that we walk according to His commandments...” (2:1:6 NKJV). The commandment is that we love one another, just as Christ loves us. And the commandment is also that we practice it – *walk in it!*

Warning Against False Teachers

John’s primary purpose is to warn against the false teachers “...for many false teachers have gone out into the world...” (2:1:7 NKJV). The consequences of following the false teachers should not be underestimated. It is not a trivial issue “...Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully...” (2:1:8 NIV). The deception will result in us losing our eternal reward. John provides a very stern warning “... Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son...” (2:1:9 NKJV). We cannot claim to belong to God if we do not keep His teaching.

Fellowship with False Teachers

The false teachers denied Jesus. John puts the flip-side to the argument about remaining true to Christ “...If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not welcome him into your house nor greet him...” (2:1:10 NKJV). The warning is stern and explicit – we are not to have

fellowship with false teachers. The idea here is not to have “*no interaction*” with them, but rather “*not to welcome them as christians*”. John described these people as *antichrist*, and welcoming and accepting them as christians is equivalent to saying that their teaching and their practices were acceptable. He confirms this thought by saying “...*for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds...*” (2:1:11 NKJV). Fellowship with the false teachers cannot be accepted, and further – it must not even be contemplated.

The letter concludes with a short statement, and is truncated as if John has run out of space on the page “...*I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete...*” (2:1:12 NIV).

(Study 10: THIRD LETTER) Salutation and Greetings

The first four verses form an introduction and personal greeting to Gaius. John uses the statement “Dear friend” (*agapetos* – beloved) four times in the letter, showing the close bond that he has with Gaius. John had heard a good report concerning HIM “...*It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth...*” (3:1:3 NIV). As far as John is concerned, there is nothing greater than to hear the news of the faithfulness of the christians that he knows well (his *children*).

Commendation for Gaius

Gaius was active at putting his faith into practice, especially in the areas of hospitality “...*Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you...*” (3:1:5 NIV). He not only served the brethren where he was located, but he also served those who were travelling through that he had not previously known. His reputation for hospitality was reported back to the church where John was located (Ephesus?) “...*They have told the church about your love...*” (3:1:6 NIV). Those who were travelling had received the benefits of the hospitality, and had reported the good things to others. John commends him for his actions “...*You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God...*” (3:1:6 NIV).

Condemnation for Diotrophes

John had previously written to the church “...*I wrote to the church, but...Diotrophes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us...*” (3:1:9 NKJV). He was ignoring the things that were written by the Lord’s apostles, and thus was ignoring the authority that had been given to them by the Lord (Jn 15:20). He liked to *rule-the-roost* and was trying to apply control when and where he had no business doing so. His motivation was not to serve God, but he wanted to be in the spotlight and serve himself.

The situation would be put right when John came to visit. John spells out Diotrophes’ actions: “malicious gossip”; “refusing to welcome the (travelling) brothers”; “stopping those who want to do so”; “putting them out of the church (for fellowshiping the travelling brethren)”.

Commendation for Demetrius

We know nothing more about Demetrius, except for the comments that are made about him here. He clearly had a good reputation “...*Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone--and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true...*” (3:1:12 NIV). John makes three statements about him: He is well spoken of by everyone; He is well spoken of by the truth itself; We (John and the brethren at Ephesus (?)) speak well of him. To which John adds the comment “...*and you know that our testimony is true...*” Whilst some people might try to supply false credentials, or false references, this was not the case with Demetrius. They knew the source of the endorsement, and could have absolute faith in it.

John has plans to visit the church in the near future, which would allow some of the issues to be dealt with personally. “...*I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink...*” (3:1:13 NIV). “...*I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face...*” (3:1:14 NIV). This is another way of saying that John wanted to deal with these things privately.