**Imitate What is Good**

*3 John*

**Introduction**

1. The advancement of truth is always met with opposition.
2. In the presence of this clash are always 2 choices – imitate what is good or imitate what is evil.
3. 2 John demonstrated how activity in truth should look among brethren – active love in truth by keeping the commandments yet making the distinction between brethren and deceivers.
4. 3 John brings specific Christians into view and presents a stark contrast of good and evil. Where 2 John instructs us to resist error, 3 John shows some are very zealous in resisting truth, but the truth prevails when the faithful stand firm.
5. A Good Reputation in Truth **(vv. 1-4)**
6. A Good Reputation is Evaluated Spiritually **(vv. 1-2)**
   1. **(v. 1)** – John’s relationship of love for Gaius is centered in the truth.
      1. **2 John 1-2** – it is this realm of truth that is the tie that binds Christian hearts and minds together, and the truth perpetuates the love among them.
      2. The contrast is made with men like Diotrephes who act against the truth, and therefore contrary to love for faithful men like John and Gaius.
   2. **(v. 2)** – John’s evaluation of Gaius’ prosperity was spiritual, which also is reflected in Gaius’ focus and character.
      1. A good man/reputation is not evaluated by anything physical – **1 Corinthians 1:26-31** – a man who can glory in the Lord is a good man with a good reputation.
         1. NOTE: Our evaluations of individuals, especially regarding their worth, usefulness, or even qualification for a given spiritual work, must not ever be by physical influence. (Good businessman, high education, physical prosperity, etc.)
      2. Prayer for physical health/prosperity – not necessarily an implication of poverty or poor health, but a prayer in interest of continued spiritual work:
         1. **(v. 6b)** – ***“you will do well”*** – past action leading to an anticipation of future action.
         2. Prayer for continued opportunity by the Lord’s blessing – **Philippians 4:10, 17-19; 2 Corinthians 9:7-11**
7. A Good Reputation is Known by its Fruit **(vv. 3-4)**
   1. **(vv. 3-4)** – John’s rejoicing was caused by a good report about Gaius’ walk in truth, but such report was not empty or false, but based on observed fruit that he had borne.
      1. ***“truth that is in you, JUST AS you walk in truth”*** – How did they know the truth was in Gaius? They witnessed him walking in it. (**cf. Acts 11:23**)
   2. Compare **– 2 John 9-11** – our relationships with brethren are based in truth, but we must not allow what is superficial (ultimately not scriptural) be the standard by which we determine our view of individuals.
      1. **No matter a person’s reputation, it must be evaluated based on the evidence provided.**
      2. Some are defended who are guilty, and some are defamed who are righteous – the truth is determined by comparison to THE truth.
8. A Good Work in Truth **(vv. 5-8)**
9. Hospitality Shows Faithfulness in Truth **(vv. 5-6a)**
   1. ***“you do faithfully”*** – i.e. faithfulness, fidelity, to the truth – **(v. 3)** – this specifies what he engaged in.
      1. **“you do”** – present active – same as in ***“walk in truth” (v. 3)***
      2. This is not an anomaly, but an active characteristic of Gaius – truly, he is ***“faithful”*** – dependable, trustworthy, reliable.
   2. Doing for brethren, ***“and especially when they are strangers” (NASB)***
      1. ***“send them forward on their journey” (v. 6)*** – propempō – “to set one forward, fit him out with the requisites for a journey” (THAYER)
      2. Hospitality – **cf. Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:1-2**
   3. **(v. 6a)** – such love – **1 John 3:17-18** – sacrificial giving, deed and truth. (**cf. 1 Peter 4:9** – not grumbling)
   4. Gaius could have been a victim of Diotrephes – **(v. 10b**) – Here he is encouraged by John who properly labels and evaluates his activity.
10. Faithful Brethren Will Maintain Good Works **(v. 6b)**
    1. **This is not just something he has been, and is presently active in, but John pays him the ultimate compliment in speaking as though his future activity in the same is a given – *“you will do well”* (future)**
    2. **Titus 3:8, 14** – ***“maintain”*** – *proistēmi* – to be over, “to have an interest in, show concern for, care for, give aid” (BDAG)
       1. ***“be careful to engage in” (NASB); “be careful to devote themselves to” (ESV)***
       2. Present tense – an ever-present state of devotion and care to good works, helping others in need.
    3. **Psalm 1:3** – bearing fruit in its season – such a one who is faithfully walking in truth is engaged in a way of life – it is his constant focus and activity.
       1. Therefore, they are indeed ***“do[ing] faithfully”*** = i.e. acting dependably and trustily in truth.
11. To Support the Truth is to Work for the Truth **(vv. 7-8)**
    1. This was no mere random good deed Gaius had engaged in or would engage in.
    2. **(v. 7)** – these were preachers/teachers/laborers in the truth who went forth in Jesus’ name.
       1. Their motives were pure – ***“taking nothing from the Gentiles”*** so as to avoid hindering the gospel **(cf. 1 Corinthians 9:11-12**).
    3. (**v. 8)** – When they are received/supported by one (Gaius), that one participates in a work for the truth. **(cf. 2 John 10-11**)
       1. Jesus in the limited commission – **Matthew 10:40-42** – to do good/aid others who are working for the truth is to contribute to the work yourself.
    4. **We often sell ourselves short as we evaluate work for the truth. Truly, God has set each member in the body as He pleased, and each member is vital.** 
       1. **Gaius’ work of hospitality made the travels possible for these brethren devoted to preaching the truth.**
12. A Call to Imitate Good, Not Evil **(vv. 9-12)**
13. Love of Preeminence Resists the Preeminent One **(v. 9)**
    1. In contrast to Gaius, and in the way of Gaius’ continuation of his faithful doing, is a wicked man named Diotrephes.
    2. Similarly to knowing of Gaius’ reputation, John knows of Diotrephes’ reputation:
       1. ***“I wrote to the church”*** – whether 1 John, 2 John, or some other letter lost, or even destroyed by Diotrephes – immaterial.
       2. ***“does not receive us”*** – contrast with **v. 8** – he does the opposite of Gaius (**v. 10b**)
          1. Just as reception equates to working for the truth…
          2. **…rejection equates to rejecting the truth, working against it – *“does not accept what we say” (NASB); “does not acknowledge our authority” (ESV)***
          3. **Cf. 2 John 8** – what the apostles worked for, in the witness of Christ, is rejected by Diotrephes.
             1. Whether specifically in support of Docetic Gnostic error…
             2. …or in general rejection of their authority.
    3. **What John specifies as the reason for Diotrephes’ actions** – he ***“loves to have the preeminence”*** – *philoprōteuō* – “to be fond of being first, i.e. ambitious of distinction” (STRONG)
       1. **Cf. James 3:16** – when one has selfish-ambition he will be contrary to authority and working what is evil.
       2. Reminiscent of the mistaken mindset of the apostles – **cf. Luke 22:24-27** – arguing over who would be the greatest, Jesus corrects – servant, lesser.
          1. Roles within the body are not for our vanity.
          2. **THOSE WHO HAVE AUTHORITY OR ARE IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS ARE SERVANTS OF THE LORD AND HIS BODY.**
       3. Only One has preeminence – **Colossians 1:18; 3:17** – we must submit to Him.
          1. Diotrephes’ selfish ambition blinded himself to the presence of Christ in John, and bringers of truth, and so he stood against Christ instead.
14. To the Defiled and Unbelieving Nothing is Pure **(v. 10)**
    1. Diotrephes’ love of preeminence translated to his active malice toward John and those who came with the truth – **(v. 10a)**
       1. ***“talking wicked nonsense against us.” (ESV)*** – the phrase indicates an effort to slander John’s name to others, but through nonsense.
       2. What one should do – **Romans 12:15; 3 John 3** – rejoicing with those who are actively doing good for the Lord’s cause.
       3. What happens when one loves the preeminence – **2 Corinthians 10:10** – not supplied with any evidence in contradiction to truth, pitiful efforts are made to degrade the man.
          1. **These are insecure individuals who cannot stomach the thought that anyone else is getting any attention…**
          2. **…yet they are also those who miss the point altogether – men such as John are not seeking to promote self, but to place the attention on Christ!**
       4. The problem – **Titus 1:15-16** – when one is not honestly devoted to the truth, but has an agenda, they will not be able to see anything positive though it is present but will inevitably find something negative (though it be fabricated).
       5. **(v. 10b)** – this extends even to those who would have the intention to do what Diotrephes intends to do – they become a victim of his evil as well.
    2. John intends to withstand him if he comes – **(v. 10a)** – ***the only way a Diotrephes can persist in his evil and ruin a church is for faithful brethren to do nothing*** (**cf. Matthew 12:30** – in doing nothing they scatter abroad.).
15. Imitation of Good Determines Our Relationship with God **(vv. 11-12)**
    1. **(v. 11)** – Diotrephes usurped the position of judge, and arbitrarily determined that only siding with him was right.
       1. Some allow themselves to be intimidated by these kinds of men and are made to abandon what is true in support of such a one.
       2. John is encouraging Gaius to continue doing what he has been doing **(vv. 5-6),** and do not be swayed by Diotrephes’ threats.
       3. **1 John 3:6-7** – only those who do good are in fellowship with God.
    2. **(v. 12)** – Demetrius is in fellowship with God based on the testimony of others (seeing his fruit), but more especially that of the truth, and the testimony of John and others.
       1. He is likely bearing this letter, and John’s encouragement for Gaius to continue his work of hospitality is with reference to receiving Demetrius when he comes through.
       2. Will he imitate Demetrius in doing good (as he labors in the truth), or will he imitate Diotrephes.
16. A Good Relationship in Truth **(vv. 13-14)**
17. Rather than brethren being in competition, there is a mutual love and affection for those who are in fellowship with God – we’re all working toward the same end of exalting the name of Christ and taking comfort in His shadow.
18. Greetings of peace replace malicious imprecations when truth brings disciples together.

**Conclusion**

1. It is important that we are actively engaged in promoting and supporting the truth with whatever opportunity and ability we have.
2. It is also important that when others threaten in their opposition to truth that we persist in doing good.
3. The truth is what we love, and our love for others should always be determined by the truth – egotism has no place.