

Lessons From III John

Introduction

(III Jn 1-4)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning
 - a. Greeting...
2. New series of lessons on III John
 - a. We finished up our series of lessons from II John and now are starting III John.
3. It is normal to read the scriptures and try and imagine what it would have been like back then.
 - a. We have tons of information about early church leaders but what about the everyday Christian?
 - i. Were they better Christians than us as a whole?
 - ii. Did they have the same day to day struggles as us?
4. There are several N.T. books that give us insight into the early life of the church and III John is one of those.
 - a. It is a private letter like II John but this one is to a brother in Christ, Gaius.
 - b. As one brother put it, "It provides portraits of three different men, and in so doing gives us a glimpse of 1st century life in local churches." (Sermon: The Three Men Of Third John by Copeland, Mark)
5. What one discovers from studying this letter is that they were not much different they we are today.
 - a. For this reason this epistle is very relevant today.
6. With this in mind let us examine our lesson today.

I. The Content & Context Of III John

- A. The author "the elder"
 1. Most hold to the conservative view that the same man that wrote I & II John is the author of this letter, that being the apostle John.
 2. The internal reason why this is assumed to be the case.
 - i. All three letters of John utilize much of the same language and thoughts.
 - ii. All of them are very similar in language and concepts to the Gospel according to John.
 - iii. The term elder would not be unnatural considering John's advance age by the time of this writing of this letter.
 3. The external reasons for why this is the apostle John.
 - i. Dionysius of Alexandria gives credit to it being the apostle John.
- B. The addressee "the beloved Gaius"
 1. Gaius was a common Roman name as we see in the Scriptures.
 - i. **Ac 19:29; 20:4; Ro 16:23; I Co 1:14; III Jn 1**
 2. It is impossible to know if the Gaius of II Jn is one of those mentioned in these other places.
 3. What we do see here is that Gaius is a good friend of the apostle John and he is one known for his hospitality.
- C. Date & place of the letter

Lessons From III John

1. Like with I & II John this letter was written during the same time period.
 - i. Between 90-100 AD
2. Like with I & II John most suggest that this letter was written in Ephesus.
 - i. The reason being we know that John lived there in the later years of his life.
- D. The reason for the letter
 1. To confirm that Gaius was righteous in supporting those teachers who come his way, and encouraging him to continue therein.
 2. To call out Diotrephes for rejecting John and those whom Diotrephes should have, with open arms like Gaius, received.
 3. To build up Gaius by having him look at the example of Demetrius.
- E. Outline
 1. Greeting Gaius (1-4)
 2. Gaius's Confirmation (5-8)
 3. Diotrephes' Condemnation (9-10)
 4. Demetrius' Commendation (11-12)
 5. Final Remarks (13-15)

II. The Men Of III John

- A. Gaius
 1. This is the close friend of John's whom John prayed for.
 2. There is a good reason why John loved Gaius so much, it was because...
 - i. He was a man of good reputation.
 - a. **III Jn 3a** "For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you..." (NKJV)
 - ii. He was a man that walked in the truth.
 - a. **III Jn 3b** "...as indeed you are walking in the truth."
 - iii. He was a man that gave John great joy.
 - a. **III Jn 4** "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."
 - iv. He was a man of biblical hospitality.
 - a. **III Jn 5-6a** "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..."
 3. It is easy to see why John loves Gaius so much.
- B. Diotrephes
 1. This is an enemy to righteousness and the apostle of John.
 2. The reason for this is seen in Diotrephes' character.
 - i. He was a "look at me" guy putting himself first always.
 - a. **III Jn 9a** "I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first..."
 - b. "...who loves to have the preeminence among them..." (NKJV; KJV; ASV)
 - ii. He was rebellious not receiving the authority of John.
 - a. **III Jn 9b** "I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes...does not acknowledge our authority."

Lessons From III John

- iii. He was slanderous.
 - a. **III Jn 10a** "So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us..."
 - b. "...prating against us with malicious words" (NKJV; KJV)
 - iv. He was vindictive not receiving some brethren and even kicking them out.
 - a. **III Jn 10b** "...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."
 - 3. It is easy to see why John is so upset with Diotrephes.
- C. Demetrius
- 1. John encourages Gaius to imitate what is good as that is from God.
 - i. **III Jn 11** "Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God."
 - 2. Demetrius is given as a pattern by which Gaius can look to.
 - 3. Demetrius was given as a pattern because he...
 - i. Had a good report from "all brethren."
 - a. **III Jn 12a** "Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone..."
 - ii. Had a good report from the "truth itself."
 - a. **III Jn 12b** "Demetrius has received a good testimony...from the truth itself..."
 - iii. Had a good report from "John and those with him."
 - a. **III Jn 12c** "We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true."
 - 4. It is easy to see why John would give Demetrius as an example to follow given his reputation.

III. Finding Joy In Others

- A. Finding joy in others starts with a basic understanding
 - 1. They are in truth and walking thereby.
 - i. We should find no joy "in" someone else if they are not in truth brethren. The reason...
 - a. Transgression lives in their heart.
 - 1. **Ps 36:1** "Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes."
 - b. They are conceited and thus can't hate sin.
 - 1. **Ps 36:2** "For he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated."
 - c. Their words are deceitful and they are not wise.
 - 1. **Ps 36:3** "The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit; he has ceased to act wisely and do good."
 - d. They plot trouble into the night and does not abhor evil.
 - 1. **Ps 36:4** "He deviseth iniquity upon his bed; He setteth himself in a way that is not good; He abhorreth not evil." (ASV)

Lessons From III John

- ii. We should find joy however "in" someone that is in truth & love. The reason...
 - a. We are like minded in our goals.
 - 1. **Ph 3:17, 20-21** "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us...20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."
 - b. We are like minded in our spiritual work ethic.
 - 1. **Ro 16:1-2** "I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, 2 that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also." (NKJV)
- B. When we find someone walking in the truth brethren let us rejoice with all our heart
 - 1. John said, "I have no greater joy."
 - i. There is great joy in knowing that someone has become a child of God.
 - a. **Ac 8:39** "And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing."
 - b. **Ac 16:34** "Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God."
 - ii. There is no greater joy then knowing someone is staying a faithful child of God.
 - a. **III Jn 4** "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."
 - b. **I Th 2:19-20** "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? 20 For you are our glory and joy."

CONCLUSION

- 1. I'm reminded what C.S. Lewis once wrote, "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation."
 - a. Brethren it is true we praise what we enjoy.
 - b. Let it be said of each of us that we praise therefore each one that "walks in truth."
- 2. Question: Are you living in such a way that others can look to you as an example of how to live for Christ?
 - a. If so continue therein and don't be afraid of this challenge but continue to mature and grow all the more.

Lessons From III John

- b. If not why not? You have the ability now just make it your reality. Stop doing those things that are unrighteous and put your treasures in heaven, seeking first the kingdom of God.
- 3. Invitation¹
 - a. For those that are Christians but are not living for Christ repent by confessing your sins to God that He may forgive you and dedicate your life/time back to Him.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7, 9** "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...9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - b. For those that are not Christians or for those that think they are Christians and want to know for sure notice what is required to become a child of God or Christian according to God and God only.
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**

¹ Brother Copeland's sermon "The Three Men Of Third John" was of great use in the building of this outline.