

'A Letter as to the Truth and Those Who Hold It' (3 John)

by H.J. Vine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining Paul's doctrine and being faithful to the truth, while also receiving and helping the brethren.

Scripture: Acts 19:29, Acts 20:4, Romans 16:23, 1 Corinthians 1:14, 3 John 1:5

Topics: "Sound Doctrine", "Christian Hospitality"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the exemplary life of Gaius, a beloved brother who remained faithful to the truth despite facing challenges and opposition within the assemblies. Through examining Gaius' journey from being baptized by Paul to receiving commendation for his hospitality and faithfulness, Vine highlights the importance of holding fast to sound doctrine and walking in love. The sermon emphasizes the need for believers to imitate what is good, such as welcoming fellow brethren and being fellow-workers with the truth, while cautioning against following the ways of those like Diotrephes who reject and cast out others.

Transcript

"It was helpful and encouraging, beloved in the Lord, to have the third letter of John set before us in the May number of Scripture Truth."

There are many beloved brethren who desire to walk in truth like the much esteemed Gaius. They have been instructed in the truth in their measure as he was; they find themselves surrounded with failure in the assemblies as he did; their love goes out to the brethren as his did; and yet they find such as Diotrephes casting them out of the assembly--How then are they to act?

A few facts concerning the beloved Gaius might help to answer this question. It is remarkable that he should be brought before us in one of the very last, if not the last, of the inspired writings; and that John should be used to do so; for Gaius, as we shall see, was closely associated with Paul. This fact will help those who sincerely desire to maintain Paul's doctrine, and yet find themselves associated with that which practically denies it, and the nature and character of our blessed God also. Previous writings as to Gaius in "Scripture Truth" have helped saints, and, through God's grace, these further remarks concerning him may do so likewise.

I will refer to each passage of Scripture where the Spirit mentions Gaius. A careful examination of the text shows that the same person is in view in each case.

1. At the start of his public confession of Christ he was baptised by Paul (1 Cor. 1:14). This should be carefully noticed, for we shall see that he who began with Paul, and continued with him, is lastly sustained by the ministry of John when failure had come in. It is the same now. He is said to be of the Corinthians in this verse.

2. During the stirring scenes at Ephesus, when the truth was overthrowing the business of Demetrius, Gaius was seized by the crowd as being a well-known companion of Paul. It was in this city where Paul spent such a long time unfolding the truth, and where he first "separated the disciples." Gaius is said to be a Macedonian in this scripture (Acts 19:29). He was evidently a Macedonian at Corinth, as Lydia was a Thyatiran at Philippi.

3. During the final meetings of the apostle Paul in Asia Minor, Gaius, along with others, accompanied him (Acts 20:4). This was a memorable and important time. He was with him at the breaking of bread at Troas. He heard the all-night discourse there, and the warnings and instructions to others afterwards. The teaching, conduct, purpose, pleadings, tears, hopes and fears of the apostle were known to Gaius; and he held fast to the truth and was walking in it long after when John wrote to him.

4. In Romans 16:23 we have a reference to this much-valued brother which exactly coincides with what we are told of him in John's last letter. He is extending generous hospitality, not only to the servant of the Lord, but also to the whole assembly. His salutation is sent by the apostle to the saints at Rome. If, as it is commonly admitted, this is the same Gaius as we find in John 3 and 1 Corinthians 1:14 then there is little ground for making the one mentioned in Acts a different brother. In any case, it is clearly evident he was well nurtured in the teaching and manner of life of the apostle Paul, and it is this which we desire to emphasize, for some, who mean well enough, excuse themselves for not practically carrying out the truth and the love enjoined upon us by the Spirit in the writings of John, wrongly believing that to do so means giving up what they think is the teaching of Paul! Needless to say, it is all a profound mistake. Some will even use the second letter of John to justify the refusal of godly brethren, known and commended as such, and who delight to speak of the love and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The case there named is that of one who is utterly without the doctrine of Christ and without God! and this is so flagrant, and his works so wicked, that he is neither to be allowed to cross the threshold of a saint's house, nor even to be greeted! A very hurtful and unchristian system has been elaborated from a wrong use of this Scripture because none other could be found, nor any principle which is really "divine," that even appears to justify the refusal of those we are elsewhere enjoined to receive.

We now come to the last mention of the beloved Gaius (3rd John), and, as we said before. Failure in the assemblies was an accomplished fact. We see, however, (a) how Gaius then acted, and we read (b) what the Spirit encouraged and exhorted him then to do. A brief statement of these things will help those who are similarly situated today, and answer the question we asked at the commencement of these remarks.

(a) He still held fast to the truth, and also walked in it (3). This would include Paul's doctrine. He received the stranger brethren, and he helped them. His faithfulness in doing this is commended (vv. 5-6).

(b) He is told to continue in this; and to set them on their journey "WORTHILY OF GOD"--their passport (written on both sides) being 1. "THE NAME"--what Christ is; and 2. "TAKING NOTHING OF THOSE OF THE NATIONS" i.e. from the unconverted (v. 7). To receive such is obligatory if we are to be

"fellow-workers with the truth." (v. 8). In contrast, Diotrephes being named, as one who received not and who cast out those who did, it is then said to Gaius, "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good" (v. 11). The evil was the refusal, and the goal the receiving of the brethren.

Doubtless the Holy Spirit is speaking to the assemblies today; but it needs an unstopped ear to hear what He is saying. As always, He is calling attention to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and giving grace and power to those who heed to respond practically; and also the desire of heart for His return. An ear to hear is the great thing. Many ears are stopped by the voices and traditions of men. "What says the Lord" is the important matter for brethren now.

You are daily in my prayers. I thank God for this. With loving greetings in the Lord, affectionately yours in Him,

H.J.Vine

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