

On Wednesday night we covered the Book of 2 John and we focused on a couple of key points. First, we comforted ourselves knowing that the truth of Jesus Christ is THE TRUTH. It is the truth that surpasses all other truths. God’s word is truth and Jesus describes Himself as THE truth in John 14:6. Likewise John reminds us that as believers we are to not only know the truth, but we’re also to walk in it.

The word for “truth” in Greek is (*alétheia*).¹ This is real, objective truth. In Greek the word means “revealed” or “not hidden.” In Greek literature it was synonymous for “reality” as the *opposite of illusion*. I like that because it reminds us that knowing Jesus and knowing the truth of the Gospel is SPIRITUAL REALITY. There is no illusion here. When we have Jesus, we have that which is real.

We hear a lot these days about different truths. One person will say, “Well, my truth is such and such.” Another will claim to have yet another truth. There is really no truth in any of this. There is one truth. The only truth and that is “objective truth.” Objective truth is truth based on facts rather than things that are imagined or invented.² The problem is that people often ignore the facts about the truth even when it is right in front of them. When Jesus appeared before Pilate at his trial, Jesus told him,

*“For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to **the truth**. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”³⁸ Pilate said to Him, “**What is truth?**” And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, “I find no fault in Him at all. (John 18:37c-38, NKJV).*

The Messiah, the Lord of All, the King of all Kings, the ultimate truth was standing before Pilate, and Pilate didn’t recognize Who He was.

We learned together that at this time in the early church (the late first century), there were itinerant teachers that walked from church to church ministering to the various congregations (Ephesus, Derbe, Lystra, Thyratyra, etc). These were the churches in Asia Minor where the events of the Book of Acts took place. In John’s second letter he gave warnings about not giving hospitality to those teachers who came bearing something other than the truth. In John’s third letter, we pick up with John praising a man named Gaius who was a good guy. He looked after these itinerant preachers and is a good model who showed hospitality to those teachers who taught the truth of the gospel.

There is also a local church leader mentioned. His name is Diotrephes, and he was acting like a tyrant. He had somehow taken control of the local body to which John was writing, and he allowed no one else to come and teach or preach at his assembly.

¹ <https://www.biblehub.com/greek/225.htm> truth, but not merely truth as spoken; truth of idea, reality, sincerity, truth in the moral sphere, divine truth revealed to man, straightforwardness.

² <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/objective-truth>

Diotrephes was even forbidding the reading of this letter that we are reading this morning. John mentions another man, Demetrius, who was a demure, diligent man serving the local body. This letter points out dysfunction that existed in the church. It reminds us of the dangers when one person tries to control everything that happens in a local assembly. Perhaps the Lord preserved it because we have our own degree of dysfunction from time to time in the church today, and it's good to be reminded that we are not alone in this. It plagued the New Testament Church in the first century. It's easy for us to have the false idea that everybody in the early church was perfect and everything was smooth, but that is not the case. This is because people are people.

Greeting to Gaius

¹ *The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:*

² *Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.* ³ *For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth.* ⁴ *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. (3 John 1:1-4, NKJV).*

John begins the letter once again referring to himself as “the elder.” Scholars estimate that John was now between the ages of 75 and 90. John was not only old, but he was an “elder” in the faith. This was the same John that had walked and talked with Jesus when he was on the earth. This was the same John that was with Peter and James when the true identity of Jesus was revealed at the transfiguration. John was there at the foot of the cross tending to Mary the mother of Jesus during the crucifixion. He writes with great authority and yet Diotrephes refused to acknowledge John's authority in the Lord.

John writes the letter to Gaius whom he calls “beloved.” This would be like us starting a letter “Dear Gaius.” Gaius was a common Roman name. It was like someone named “Joe” today. John begins the customary greeting, praying that “Gaius would prosper in all things and be in health, just as his soul prospers.”

John tells Gaius that he delights in him because the word has reached John that Gaius is a solid believer and has great fruit in his life. John mentions that Gaius is a man who not only knows the truth, but he walks firmly in the truth. John has no greater joy than to hear that his spiritual children are walking in the truth (walking in the spirit).

I can attest that it gives my heart great joy when I see people in this congregation studying God's Word and making it the centerpiece of their lives. Sandy and I often talk about things that folks at the Grove go through, and we delight as we see you trusting in the Lord and walking in a manner that is worthy of your calling as believers. That should give any spiritual leader great joy, and John tells Gaius that he is so delighted in the reports that he hears about Gaius.

⁵ *Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers,* ⁶ *who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well,* ⁷ *because they went forth for His*

name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth. (3 John 1:5-8, NKJV).

John is impressed with the faithfulness of Gaius. Gaius is the kind of believer that walks each day in joy and faithfully ministers to not only believers but even strangers (unbelievers). John tells him that there are many people who have testified to the good that Gaius has done. I am often amazed at the personal sacrifice many of you make tending to the needs of others. Just this last week, one of you crawled under a house to repair the plumbing leaks of a brother or sister in need. That's the kind of person that Gaius was. He was a selfless servant who tended to these itinerant preachers that we've talked about.

Gaius had great discernment in whom he supported. He was operating and loving in a manner that is worthy of God and in doing so, he did well. Everyone knew he was such a person. John notes that Gaius takes nothing from unbelievers for his work. He was loving others with his time, talent, and treasure. John told Gaius that when we help worthy causes, we are partners in the cause or ministry.

This reminds us that as we financially and prayerfully support those on the front-line of ministry, God considers us as partners and partakers in the fruit of their ministry. Some are sent, and some are senders. Larry and I were talking the other day, and we observed that there are great needs around us that do not necessitate going to a foreign land. This church regularly raises funds to see that folks are in safe and sanitary conditions. I praise God that, like Gaius, this is a generous church body. John now lowers the boom on those in the church who were not acting so generously.

⁹ I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. ¹⁰ Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church. (3 John 1:9-10, NKJV).

Apparently, there was a guy named Diotrephes who was a leader in this church. He was probably the head pastor. But instead of being a servant leader, he had become a control freak. He was like the pastor who always must have the microphone. Such a person has to be in charge of everything. Not only did Diotrephes want to be in the spotlight, he wouldn't even receive John or John's letter. Remember folks, this is John, the Disciple whom Jesus loved and cared for. Jesus entrusted His own mother to John.

²⁶ When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" ²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. (John 19:26-27, NKJV).

John goes on to say that Diotrephes is not only excluding John and these itinerant preachers, but he is throwing people out of the church who wish to lend support to

these faithful teachers that are traveling and coming to minister to the body. I suppose he was talking about people exactly like Gaius or Gaius himself. John continues,

¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. (3 John 1:11, NKJV).

John reminds Gaius and us not to imitate what is evil, and not to be shaken by what is going on. He who does good (Gaius) is of God. But he who does evil (Diotrephes) has not seen God. I think there are many Diotrephes in the Church today. These are the leaders who think they have the corner on the truth. They can't recognize real ministry when they see it. They insist on sharing their authority with no one. They grab the reins of a local church, and they hold onto them tightly. They never let go. Beware of such spiritual leaders. When I began my ministry at the Grove, I longed for other men to join me in the pastoral ministry. Over time God has sent me such men. I often remind them that congregants at the Grove are not OUR sheep, but God's sheep. We are mere undershepherds. God has faithfully sent a handful of fellow undershepherds in this congregation who each have distinct ways in which they serve this body.

Some are intercessors. Others are gifted in empathizing and sympathizing with others as they go through the tests and trials of life. Others help me with theological and biblical questions. Others pour themselves into helping the physical needs of the congregation. John tells us that such people are those who know God. He also mentions another such servant.

¹² Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true. (1 John 3:12, NKJV).

John remembers to praise a man named Demetrius who is spoken of well by all. John isn't just condemning Diotrephes, but he's lifting up such people as Gaius and Demetrius. Let's not be a Diotrephes, but let's be Gaius and Demetrius.

¹³ I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; ¹⁴ but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name. (3 John 1:13-14, NKJV).

John ends the letter in the same way he ended his second letter. So, what can we learn from this little book.

First, we should remember that there has always been dysfunction in the church. Some is caused by unbelievers who find their way among us. Others are believers who perhaps are still not walking in the spirit, but rather spend most of their time "in the flesh," responding with flesh patterns they learned before they were saved. We should be wary of someone who wants to control everything. The Church is described in scripture as a body having many parts. There are many different things for us to do in this fellowship. Likewise, we should avoid those who cause division in the body as well as those who are needlessly offensive to others (Romans 16:17-20).

Second, if you're doing good, keep doing good even when you're discouraged. Don't be side-tracked by some unfounded criticism. Just know your calling and continue in it. In writing the church in Galatia, Paul exhorts, ⁹ *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.* ¹⁰ *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:9-10, NKJV).*

Third, don't be discouraged by dysfunction in the church. We all still have our problems, but this is the Body of Christ. We don't attend church because it feels good, and we can always have it our own way. We come together because the Bible tells us to come together (Hebrews 10:25). Church attendance is not optional for a healthy believer. I am not speaking to those of you who are infirmed and unable to attend services. I am talking to those of you who find church attendance optional if you don't have anything else going on. The 19th century theologian Dwight L. Moody once described church attendance as a practice "as vital to a disciple as a transfusion of rich, healthy blood to a sick man." But an increasing percentage of Christians are seemingly conflicted on the need for church, believing they could stay faithful to God by themselves, or just watching a preacher online.

Kenneth Priest, interim director of the Center for Church Revitalization at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary said, "I believe this is primarily a discipleship issue....part of the problem is due to **"the lack of pastors and spiritual leaders equipped to effectively preach and teach a text-driven life application of God's Word."**³ As long as I am senior pastor of this assembly, we will focus on "preaching and teaching text-driven life application of God's Word." Folks are hungry for biblical teaching, and we are committed to providing that in this place.

When we come in here and fellowship, we will step on each other's toes, and we may even offend one another. But that does not give us a right to ever withdraw from the church. We come together as broken people who are flawed and have problems. We are the body of Christ, and this is who God has formed us to be. We are a group of flawed people who come together to love one another and to be kind to one another. Sometimes we'll get hurt, but we never run. We are all a work in process. We were made perfect in Christ, but we don't always walk in the truth of that identity. Let's commit ourselves to forgive one another and move forward (again and again and again).

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.

³ <https://www.faithwire.com/2019/08/08/theres-a-reason-scripture-commands-christians-to-gather-together/>

