

Diotrephes Loves the Spotlight: 3 John 1:9-14 Explained Scriptures for Today

3 John 1:9-14

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. 11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. 12 Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true. 13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: 14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

Loving the Preeminence

3 John 1:9

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

A detail many people skip over here is right at the beginning of the verse: "I wrote unto the church." John sent a letter to that church, but it is not included in the Scriptures. We don't know the name of the church, but we know John is writing to Gaius from the first verse in 3 John. Diotrephes must have been a leader of that church. He had influence and control.

Diotrephes has a love for being first. He desired to be above others and to control what was happening. This reveals a heart problem. When someone loves position more than the truth, they will protect their status even if it means rejecting what is right.

And I've seen this many times, and we have to take heed or we'll do the same things because this sinful nature is built into man. The apostle John was an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was in a much higher position than Diotrephes. So Diotrephes didn't like that. "Who loveth to have the preeminence among them." He wanted to be superior, but he wasn't—not even close.

So what does he do? He doesn't receive the apostle John whom Jesus loved and who wrote books in the Bible. Diotrephes blocked that letter from reaching the church. He blocked the truth because he wanted to be the highest of all. That attitude follows after Satan—not Jesus.

John is an apostle bringing truth, yet Diotrephes rejects him. This shows that pride does not submit to authority. John had authority over Diotrephes. When someone elevates themselves, they will push away anyone who threatens their control. Truth becomes secondary to maintaining their position.

Using Words to Tear Down

3 John 1:10

Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

He is speaking against John with malicious words. He is attacking to turn people away from the truth and from those bringing the truth. When someone wants control, they go after people. They use words to damage reputation so others stop listening. And it works.

"Prating against us with malicious words" or talking foolishly, talking excessively, speaking without substance. It's empty talk but not harmless talk. He's running his mouth about the apostle John to tear him down—public negative talk. He can't be content until all the people in the church reject John and the other believers.

Look there: "neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would." He decides who is received and who is not received. He stops others from receiving them as well. He places himself where truth should be making the decision. He acts like he is the way and the truth.

"And casteth them out of the church." He removes people who will not go along with him. They are cast out for not submitting to him. The church is operating around one man instead of truth. Many church leaders will accuse people of causing division when they are causing division. Diotrefes and people just like him are the ones causing division and kicking people out of church.

Do Not Follow Evil

3 John 1:11

Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

John gives a direct command. Do not follow evil. Do not copy it. Do not align with it, even if it is coming from someone in a high position within a church. Many of those evil church leaders will try to make you think you are going against God if you go against them. Pure evil.

In other words, John is telling them not to follow Diotrefes. Don't follow after that evil that he is committing. Position, status, and titles do not determine what is right. What is being done determines it. You are responsible to follow what is good, not who looks or feels important.

"He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God." This is not saying every person who does something that looks good is saved and is of God. Unbelievers can help people and do outwardly good things. This is about pattern. Doeth is continuous. It's a person whose

actions line up with the truth. It's the kind of life that comes from God. They are producing good fruit.

This is also not saying that if you ever do wrong, you are not saved. We already know that believers sin. This speaks of a person whose life is characterized by evil. There's pride, control, rejection of truth. There's ongoing behavior without correction. The person is not walking with God ever and does not know Him in any way.

Diotrephes is clearly not walking with God. The Bible does not say he is not saved, but he sure acts like he's not saved. He loves preeminence, he rejects the authority of the apostles, he attacks with malicious words, he controls the church and the people, and he casts out saved believers because they went against his sin. That is a pattern of evil behavior.

His actions match what the Holy Bible says is evil. The Bible does not say he is unsaved explicitly. John is saying, though, that a saved person should produce good and an evil person produces evil. Follow one that aligns with God. Diotrephes doesn't.

A Right Example

3 John 1:12

Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

Now we see the exact opposite of Diotrephes. Demetrius is the contrast—exact opposite. His life lines up with the truth. "Demetrius hath good report of all men." His testimony is not built on words, but on what is seen in him.

For example, here, I believe most of you would give me a good report. But there has been one man recently who said that I think I am above God. That is a false accusation. All because I attempted to correct him on some things, and he didn't like it. For example, Diotrephes didn't give a good report of the apostle John. Evil men won't give good reports of men working for God.

Demetrius has a good report from people, and from the truth itself. What he does matches what God says. "And of the truth itself." The truth itself confirms him. His life agrees with it. There is no contradiction between what is right and how he lives.

This is the opposite of Diotrephes. One uses position to control. The other lives in a way that reflects the truth. Many will want to follow the evil man and few will want to follow the truth.

Dealing with Things Directly

3 John 1:13-14

I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: But I trust I shall

shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

John is not avoiding the situation. He is planning to deal with it directly. He is willing to address it in person. "We shall speak face to face" meaning to the well-beloved Gaius. So, instead of sending this letter to the church, 3 John is written to the well-beloved Gaius. And John is planning to come see him face to face very soon.

Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name. Thee is singular. Again, the apostle John is writing this letter to Gaius. Gaius was a faithful man, walking in truth, hospitable to believers, supporting the work of God, and a contrast to Diotrephes. He is not seeking position. He is simply doing what is right.

This entire passage shows how leadership can shift from truth to control. When that happens, people are pushed out and decisions are made based on one person instead of what is right. The issue is not the position someone holds. The issue is whether what they are doing lines up with the truth—no matter the position, title, or status.

Practical Applications

1. Do not follow someone just because of their position. Follow truth.
2. Watch for pride that seeks control instead of serving others.
3. Reject malicious speech that attacks people instead of standing on truth.
4. Look for lives that match the truth, not just words that sound right.

Conclusion

Diotrephes loved being first. That led him to reject truth and control others. Demetrius lived in a way that matched the truth. It was clear in his life. The difference is not the positions or titles. The difference is whether truth is being lived out. The question is simple. Are you following truth, or are you following a person?

Let's pray.