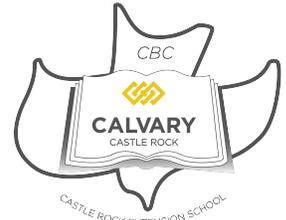


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NT391 The Letters of John Fall 2016



Class # 12

2 & 3 John

2 John Exposition

2 John in many ways is a general sequel and follow up to 1 John. It is doctrinal yet personal.

Addresser, Addressees and Greeting (1-3)

v.1 The Elder;

- The writer tells us right away who he is by description/title only. No name is necessary, they know who this is that is writing, otherwise his name would have been given.
- John may be using His 'office and age' title because he is the principal leader amongst a group of locally connected churches.
- Another eye-witness uses a similar designation in the singular, **see** 1Peter 5:1
- His position, his maturity, perhaps his office in a broad sense is emphasized over his name.
- Elder simply, in an everyday context, means: old man
- Marshall:** Elsewhere in the New Testament, 'Elders' refers to groups of leaders in local churches. This meaning is unlikely here since the writer refers to himself in the singular as "*the elder*," and since he is probably writing to a church of which he was not often in attendance.
- 'Elder' in the singular may also be a mental link for the church to remember that John was with, walked with, looked upon carefully, talked with Jesus from the beginning of Jesus' Ministry all the way to His ascension.

v.1 cont. To the elect lady and her children,

-Metaphorical or literal? Meaning a way of addressing the local church(es) and its members or is he addressing a particular chosen lady and her literal children?

-'Elect lady', **Marshall:** The word translated "lady" is a respectful term meaning "mistress." It is the

feminine form of the word “lord”; possibly there is a hint of the church being the bride of the Lord, so that her children are the spiritual offspring of the Lord and his church.

-Kruse: ‘the elect lady and her children’, which is a metaphorical way of addressing a local church and its members. This last alternative is the choice of most modern interpreters, and is supported by several considerations: (i) While the addressees are referred to as ‘the chosen lady and her children’ in verse 1 and the elder says ‘it has given me great joy to find some of your [singular] children walking in the truth’ in verse 4, in the rest of the letter (vv. 6, 8, 10, 12) he addresses all his readers in the second person plural (‘you’), suggesting that ‘the chosen lady and her children’ is another way of addressing all members of a local church. (ii) In 1 Pet 5:13 the church in Rome is described as ‘she who is in Babylon’, indicating that NT Christians could speak of a Christian community as a woman. (iii) The letter closes with the words ‘the children of your chosen sister send their greetings’ (v. 13), which appears to be a way of conveying the greetings of the elder’s Christian community to his readers. If this is the case, then the letter opens and closes with references to Christian communities: the one to which this letter is sent (‘the chosen lady and her children’), and the one to which the elder belongs or is at when he writes (‘the children of your chosen sister’).

-‘Elect’ or ‘chosen’, an adjective thus a description of those chosen to be His light and witness to a dying world. Being chosen starts with God, **see** 1 Pet. 1:2. For what purpose? **See** 1Pet. 2:9. And that light and witness must be ‘trimmed’ inwardly before it can shine outwardly, **see** Col. 3:12. And the example used is the leadership of the local church, **see** 2Tim. 2:10.

v.1 cont. whom I ‘love in truth’ (a phrase only used here and 3John 1),

-‘truth in love’ is used only once in the Eph. 4:15 where we are to speak ‘the truth in love’.

-A two atmosphere approach is the correct balance: ‘love in truth’ and ‘truth *speak* in love’!

-It will always be received well in Heaven when we love in truth. **See** 2 Thes. 2:10, **see** Gal. 4:16

-Love here, ‘*agapao*’ **Marshall:** He uses the Greek word which often functions in the Greek Old Testament and in the New Testament to express the particular kind of love shown by God to men and which must be shown by men to God and to one another. The use of this word, rare in secular writings, shows how a new word was needed to bring out the special elements in Christian love. It contains such thoughts as caring for other people, showing loyalty to them and seeking their good, in contrast with other words which are more expressive of seeking one’s own enjoyment in the object of love or of mutual attractiveness and affection. Christian love is first and foremost giving love, although it does not lack other elements such as affection.

-Kruse: the elder would be saying that he ‘love in truth’ the readers, who, like him, are ‘in the truth’, that is, those who continue faithful to the truth concerning Jesus Christ as it was heard at the beginning.

-Why in **love in truth**? Because of counterfeit loves. We have antichrists with their anti-love which is a counterfeit love to replace *agapao*, and the strange thing is that the counterfeiters also call it *agapao*. So how do we tell the difference? The truth is the differentiator? The Word of God, both as the Bible and the Word incarnate. Does this love come from (since love is of God) from Jesus who is the Christ, the Son of God who has come in the flesh and now sits at the right hand of God the Father? Or does this love come from another Jesus who is missing some of those descriptors and thus is a different Jesus, an anti-Jesus or instead-of-Jesus?

v. 1 cont. ... and not only I, but also all those who have known or continue to experience the truth,

-Those with Him who are knowing the truth continually, also loves those he is writing to.

-Truth here, if we follow from the first letter, would be the truth as John and other eye-witnesses delivered to them, not the new ‘truths’ of ‘new revelations’ from the secessionists.

v.2 because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

-This truth abides or should abide in us (*working and walking in us*) and never change; it will abide

unchanging forever.

-The 'Word' embodied (Jesus), abides in us and amongst us forever, and the Word written abides in us forever.

-**Kruse**: one cannot know the truth without knowing the person of Christ who first proclaimed it and also embodied it. These two are mutually inclusive: one cannot know the truth without knowing the person of Christ who first proclaimed it and also embodied it.

v.3 Grace, mercy, and peace 'will be with you' (not may be with you).

-**Kruse**: Most NT letters include an expression of the writer's desire that the readers experience the grace and peace that come from God (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4; Phlm. 3; 1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2; Jude 2; Rev 1:4).

What is found here in 2 John differs from the norm in several ways: **(i)** Here it is not so much a wish as an affirmation that grace, mercy, and peace will be with the writer and readers. **(ii)** Emphasis is placed on the fact that these blessings will be with them by placing the words 'will be with us' (*estai meth hēmōn*) at the beginning of the sentence in the original language. **(iii)** The affirmation relates to the experience of both writer and readers ('with us'), not just readers. **(iv)** To the name Jesus Christ is added the description, 'the Father's Son'. **(v)** Grace, mercy and peace, the text says, will be with them 'in truth and love'. Each of these variations from the norm reflects something of the elder's concerns as he writes this brief letter. He reassures his readers by emphasizing that God's grace, mercy, and peace will be with them, despite what the secessionists might say.

-This phrase 'will be with you' is found only three times in the NT. Here and **see** 2Cor. 13:11 (Paul's benediction) and **see** Phil 4:9. All three have conditional elements to them. What are they?

v. 3 cont. ... from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, 'the Son of the Father' (only here in the Bible), in an atmosphere of truth and love

-**Kruse**: He emphasizes that these blessings come from God the Father and Jesus Christ, 'the Son of the Father', reflecting the truth about Jesus which he defends against the secessionists' teaching, attacking the full deity, Messiahship, and humanity of Jesus the Lord. He adds that these blessings from God are experienced 'in truth and love', a rather imprecise expression, possibly meaning that the blessings are experienced by those who continue to hold to the truth and practice love among themselves; something he believes he and his readers do, but the secessionists do not.

Living in Truth and Love (4-6)

Kruse by introduction to these three verses states: *Several difficulties face the interpreter of this passage. These relate to the relationship between walking in the truth (v. 4) and obeying the love command (v. 5); the distinction, if any, between the commandment (singular, v. 5) and the commandments (plural, v. 6); and the meaning of walking 'in it' (v. 6).*

v.4 I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth,

-Could be referring to those who have been sent out by that fellowship and their walk has been testified to by others.

-**Kruse**: On the surface, this might imply that some were not, that some had already succumbed to the deceit of the secessionists (cf. vv. 7-9). But there is no indication elsewhere in the letter that this is the case, so it is best to regard the elder's statement as expressing joy over those he has heard are walking in the truth, without implying that others are not. The elder, speaking about those who were walking in the truth.

v.4 cont. ... (how were they walking?) as we received commandment from the Father.

-Kruse: What was the command of the Father, and when was it received? There are several possibilities to consider: **(i)** It is an allusion to the voice from heaven at the time of Jesus' transfiguration which said to Peter, James, and John: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!' (Mark 9:7/Matt 17:5). **(ii)** It is a recognition that the teaching of Jesus was teaching that the Father had commanded him to pass on (cf. Jesus' words in John 12:50: 'Whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say'). **(iii)** It is an equating of the gospel message itself with the Father's command. This last option is probably the correct one, for in 1 John 3:23 we find: 'And this is His command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us'.

-Again because of the secessionists John takes us back to the 'gospel time': Jesus walking, talking and doing as the Father commanded. The secessionists have nothing from the Father to add or take away from the truth taught at that time, to which John was an eyewitness.

After being very assuring he now pleads with them

v.5 And now I plead (to 'ask' as a superior or in this case as an Elder) with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another.

-By making this request he is not seeking to lay on members of the church any new obligation; he is calling on them to obey the command they both received 'at the beginning'.

-The message they heard included the command of the Lord Jesus that those who believe in Him should 'love one another'. This is the last of six references to Jesus' command that his disciples should love one another found in the Letters of John (the others are contained in 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12). These in turn came from the Last Supper discourses, John 13:34, 15:12 and 17.

-Other references to Love one another not tied to any of John's writings include: **see** Rom. 13:8, **see** 1Thes. 4:9, and **see** 1Pet. 1:22

-Why repeat this at this point? Probably to counteract the influence of the secessionists who put their 'superior' knowledge above all else, including loving one another as an extension or outworking of their superior knowledge. Of course 'love in truth' and 'truthing in love' are inseparable characteristics of the mature believer.

John now defines this 'love' so that we are all clear

v.6 This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

-This sounds very much like **1 John 2:7 Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.**

-Kruse: In the Fourth Gospel Jesus defines his disciples' love for Himself in terms of their obedience to His commands (*plural*) in general (John 15:10, 14), and in the same context he interprets that general obedience in terms of obedience to his command (*singular*) that they love one another (John 15:12). A similar pattern is found here in verse 6. Having defined love as walking 'in obedience to his commands' (plural), the elder defines that obedience in terms of a single command: As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love

- **'walk in it':** walk in love. Before we can outwardly walk in love we must first be convinced to walk in love inwardly thru first seeing His love 'working and walking' in us. We must be convinced of this foundational 'walking in love' principle. One of the best ways to be convinced of this has two walking legs or principles to it" **#1-** 'Forgiven much loves much' (**see** Luke 7:47). **#2-** While we were 'sinning enemies' Christ died for us (**see** Rom. 5:8-10). Do we love much? Do we love those against us, enemies if you will, knowing that we were *great* sinners and enemies of God!

-**Kruse:** Another approach to the interpretation of walk 'in it' is to regard *en autē* in v. 6 as an example of semantic density, that is, at this point the author deliberately intends the reader to understand that the antecedents of *autē* ('it') are *alēthea* ('truth'), *entolas* ('commandment'), and *agape* ('love'). To walk in 'it', then, would be to walk in truth and His commandments and love.

Bad Walking Starts with Deceptive & False Teaching (7-11)

v.7 For or because many deceivers have gone out into the world (but from where?) who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming (permanently) in the flesh.

-**Kruse:** The way to avoid being taken in by deceivers is to continue walking in the truth. The deceivers mentioned here are people who 'have gone out into the world'. This is one of three texts found in the Letters of John that refer to people 'going out' (the others are 1 John 2:19: "They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us"; and 1 John 4:1: "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world").

-This is the exact peril, the great deception: Not confessing in a proactive, acknowledging manner, that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. At best they are silent on this subject in order to not lose their 'Christian' audience. But being silent is not good enough, they must verbally acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Here is how we know that they have the Spirit of God: **1 John 4:2-3**
2 By this you know the Spirit of God (is in the person doing the teaching): Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,

3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

-**Moule:** Without the Incarnation, there could be no fellowship with God, and, of course, no salvation. "A Savior not quite God *and not fully man* is a bridge broken at the farther end" (Bishop Moule).

-**Kruse:** we may say that what the secessionists denied, when stated fully, was that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God come in the flesh, and the reality of his atoning death *is then negated*. The author of 1 John could signal this whole complex of ideas by referring to just one or another aspect of it (cf. 1 John 2:22; 4:2, 3; 4:15; 5:1, 5, 6), and it is probably best to read the present verse in the same way. The aspect of the false teaching picked up here is the reality of Jesus Christ's humanity (his 'coming in the flesh'), but this cannot be divorced from the purpose of his coming in the flesh, that is, to give himself as the atoning sacrifice for our sins (cf. 1 John 1:7; 2:2; 3:5; 4:10).

v.7 cont. ... This is a deceiver and ~~an~~ the (or contextually we would say the embodiment of *THE*) Antichrist (see 1 John 2:18).

-**Thomas:** When he says, "many deceivers," the same word is used as in the First Epistle (2:26), implying deception of both heart and life. It was no mere intellectual error, but one that inevitably led people astray in conduct. The trouble was a deception of heart which expressed itself in a wandering life. The original word is that from which we get our word "planet." **All See** also 1 John 2:24-27 for the process of deception detection and safeguard against error.

v.8 Look to yourselves, that we (John includes himself) do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

-John includes himself in the collective 'we' three times in this verse.

-Note: the corrupt text has 'you' instead of 'we'

-**Kruse:** The elder has worked to make known the truth of Christ to them so that they might know God and have eternal life. In the very next verse the elder warns his readers against leaving behind the 'teaching of Christ', for that would result in their not 'having God' and therefore not having eternal

life either.

9 Whoever transgresses (to break away or turn aside to) and does not abide in the 'doctrine of Christ' (twice only here in v.9) does not have God. He who abides in the 'doctrine of Christ' has both the Father and the Son.

-**Kruse:** The secessionists, by breaking away and leaving behind the teaching of Christ, show that they do not have God.

-By holding to the Doctrine of Christ as taught from the beginning they will have both the Father and the Son. You cannot have the Father without holding to the true doctrine of the Son as taught from the beginning. The Father will always honor the Son and the Son the Father.

v.10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine (of Christ), do not receive him into your house nor greet him; **11** for he who greets (thus fellowships with) him shares (κοινωνέω, in agreement) in his evil deeds.

-**Kruse:** In a word, he urges them not to provide hospitality to anyone who comes with a gospel different from the one they received. To appreciate the force of this exhortation it is necessary to understand the norms of hospitality operative at the time, which involved hosts in guaranteeing their guests as worthy individuals to the rest of the community.

-**Kruse:** 'Into your house' it could be taken to mean receiving an itinerant preacher in the assembly of a house church. This letter is addressed to 'the chosen lady and her children' (v. 1), which we have taken to refer to a church and its members, not an individual and her children. This being the case, the elder could well be advising the members of the house church not to receive heretical teachers into the assembly of the church.

Truth is our safeguard (read on your own)

Griffith Thomas:

1. Truth as a sphere (vs. 1, 3, 4, 9). The Apostle uses the phrase "in truth," or "in the teaching," thus showing that if we are only abiding in the teaching that we have obtained all will go well. Truth here and elsewhere in the New Testament is at once intellectual and moral, and is intended to affect with illuminating and inspiring force every part of our being.

2. Truth as an experience (v. 1). The Apostle speaks of "them that know the truth," thereby suggesting a personal experience—and that of a permanent character. As before, so now, he emphasizes something that is far beyond any intellectual conception of Christian teaching, and refers to a personal experience and possession of the truth of God.

3. Truth as a motive (v. 2). Then he speaks of "the truth's sake (or because of the truth), which abides in us, and it shall be with us forever." The possession of this truth is thus shown to be a reason, perhaps the chief reason, why we are to remain faithful and not to be led astray. This truth abides in us, and will remain with us permanently, and on this account we are to be true to it.

4. Truth as a standard (v. 4). The Apostle was able to rejoice exceedingly that some of those associated with the "elect lady" were walking in truth. Walking always indicates life and progress, and "walking in truth" implies that truth was the standard, rule, and guide of their life. *Remember the Spirit and our willingness to obey the truth must always be working and walking 'in' us before it is working and walking 'out'-side of us.*

5. Truth as a power (vs. 5, 6, 8). The Apostle goes on to speak of a commandment with which they had been familiar from the earliest days of their Christian life, the commandment to "love one another." Then this was seen to involve conduct according to God's commandments (v. 6), and the outcome of everything was their definite work (v. 8). Thus, in regard to the three aspects of love, obedience, and service, the Apostle shows that truth was intended to be the power of their life.

6. Truth as a home (v. 9). He had already spoken of truth abiding in us, and now he is to speak of our abiding in the teaching of Christ. Thus truth is seen to be the home of the soul, and those who thus abide are the blessed and holy possessors of the Father and the Son.

7. Truth as a test (vs. 10, 11). This truth was not only to be a power in these respects in the individual life and experience, but it was also to be used as a criterion in relation to others. If anyone should come to these Christians, and was seen to be without this teaching, he was to be left severely alone. They were not to give him hospitality; indeed, they were not even to greet him, for a greeting might easily be misunderstood to indicate approval of his evil ways. The Apostle thus does not mind his converts being regarded as “narrow,” or severe, because he knows that the truth is, after all, the supreme matter, and everything, however attractive and otherwise delightful, must be tested thereby.

Final Words and Greetings (12–13)

v.12 Having many things to write to you, I did not wish *to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face (only John), that our joy may be full.*

-‘Face to face’ fellowship brings a fullness of joy that is otherwise not known and allows for fuller teaching and response than can be done by letter. Thus, an even fuller joy.

v.13 *The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.*

-**Kruse:** This letter is addressed to ‘the chosen lady and her children’ (v. 1), a metaphorical expression denoting the local church and its members to which this letter is being sent. When the elder concludes the letter with greetings from ‘the children of your chosen sister’, he is conveying the greetings of the members of the local church of which he himself is in attendance when he wrote.

3 John Exposition

If 2 John is a general follow up to 1 John, both doctrinal and secondarily personal, then 3 John is specifically personal and then doctrinal.

Address and Greeting (1–4)

v.1 *The Elder, to the beloved Gaius* (‘I am glad’),

-**Thomas:** This expression “beloved” shows the beautiful oneness in Christ between the Apostle and Gaius.

-The name Gaius is found in four other places in the NT, and in each case the one bearing this name is associated with the apostle Paul. John’s Gaius does not appear to be any of those associated with Paul.

-Gaius is a dear friend of John’s, but it is not certain if he is in a leadership position.

v.1 cont. ... whom I ‘love in truth’:

-**Kruse:** He writes in his own name (indicated by his use of the first person singular forms in vv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 13, 14), but in some places he associates himself with others from his community in what he writes (indicated by first person plural forms used exclusively in vv. 9, 10, and 12)-

-What is the sphere and boundaries of His love? _____ .

-What is the character of his love?

-If you had to start with one approach to life which would come first, knowing that both must work together as one eventually: ‘Love in truth’ or ‘speak truth in love’, which would you choose: Love or Truth? Let’s put it another way: Which atmosphere would you breathe first? Love or Truth?

v.2 *Beloved, I pray that you may prosper (here and 1Cor. 16:2, Rom. 1:10 ‘way’) in all things and be in health, just as your soul (ψυχή) prospers (develops in positive way).*

-prays that his physical life may prosper and be in good health just as his soul prospers?

-Thomas: The Bible has not a little to say about “prosperity,” though the words in the Hebrew and the Greek invariably indicate progress, “having a good journey” (Rom. 1:10; 1 Cor. 16:2). He actually prays that Gaius may have as much bodily strength as he has spiritual power. We are accustomed to think the very opposite, but here is the remarkable experience of a soul prosperous and a body weak, and the spiritual health is to be the standard of the bodily vigor.... We have only to think of the marks of bodily strength and health to see what is meant by spiritual prosperity. When we think of appetite we may ponder whether we enjoy our Bible. When we think of bodily rest we may inquire whether we know anything of the rest of faith. When we think of physical work we may inquire what we are doing for Christ.

How does John know that his soul is prospering?

v.3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified or gave witness of the truth that is in you, just as you walk (not just talk!) in the truth.

-This is the real life, one that is not only enjoyed but expressed thru ‘the walk’.

-notice the two-fold areas of truth identified: ‘in you’, probably identified through listening and then his ‘walk in the truth’, the expression of the inward in his outward walk.

v.4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

-All this gave the Apostle great joy, and he says that he had no higher joy than this, for when he heard that his spiritual children were “walking in the truth,” enjoying and manifesting prosperity in the spiritual life, the faithful Apostle found his joy full.

What exactly are the characteristics of his ‘walk in truth’?

The Writer Praises Gaius (5–8)

v.5 Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers (who are probably brothers, but unknown),

-Thomas: Hospitality is clear in the New Testament as a duty incumbent on Christians, and in those days when brethren traveled from place to place it is easy to see its necessity and value as one of the marks of true fellowship (Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 5:10; Tit. 1:8; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9).

v.6 who have borne (or carried along with them the) witness of your love before the church.

-Good works done in faith, in love will not go unnoticed, but beware of doing them for notice.

-Remember **see** Heb. 6:10.

v.6 cont. ... If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well,

-Kruse: The expression ‘to send them on their way’ translates a form of the verb *propempō*, which functioned as a technical term for missionary support in the early church (cf. Acts 15:3; 20:38; 21:5; Rom 15:24; 1 Cor. 16:6, 11; 2 Cor. 1:16; Tit 3:13), and this is also its function here. These people were preachers of the truth as it was heard at the beginning, and so it was appropriate to send them on their way as faithful missionaries ‘in a manner worthy of God’

v.7 because they went forth for His name’s sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.

-They were faithful proclaimers of the Name; they proclaimed Jesus Christ ‘as coming in the flesh’.

-Kruse: The second reason why these missionaries deserved to be sent on their way in a manner worthy of God is stated in v. 7b. It is because they went out receiving no help from the pagans. As they travelled from place to place they were dependent on the Christian community for hospitality, for they

received none from the pagans.

v.8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

-**Thomas:** Love, truth, joy, faithfulness, service, dominate his thoughts and reveal both in him and in Gaius the splendid reality of their Christian experience and love. If only we “love in truth” (v. 1) and “walk in truth” (v. 3), we cannot help becoming “fellow workers for the truth” (v. 8).

-**Kruse:** In 2 John 11 the elder warned his readers against providing hospitality to a secessionist preacher, for to do so would make them sharers ‘in his wicked work’. But in respect of the faithful missionaries he counsels Gaius to do the opposite. He encourages him to provide hospitality to those who proclaim the original message, for in doing that, he says, we ‘work together for the truth’ (lit. ‘we may become fellow workers for the truth’)

The Writer Denounces Diotrephes (9–11)

v.9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes (*nourished by Jupiter*), who loves (*among the brethren*) to have the preeminence (*contrast with see Col. 1:18*) among them, does not receive us.

-**Kruse:** While the verb ‘to love to be first’ (*philoprōteuō*) is not found elsewhere in the NT, the cognate word (*word of a similar derivation*) *prōtos* is used in many places to refer to leading persons. When the elder says that Diotrephes ‘loves to be first’, he is probably implying that he loves to be the leader and to exercise authority.

v.10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating (*disparaging*) against us with malicious (*painfully wicked*) words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren (*in hospitality or fellowship*), and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church the visiting brethren or even the local brethren showing hospitality.

-**Thomas:** He is seen to be marked by exclusiveness, being unwilling to receive even an Apostle. Not only so, but his speech against John was marked by evil, and not content with saying wrong things, his actions were equally deplorable, for he would not welcome the brethren by showing hospitality, and also actually repelled and cast out of the Church those who were willing to show this kindness. It is almost incredible that any professing Christian man could have taken such a harsh attitude.

-He appears to be a man in sympathy and like mind and heartedness with the secessionists.

Leaders are often copied, so John gives some principles to follow regarding imitating others ...

v.11 Beloved, do not imitate (*mimic*) what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does (*reference to v.10 in context*) evil has not seen God.

-**Thomas:** The Apostle, using his favorite term “beloved” for the fourth time in this brief Epistle, refers to the nature of that which every Christian man should be occupied with, “that which is good,” as contrasted with “that which is evil.” The method of fidelity is seen in the suggestion of imitation, and, inasmuch as all good comes from God, this advice to imitate means really to imitate none other than God himself because “he that does good is of God; he that does evil has not seen God.”

-**Kruse:** In this verse the elder spells out in some detail exactly what he believes Diotrephes was doing. Diotrephes’ misbehavior consists of four elements as far as the elder is concerned: **(i)** malicious gossip about the elder and his community; **(ii)** refusal to welcome the orthodox missionaries; **(iii)** preventing others from doing so; and **(iv)** putting out of the church those who defied him in this matter.

-Since God cannot be seen with the eyes what does ‘not seen God’ refer to here? Does **see** Acts 11:23 help? Does **see** 2Cor. 5:7 help?

-**Expositors:** In Christ these same attributes have become available to all who love God and desire to obey his commands. To show them forth in our lives proves that we are “from God.” All goodness proceeds from him; our perseverance in goodness demonstrates that in Jesus Christ we have seen God.

The Writer Praises Demetrius (12)

v.12 Demetrius (belonging to Mother Earth) *has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.*

-**Kruse:** In this verse the elder comes to his commendation of Demetrius. What seems to be implied in the commendation is that Gaius should provide Demetrius with hospitality. This would especially be the case if Demetrius himself was the bearer of the letter (and therefore present when Gaius read it), and even more so if he was one of the travelling missionaries who had gone out from the elder’s community.

-**Thomas:** It is one of the best recommendations of the Gospel that a follower of Christ impresses and attracts those around by his reality of life. When the Seven were appointed, one recommendation was that they should be “men of honest report,” that is, men of good reputation (Acts 6:3). This feature is often noted in the New Testament (Acts 10:22; 16:2; 22:12; Eph. 5:15; Col. 4:5; 1 Thess. 4:12; 1 Tim. 3:7).

Final Words and Greetings (13–15)

v.13 *I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink;*

v.14 *but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak ‘face to face’.*

Peace to you. Our friends (see John 15:14-15, see James 2:23) greet you. Greet the friends by name.

-**Kruse:** The expression ‘friends’ (*philoí*) is an unusual one to be used for believers, and it is used in this way only here among the letters of the NT. It may have derived from Jesus’ description of his disciples as his ‘friends’ in John 15:13–15. There Jesus says that no one has greater love than that a person lay down his life for his friends, and adds that the disciples are his ‘friends’ because they do what he commands, and because he treats them as such by informing them of ‘everything’ he has learned from the Father. It probably reflects the way early believers spoke of themselves, as ‘the friends’.