

3 John 1

Sunday 10/16/2005

Last week we were in the book of 2 John, and we saw two great concepts for our spiritual growth. I have told you how the writings that John writes are from a very unique perspective. We saw this in a great way Thursday night with some of the questions that you asked. We saw how this worked its way out. We saw the practical side because John is a perfect picture of what your life and my life should be as a New Testament Christian. Then we saw the doctrinal slant. We saw how John also represents God's viewpoint and God's plan for the nation of Israel. So we saw how the great concepts were laid out.

We talked about that one little chapter, verses 1-6, which focused on our walk with God. Then chapter 1, verses 7-13, focused on us receiving a full reward. I showed you how that lays out from a practical standpoint for your life and my life, and also from a doctrinal standpoint, how it relates to the nation of Israel.

I. The Two Men of 3 John

Now, when we come to the book of 3 John, as I said, the author writes from a unique perspective. He has the complete viewpoint of God's plan with the nation of Israel and God's plan for the Church. In his books, you find both of those plans laid out: one in a practical application, one in a doctrinal application. The breakdown of this book is very simple and basic. I've given you a breakdown of every book in the Bible so that when you begin to read your Bible, you know what to look for before you start. I give you all the keys, all the concepts, and all the things that you need to see and understand how it works for you.

The book of 3 John is simply built around two men. These two men are going to form the study that we're going to take today. First, we're going to study these two men from a practical standpoint. We're going to see how they apply in your life and my life as a 21st-century Christian. Then we're going to look at these two men from a doctrinal standpoint, as they represent the nation of Israel. I think that it will help pull a lot of things together for you today. From a practical standpoint, you'll leave here better understanding a lot of things about the ministry. I'm going to severely focus on you understanding the concept of ministry, especially with all the opportunities for our men and women. I'm going to bring all the other ones along and work wherever you're at, but there are a number of you who have been with us for a while now who are right in the mix of this, and you've got to understand some things about the ministry because you're teetering on the edge of just really being able to get into something you can sink your teeth into. God has been good to us, and I praise Him for that.

➤ Gaius: Service in Truth (Verses 1-8)

The first man we're going to look at is Gaius. Gaius is talked about in verses 1 through 8. You only have one chapter in this little book. The theme in these first eight verses about Gaius is simply the fact that he has a great service for God in truth. Gaius represents what the ministry should be. We're going to look at all the attributes in Gaius's life as we come through it. Gaius is a good model to follow.

➤ Diotrephes: Evil by Pride (Verses 9-14)

Then in verses 9 through 14, you have another man named Diotrephes. Diotrephes is talked about in verses 9 through 14. He's a bad man, not a very good man at all. The theme about Diotrephes' life is the fact that he is evil by pride. So we have a contrast here from a practical sense of two men. One man's service for God is in truth, and we're going to look at all the attributes of that. The other man, Diotrephes, is a bad man, and the theme there is his evilness by pride.

Both these men, doctrinally, represent the nation of Israel. We'll get to that a little bit later on. Right now, we're going to focus on the inspirational, how it applies to your life and my life, and the great lessons in these men's lives and what we can learn from it.

II. The Bible's Character Studies

The Bible is full of people. I don't know how many characters are in the Bible. The Bible is a book about people. I always wanted to get a count of them, but I don't think my life is that long. There are just so many people in the Bible. A couple of weeks ago, and we talked about this on Thursday night, we discussed character studies. The reason why there are so many people in the Bible is because they represent the things that you and I go through.

If you're a Christian and you're going through some very tough times, Job would be a book for you to understand why that is. If you're a young person and you're growing in the Lord, and you're right in the middle of things, yet there's conflict in your life, like so many of us have talked about this week, you're trying to do what's right, but you have those little bumps in the road, Abraham's life would be a good life for you to study. All of those men in the Bible, and those are the more famous ones. There are some men in the Bible who are great studies that most people never heard of. The older you get into the Word of God, and the more you have a relationship with God, the more you begin to focus not on the great characters that we all know about, but you begin to glean into the things that aren't maybe too apparent.

Whoever heard a message on Gaius? There's a guy in the book of Philippians called Epaphroditus. Whoever heard a sermon on him? You find that all the way through the Bible. Back in the Old Testament, we know the story of Jonathan. Jonathan has one of the greatest character studies about him. Not Jonathan himself, but study a story back there about Jonathan's armor bearer. He's not even named in the Bible. He's one of the greatest studies on faithfulness in the ministry that you're going to find.

The more you learn the Bible, the more you become friends with those characters. The more you become personal friends with those characters, the more you see yourself in those characters. I'm the kind of guy that, and this is true of all of us, we all meet people in life. I meet people today that remind me of people that I hung out with in high school that I haven't seen for 40 years, just because of human nature and character traits. When you learn the Bible, and you learn the characters of the Bible, the men in the Bible, and the women in the Bible, and you really get to know them, when God gives you a ministry, how you start building people or working with

people, or in any church scenario that's Bible-based, you're going to find people in that church that remind you of people in the Bible.

I kid little Rebecca that she's my centurion. There are five centurions in the New Testament, and every one of them, every time you find a centurion in the Bible, he's a good man. A centurion in the Bible represents something. I look at you and I say to myself, "He's this, she's that." You have a guy in the book of Acts named Barnabas. Do you know what the name Barnabas means? It means "son of consolation." I see Barnabas in a lot of you guys and some of you gals. You have characters like Peter. We talked about when we studied the books that Peter wrote, how Peter represented so many times a young Christian. There are so many young men in my life that have reminded me of what Peter probably was like. There are guys that remind me of Paul. There are women that remind me of the mother of Jesus, Mary. They're great studies.

You study Peter, Paul, and Mary, and then take their lives and how they got that little band together and traveled around the world. There isn't a young man or a young lady that I don't deal with one-on-one in the Bible that I don't look at you like Paul must have looked at Timothy. I love you in that sense. In the Bible, there's a story of two sisters, Mary and Martha. Mary is a picture of what our lives should be. Martha is a picture of what, as a Christian, our lives shouldn't be. I've found men and women in the Bible that remind me of Mary and Martha. I find this story about Thomas. I find people that remind me of Thomas. They have to be proven everything. I'm not saying that's a bad thing, but I know Steve Bracken Sr. back there. You hate to sell a car to a Thomas, don't you? You ever meet one of those guys that come back nine or fifteen times before they buy a car, and they have so many questions? After a while, you just know once you sell them a car, they're going to be a pain in your neck for the next six months. You just say, "Go buy a Chevy." Those are Thomases. They want to know everything. "When you close the door, does the door latch go down or does it go up?" "I don't know. Stick your head in there and we'll close it and we'll find out." That's a Thomas.

I talked about a minute ago in Philippians 2:25-26, you have that guy, Epaphroditus. There are six things about Epaphroditus's life in one verse that make him one of the greatest studies anywhere in the Bible. I see a lot of Epaphroditus in a lot of you guys and gals. There are six things said about him that you have to have to really have a ministry in any working New Testament Bible-believing church. Epaphroditus had all six of them. If you want to study, study it. Each one of those six things will lead you to an hour study. I see a lot of you like that.

III. Gaius: A Model of Truth and Faithfulness

So we have Gaius. Gaius is a good man. He's a man that we really have a good... Let's read it. Let's read 3 John 1:1-8.

3 John 1:1-8

The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

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

Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

Father, bless us today as we come to Your Word. Help us to look at these two men. Help us to see it from a practical side and then a doctrinal side. Help us, Lord, to be like Gaius. Help us to be like all the good men in the Bible, whether we're male or female or not. It doesn't matter. The character studies are about our relationship with God. Character knows no gender. Character is not male or female. There isn't a different character for a female and a different character for men. Character is character, and it simply means that you do what's right all of your life as God gives you the light to do it. Help us today, and we'll thank You and praise You in Jesus' name. Amen.

Verse 1 says, "The elder," that's John, "unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth." That's a great statement and a great setup for the practical side of this book. As Christians, the thing that we have that makes us love each other... Our church is not a problem-free church; it never will be. Anytime you have a bunch of people together, you have the potential for problems. But let me tell you what keeps problems in a church with human beings to a minimum. It is not just loving each other, but it's loving the Book that God gave us and loving each other through that Book. That's the difference. That's why if this church stays on the track that it's on, and I know it won't be perfect, and I know that somewhere down the line, somebody will have a problem with something, but that's just the way it goes.

Compare all the churches that are out there and some of the horrendous problems they go through. I can tell you this: we're all human, and we all have the problems that we have. Sometimes, given all circumstances, we can rub each other the wrong way. But we're a family. The difference is that you allow your brother or sister to "lop you up alongside the head," but if some stranger does it, you're going to deal with it differently. That's the way it is in the body of Christ. We're supposed to put up with each other because we're supposed to understand that we all have our shortcomings and our downfalls. In other words, instead of hurting each other, our job is to help and uplift each other.

Where do you get that concept? You get it from the Bible. That is not a natural thing. The natural tendency for us is to hurt other people. That's why little kids do it when they're growing up. Your little girl or boy will come home from school or even come home from Sunday school and say, "So-and-so wouldn't play with me today," or "So-and-so told everybody something about me that wasn't true, and nobody wants..." That's the way little kids are. Unfortunately, a lot of God's

people follow that same category because they never grew up either. But when you get into the Bible, and you love the Bible, and the truth of the Word of God is the core value system of your life, then you view each other the way we do as a family. You put up with my idiosyncrasies, if I have any. You put up with the person's problems next to you. We put up with each other because we're all human. Every one of us does dumb things. Every one of us thinks dumb things. Every one of us has room for improvement. But when your basis is the truth, and you love the Word of God as much as I do, then our fellowship, like John and Gaius, is in the truth. You build those special relationships because you get a higher calling. You get a higher vision. You realize that the pettiness of life, the things in your job, the little things that distract you, as the Bible says in Hebrews, "the weight that doth so easily beset us," are secondary things because we have a higher vision and a higher goal, and it takes all of us together.

I love telling each one of you in an individual way how special you are to me, my family, and my ministry. You are all unique. I don't just say it because I'm trying to get points. I don't need any points. I don't want any points. I genuinely love you because you love the Bible. I don't love you because you're pretty. I don't love you because you're nice. I don't love you because you're my friend. I love you because you love the Book that I love. In that, you're the most lovable people in the world. That is what we're always going to fall back on when the little bumps and grinds come. That will always be the thing that will hold us together when everybody else is flying off into outer space. That's what they had. He says, "Gaius, whom I love in the truth." What a great statement that is.

There is no room for racism in God's church. I think racism is a terrible thing. I think it's something that divides in such an evil and wicked way, that how a man can look at a man's skin color or a woman's skin. Because of that, whether it's black or red or yellow, it doesn't make any difference to me. I like the little song I sang growing up: "Black and yellow, red and white, they're all precious in His sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world." That's the way it is. Do you know why that is? It's because when you understand the truth of it, there is no race card with God. You begin to understand why that is. It's because God is a different race than I am. I'm a fallen race. He's a divine race. God has different standards than I have. God has a different culture than I've got. God looks at things totally different than I do. Yet, we love the truth because the truth is God is so totally different from us, yet God still loved us in spite of that. That is the basis of our relationship as a church. That's why when John writes this in 3 John from the practical, he's showing you the fellowship that we love each other in the truth.

IV. Spiritual and Physical Prosperity

Then he says in verse 2, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." With this verse, we see a great concept again. He says, "I wish above all things." We find out that there are two types of prosperity in the world. Prosperity is something that we all want to some degree or the other. The Bible clearly teaches that there is a physical prosperity, which would be money, and there is a spiritual prosperity, which is your spiritual relationship with God. When you understand all of these concepts, and you realize that there's physical health, that's your body, and then there's a spiritual health, that's your soul and

your new nature, you find that we are to build together those two concepts. I want you to be healthy spiritually as much as I want you to be healthy physically. I want you to prosper spiritually. This is called the true riches in the Bible. This is the riches that the Laodicean church has lost. This is the true riches that anybody can have today, even though we're in the Laodicean church, if you really want it.

That's why I minister to my people the way that I do. I am like a multi-trillionaire who wants to give you all the money I've got, except I don't have physical money; I have spiritual riches. I want to give you everything that God has given me. I want to take you aside and spend whatever time it takes. I want you to... Right now, in high schools out there, there are coaches who are working their football teams and basketball teams and baseball teams with guys on there who they see great potential. They're doing everything they can to get that kid into a good college where he can be a great ball player. There is nothing wrong with that. Coaches take physical young men who have the ability to play ball sports, and what they do is they give them the extra attention, and they work with them, they fine-tune them, and they see in them something that they don't see in somebody else, because that's what coaches are supposed to look for. So they build in that kid all of his knowledge, all of his years of coaching, and he tries to get that kid the best shot he can when it goes to college, when it goes to wherever he's going, and who knows where it'll lead. Well, that's what I do for you in a spiritual sense. Only I'm not trying to get you into a college; I'm trying to get you to the judgment seat of Christ where you'll stand before God with your family, with everything that God has for you, a full reward. We talked about it last week. I know that to do that, I have to work at giving you those concepts that you need.

Our country is in a terrible mess. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out why it is. America was once built on the core value system of the Word of God, and this is nothing new to you. Our founding fathers believed the Bible, they understood the Bible, and they built the Word of God into the Constitution. They knew that God had delivered them from tyranny. They knew that God... That's why they formed a republic and not a democracy. They wanted God. In fact, the first time the Declaration came in when they wrote it, the fathers looked at it and said, "Not enough references to God. Send it back. Put some more references to God," because the bottom line is we wouldn't be here if God hadn't done for us what God did. Incredible. Those are core values. Yet, at the same time, half of the founding fathers were not even Christians. You see, back then, even the unsaved people had core values. We've come to the place today where Christians, saved people, don't have any core values. That's where we've come from.

I heard on the news last week about a coach in Washington State who quit his job. He was a good coach. They listed all the things this guy had done. Do you know why he was forced to resign? Because he prayed with his ball team before they had a game. The parents were outraged. Somebody called the school board and told them and gave them the fact that there was prayer activity in the school system. He called the National Guard. Prayer activity in the school system! You see? We've lost our core values. Here's a man who would get your kids off drugs. Here's a man who would keep your kids off of drugs. He would give them a good role model. I can't tell you the list of things that this guy had done in the community. Do you know what he said? He said, "I'm not a preacher. I'm just somebody who believes there's a value system that helped

produce the right kind of kid." "Can't have you here." That's what's wrong with us. That's what's wrong with Christianity.

I'm your coach. We're getting ready for a big game. It has nothing to do with the Chiefs. It's called the Game of Life. The devil's pitching, and he's got a fastball that's the most unbelievable thing you ever saw in your life. It will shriek past you so fast that when a catcher does catch it, his glove will catch on fire. We're in the Game of Life. Except the winners and the losers don't go home. The winners go to heaven. The losers die and go to hell. That's the game that we're in. You and I need to understand that we need to prosper spiritually.

Do you know that the Word of God is likened to seven food groups? If you have these things in a physical sense, you could survive.

1. John 4:10-14: The Word of God is likened to water. You have to have water.
2. Luke 4:4: The Word of God is likened to bread. Good, stable.
3. Hebrews 5:12-14: The Word of God is likened to meat. There's your sirloin steak, prime rib, filet mignon.
4. 1 Peter 2:2: The Word of God is likened to milk.
5. Psalms 119:103: It's likened to honey.
6. Proverbs 25:11: It's likened to apples.
7. Psalm 78:24-25: It's likened to vegetables.

Do you know what the Word of God provides for you spiritually? It provides you a balanced diet. It gives you spiritually what you need that your soul may prosper as well as your physical body. Let's face it, we don't eat right physically. We don't grow the way... That's why little kids growing up, mom and dad, don't want to eat the junk food. That's why in America, our kids growing up, America is the most obese country in the world when it comes to children. I know when you get older, you get gland problems and all those kinds of things and medical things add to the thing. I understand that. But when it comes to our children, little kids who look like they have twins in the same pair of pants, it all comes down to the fact that nutrition-wise, we're feeding the wrong thing. The churches are feeding God's people spiritually the wrong things. This country physically is a mess, and spiritually, it's a mess. So he says, "I wish above all things that you were healthy physically and you were healthy spiritually." That's what he wants for them.

Most of God's people don't understand that as a Christian, unconfessed sin in your life can bring about physical illness. You have to read 1 Corinthians 11:29-30. Most young people today don't understand that the rule of thumb for your long life when you get 50, 60, 70, 80, and 90, how God gives you longevity of your life, is based on how you deal with your parents as you're growing up as a teenager when you're 14, 15, and 16. In Ephesians 6:1-3, the Bible says, "Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." It's the first commandment with promise. Do you know what the promise is? If you don't obey them right, God cuts your life short on the other end. How many young people know that? Nobody. What's even worse, when you tell them, they don't care because they have no core values anymore.

V. Gaius's Faithfulness and Charity

Now look at verse 3 and 4. Here's a great side note. Gaius has the truth in him, and he's walking in the truth. He says in verse 4, "no greater joy than my children." That brings us to the place that probably Gaius is a man that John won to Christ because that is his favorite term for his sons in the Lord. Again, we see John winning this guy to the Lord, just like Paul won his Timothy. We see here that this is a guy that probably at some point in his life, John had won to Christ. Now he's looking at him just like Paul looks at his young men, and he says, "my children," showing you that John has an intimate connection with not only Gaius but the church here.

Then he says in verse 5, "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers." That tells me that Gaius was faithful in his ministry. It didn't matter if he was doing something with saved people or he was doing something with lost people. He was faithful in ministry. Faithfulness is the greatest key you can have. Faithfulness to the Word of God first, faithfulness to everything else in its priority level. When you become faithful to the Word of God first and the Lord Jesus Christ, you have those things in your life that whatever God gives you to do, you'll be faithful with it.

In our life, and your life, and my life, it comes down to this: when America and American Christianity lose their core values, they lose their discipline. I grew up in the 50s and 60s, and I remember Christianity even before I got saved, because I went in and out of church all my life. But certainly, as a young man growing up, and my own parents in the church that we were going to, there was a different mindset about God and Christianity. There was a discipline that is missing today. Christians were nowhere near as flaky as they are today. The reason why they're flaky today is because they have no value system in their life. They don't know what it means to be faithful. Some of God's people can't get to church three Sundays in a row. They have everything else in the world going. If you had three Chiefs game tickets in a row, you would be there. If it was what you wanted to do, you would never miss it. But when it comes down to God, we all, in this world we're living in, God is a little world all by Himself that we only get to when nothing else we want to really do is in our way. That's a terrible way to be. That's the way Christianity is today. We have to come to the point that we understand that the watchword for you and for me is faithfulness.

When you take a ministry, like I talked to you boys about the volleyball. It isn't a volleyball league where we're trying to put in the aspect of ministry. No, it's a ministry where you're trying to figure out how to get volleyball into it. You have to be faithful. Those little kids down there, we have to be faithful when we teach. We don't look at it, "Well, it's big church, but when we get down there in the nursery, I just got to do my thing today." No, it's faithful. God says if you're faithful over the little things, He'll make you faithful over the big things. Comes your time to do the nursery? You show up and say, "Oh, am I in there today?" How is God going to trust you with something big when He can't trust you with something that small? Faithfulness is the key. We get so busy with everything else in life, we forget to be faithful with the most important things in life. That's just the way that it is. He's faithful to the brethren and the strangers.

Verse 6 says that he displays charity before the church. Charity, as I've said before, is unconditional giving of yourself to others based on God's unconditional giving to you. That's charity. Gaius is both an example and an exemplar. An example is something that you are. An exemplar is something that you do. We see that he's a good man, and in his life, he is both. He's an example, and he's an exemplar. He does it, and he lives it. That's the key. That is the practical side of where Gaius is and why John loves him.

VI. Diotrophes: A Warning Against Pride

Then we have in 3 John 1:9-14, the study of Diotrophes. This is the contrast of two men. I say this primarily to the men: you need to learn this study. You need to watch this study. Some of you, a year from now, five years from now, and you ladies too, five years from now, if the Lord tarries His coming, or ten years from now, I told you this the other night, you're going to be heading up large areas of ministry. You're going to take a piece of the pie from me, and I'm going to say, "Okay, this is your baby. You're responsible for it. You're accountable for it. I've taught you everything I know." You're going to have eight or nine, ten or twelve, fifteen, two hundred people under you that you're going to have to manage, and you're going to have to be a pastor to them, just like I was a pastor to you. My point is this: the reason why, from a practical standpoint, he talks about Gaius and he talks about Diotrophes is because in the ministry, you find both kinds of people. You find the people that try to help you with everything they can, and you find people who will wind up trying to hurt you. It's just the way that it is.

Let's read about our old buddy Diotrophes here.

3 John 1:9-14

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

There are some great lessons here. I said, now we've seen Gaius, and Gaius represents the Christian the way they should be. Diotrophes represents the other side of that. Let's talk about it and define him for a second. When you read this, I want you to fully understand what I'm saying, because from this point on, with all that God is opening up, and all that God is doing for us, I'm

going to talk in very frank terms to you guys, because I expect you to pick it up. Like we talked about last week, or the week before last, about manning your watch and looking for things that will hurt the work of God, the Diotrephes in life will hurt the work of God.

First of all, I want you to understand, this is not some unsaved guy here. This is not some kid who never comes to church. This is not some kid who has one foot in the world and one foot out in church. No, no, no. The Diotrephes of life will go to church every Sunday. They will never miss. We're not talking about unsaved people here who are hell-raisers that go out on a Saturday night. Diotrephes goes to bed by 9:30, and they're in church every Sunday morning. They wouldn't miss it. But he stands in opposition to what God is trying to do. In this case, John is trying to work with this church, and Diotrephes is against John. I don't understand that. I don't understand why they were against Paul. But it goes to show you it doesn't matter how God chooses you, or it doesn't matter that you may be God's man in any particular ministry that you're in charge of. The Diotrephes don't ever see that.

We're going to detail out this guy, because it's all right here. I want you to understand not only who this guy is, but I want you to understand why he is who he is. It's very simple. You ask yourself, "How in the world has something like this happened?" It's so simple. At some point in his Christian life, Diotrephes quit growing. He quit worrying about the prosperity of his new nature. He quit growing. At some point in his life, he just simply said, "I know a lot of things about the Bible. I even know the Bible." He fell into the trap that the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 8:1, "Knowledge puffeth up." The Bible says in Colossians 2:18 that when we get puffed up, we become fleshy. He fell into the trap of pride. So instead of being John's partner, instead of being John's co-laborer, or as John says in verse 8 of the last verse on Gaius, instead of being a fellow helper, he begins to view John as competition. He begins to view John as someone that he begins to resent.

The answer is so easy. Verse 9 is very instructive. It says, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not." There's the first problem that he's got. He loved the preeminence of men. He loved to walk around the church, and that's why he never misses a Sunday. He wants to walk around the church and say, "Hey, look at me." Now he doesn't walk up and say, "Look at me," but he walks around and he always wants to say, "Look at me." He wants to present himself as someone who knows everything there is to know about the Bible. He wants to present himself as someone that really just... He doesn't do the ministry because he loves God. He does the ministry so he can be recognized as a spiritual giant.

In my life through the ministry in the last 35 years of my life, I've been lucky. If you would turn to my Bible and you'd come to the book of 3 John and you'd look at this story of Diotrephes, you would find there are six names listed. Those six names are the Diotrephes in my life. You would find that there were six men in my life down through my ministry that were to me what Diotrephes was to John. The reason why I do that, because when John wrote this, he said, "I will remember his deeds." I don't ever want to forget the deeds of the Diotrephes that have been in my life because they taught me great lessons. I know that my ministry and my life with God is going to go on for a while until Jesus comes or God takes me home. I know that there are great

opportunities for another Diotrephes to come into my world. Once you smell the Diotrephes, that smell never leaves your nose. There are certain traits that all Diotrephes have. Once you see it and once you recognize it, then it's just a matter of watching out and what takes place.

Verse 10 says that they are "prating against us." Prating means talking much without saying nothing, "with malicious words." Diotrephes' problem is simple. He's jealous of the fact that God has chosen John and is using John. He thinks God made a mistake and should have chosen him. So he maligns John's ministry behind his back always. Diotrephes always works behind your back. That's because Diotrephes in general principle are cowards. That's why they never do anything for God. They always are in this slippery slope of nowhere. That's why it's always behind your back. In every case of those six young men, it was always behind my back. I'm lucky. I know guys that had their whole ministry filled with them.

I'm not telling you this because I'm saying, "Okay, if there's a Diotrephes out there, I want you to know I'm on to you." I don't have any here. We don't have a Diotrephes here. I'm telling you that right up front. So I'm not telling you so I can kind of give you the nudge. I'm telling you so I can give you the nudge. Guys, when you're in charge, watch out for these things because there will be people who will not be your fellow helper in time that will try to sandbag you. I see it a lot of times, not here, but I've seen it in the past when I give a young Christian like Joe or Marion back here, or Steve or one of these guys, when I give you something to do and I put you in charge of it, and some older Christian resents that because they're thinking, "Bob made a mistake. He must have had a brain lapse and forgot that I'm the greatest spiritual giant he ever had." So then you will try to sandbag the young guy that I just put in there because you want to make a statement. You do. You make a statement of how stupid you are. You don't fool anybody. Diotrephes didn't fool anybody because the key is here: fellow laborer, fellow worker, we're all in this to help. It doesn't matter who's in charge.

When I put myself, I'm on Jimmy's volleyball team. Jimmy doesn't have to worry about the fact, "Well, I'm the captain, but Bob's just going to throw his weight around because he's the pastor." No, no, no. I'll sit in a corner and won't say anything until he says, "You can speak, Bob." Do you know why? Because that's what you have to do when a man's in charge. I don't care who I am. If I put you in charge and I'm under you, then I submit myself to you. You tell me what to do, I'll do it. Jimmy wants me to take a wet towel and clean up the baby puke off the floor before we play. I'll give it to my daughters and say, "Yeah, go ahead and do that." I'm submissive. I don't care. The greatest way you teach those things is by example.

I don't know why some of God's people can't see that. Diotrephes is so simple. He's jealous of the fact. He's got the Absalom syndrome. In my counseling format, my counseling ministry, as we get to that point in time, many of you will be introduced to that, and I'll give you my secret formula for dealing with people's problems. Everything I use, I have a syndrome that is found in the Bible. When I have somebody that's got a satanic stronghold they can't break, I have a place that I go in the Bible that the principles and the story show you how to do it. When I have somebody that's in depression, I have a depression syndrome where I go in the Old Testament, shows you a man's in depression, shows you how he got in, shows you how to get out. Everything's that way. I have what I call for my Diotrephes, my Absalom syndrome.

➤ The Absalom Syndrome (2 Samuel 15)

In 2 Samuel 15, the story of Absalom at the gate. Here's how it works: David is king. David is God's man. Absalom was David's man. See already the spiritual thing developing here? Someday you'll be the pastor, you'll be in a ministry, and somebody you won't to Christ will be underneath you, a spiritual son, like David and Absalom. Now Absalom was jealous of David. He was jealous of the blessing that David had in his life. Instead of going to David and saying, "David, I think that I can do things as good as you, and I just think that you need to quit being king and I need to be king," Diotrephes never operates that way. They always operate behind your back.

Do you know what Absalom does? He goes down to the gate. The gate is where everybody comes into the city. Here's what David was doing all day long: David was sitting in his throne room, and people would come in with problems. They would say, "King David, my ex-wife here wants this, and I don't think this is fair," or "My chariot at the old Sonic place down there, and we can't..." David would say, "Okay, now this is what we're going to do." He would make the judgments for the people to solve the problem for the nation of Israel. That was his job. He used the Word of God to do it. Solomon, you'll find later, does the same thing. Obviously, when you have to deal with people, somebody doesn't get what they want. So Absalom was waiting down at the gate, and he'd see the person that came down there that wasn't quite as happy. Absalom would be over there saying, "Hello, brother, how are you today? Why is thy countenance fallen? What happened? You went in to see the king today, how did it go? Praying for you, brother, praying for you. How did it go? Oh, really? Oh, well, that's too bad. You know what? That wasn't right. You ever see how many notes I got in my Bible? You see, now I love David, but David's kind of lost his edge. Oh, if I were king, I would have done it differently. If I were king, I'd fix all the problems that old David. You know, David thinks he's God's man, but he's really not. I'm God's man. Oh, and I feel so burdened for you. I feel your pain, brother. I feel your pain. All I can tell you is if I were king..." Do you know what he tried to do? He tried to steal the hearts of the people from David. That's the Diotrephes.

I want to give you an example. This has happened all my life. This is the best example I know. If it hasn't already happened, it's happened all my life. Somewhere in your life, down the line, you're going to hear this. You're going to grow into the Word of God, you're going to get into the Word of God, you're going to start to take a stand, and then you're going to bump into the Diotrephes. The Diotrephes are going to say something to you like this: "Oh, I see. Well, you know what? You don't want to turn into a Bob-ite. You don't want to turn into an Alexander-ite. Bob, he has a way of just... You want to stay... You want to be your own man. You don't want to become made in the image of Bob. You really have to be careful." All my life, from day one of the ministry, I've heard people telling my people that I were teaching the Bible with, "Brother, you better be careful following a man."

I had one of my boys years ago, in the ministry now, love him to death. He stopped talking to one of these Diotrephes one time, and the Diotrephes said, "Well, you believe that King James Bible is the Word of God?" My young man says, "You betcha I do, cover to cover." And he said, "Well, you're just following a man. A man told you it was the Word of God." My boy looked up and said, "Who told you it wasn't?" Everybody who says, "You're following a man," is following

somebody. Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." You're going to follow somebody, that's God's plan. He said to Paul, "Take what I've committed to you and commit the faithful men, that they may teach others also, which was heard of you by many witnesses." That's God's plan. All I can tell you is this: make sure you're following the right guy. That's all. My philosophy of life, if you can find somebody who will teach you the Word of God better, be more honest with you than I will, and love you better than I will, drop me like a bad habit and go for it. I'm honest. I have no problem with it. Somebody says, "Aren't you afraid these guys will come in and steal your people?" Let me tell you something: if you can steal my people, you can have them. I have nothing. This is no competition for me. I asked God to build around me men and women who wanted to put on the gear, get in the trenches, and fight. Too much battle for you, I understand. Can't straddle the battle and hit the paddle. I heard Snoop Dogg say that, I like it.

Let me translate this for you, this "Bob-ite, Alexander-ite, and follow the man" stuff. Let me translate for you: "I'm jealous because people are following him, and they won't look at me, and I'm really spiritual. Don't you know that I'm spiritual?" I have a guy right now, I trained him in the ministry, a good man. He runs a church of about 250 people. I have another boy that I trained in the ministry. He's on my Diotrephes list. This boy, I always suspected this kid. You never really know what a person is made of in the ministry until they get out on their own. This boy went to the mission field, failed in the mission field, came back, lined up with my other buddy, and this guy now, and he always was this way, he's come to the place where he's the great spiritual guru of the world. He left my buddy's church and went out and started his own church. He's now running probably the magnanimous number of probably 9 or 10. Magnanimous is a wonderful word. I don't know what it means, but it fits in a lot of things that I say. About two years after he left my buddy's church, he calls my buddy on the phone, and he says, "We have lunch together." My buddy says, "Well, sure, yeah." He's just down with my buddy, and he says, "I really want to help you." My buddy says, "Okay, how?" And he says, "You know, God has showed me things that He never showed Bob. He showed me things that He never showed Mel, Mel Spott." And he says, "Brother, I just want to help you minister to your people in your church." Now get this, this kid's running 9, my guy's running 300. Diotrephes. I mean, I don't know what else to tell you. It's one of those things where he's saying, "Don't you know? I want your people to follow. I want people to follow." The only way he's building a church is he goes into these churches, and he pulls the young Christians aside, and he starts downplaying my buddy, telling him that he's lost touch. "Oh, he's so busy. He doesn't have time to minister to you. I will be your spiritual guru." Absalom at the gate. Do you know what? He'll never build a church. He hasn't got the courage to build a church. He hasn't got the character to build a church. All he's going to do all his life, because he's so puffed up with what he thinks he knows. He said to me one time, "You think you know more about the Bible than I think you know more about the Bible and the world." I said, "No, I don't, but I do know this: I know more about it than you do." I'm telling you, his whole life he's going to walk around thinking he's this gigantic spiritual Goodyear blimp that he's got all the answers of truth in life. I'm telling you, they're out there.

I look at that thing and I think to myself, I learned some things over the years.

➤ Historical Examples of "Following a Man"

- About 150 AD, there was a guy by the name of Manes. All the spiritual gurus around him were departing from the Word of God, and Manes said, "You know what? I'm sticking with the Book." The people in his church and people in other places said, "We're with him." They broke from the norm that day or that time period of 150 AD. All those Bible-believing groups that said, "We're staying with the Word of God," the opposition looked at him and said, "Oh, you're following a man." They called him Manichaeans after Manes.
- In 160 AD, there was a guy by the name of Novatian. Novatian was a saved Bible-believing man. He followed the old Latin manuscripts out of Antioch and Syria. The world around him, the Christian world, was collapsing, and the whole world was going into that evangelical mindset of the day. Novatian said, "I ain't going. I'm sticking with the Book." Novatian believed the same thing you and I believe. His people were called Novatians because they're following a man.
- In 180 AD, you had another guy by the name of Nestorius, same scenario. His followers were called Nestorians.
- Around 1200 AD, you had a man by the name of Henry of Lausanne, who was taking a stand against a corruption in the Roman Catholic Church. The hierarchy at that time said, "You're following a man," and they called his people Henrycans.
- Around 1300, there was a bunch of believers that said, "Hey, we're not following the teachings of Peter like the Roman Catholic Church is. No, no, no. We know that the New Testament was written by Paul, three quarters of it, and that's the doctrine of the Church." Somebody said, "You're just following a man," so they called him Paulicians. See how it works?
- In 1850, evolution was coming in, and all the great Bible teachers were heading for the rocks. They all were dumping the Book, and there was one guy during this period of time whose name was Darby, and he taught the gap just like we teach it. He taught the six years, little creation, thousand years, like we believe it. He believed the Bible, and he is the only guy during that time that takes a stand for the Book, and they call his followers Darbyites.
- You and I are sitting here today in a New Testament Bible-believing Baptist Church. We're independent, or dependent, however you want to look at it. Some of us are codependent, but anyway, we're to the place where we're not connected with any organization. We're not a member of the Southern Baptist. We're not a member of the General Baptist. We're not members of anything. We're about as renegade ragtag as you can get. If you want to find where we're at in the Bible, go back there with David, and we're the guys at the cave of Adullam. Just a bunch of old broken-down wrecks that all got together with a guy that kept their mind on Christ, and they taught him the Bible. When we come out of this thing, we're here today because back in the 19th and 1930s, there was a man that took a stand against the organized Baptist departure from the truth, and he took such a stand, and he was such a wild man that they called him the Texas Tornado. His name was J. Frank Norris, and he led the demise of the Southern Baptist and the exodus of every fundamental Baptist church on the planet today, and the followers that followed him were called Norrisites.

- Down in Pensacola, Florida, there's a man that I wouldn't have my Bible today if it wasn't for that man. You wouldn't have it either, nor would about 100 million other young men who believed the Bible is the Word of God. His name is Peter S. Ruckman. Peter Ruckman, in the last days of the Laodicean age, is the last Philadelphian soldier that I know of that has taken a stand unequivocally that will die believing what he believed when he got saved. He's the only one that's standing up for the truth. He's the reason why we have our Bible, why I have my Bible, and why 9 million men have the Word of God around this world today, and they call me and you Ruckmanites.

So when somebody calls you a Bob-ite or an Alexander-ite, you are in good company with history in the church because everybody follows somebody. The Diotrephes want you to follow them, and because they want the preeminence of men, they don't like you following somebody else, so they slander that person, they're malicious to that person, and they'll try to set that person down so they can set themselves up. Do you have them? Let me tell you something. The Diotrephes never died out with this guy. Paul had the same problem. He said, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil." He said Demas had forsaken him. The church at Corinth was against him. Hymenaeus was against him, and that's why he says down here, "I will remember his deeds," because you don't want to get blindsided. Diotrephes are so easy to spot. Their insecurity just reeks all over the place. Anytime you're going to tell somebody how spiritual you are, you're in trouble. You're in trouble. The Diotrephes will always be around, so what you do is you recognize their great spiritual gifts, you recognize what great spiritual giants they are, you recognize that truth and truth alone rest with them, you recognize God has set them up and given them the great deep secrets of the Bible, and then you put them back in their high chair, you fasten their bib on, you give them a little milk, you pat them on the head, and then you pick up your weapon and then you man your post. Because Diotrephes will never be there. He can't ever hit the foxhole. He can't figure out those little things on the side of the high chair to get it off.

From a practical standpoint, you have two guys. I'm telling you that because men, as you grow, as you take responsibility, you're going to run into both. Our church is full of Gaiuses. I'm happy as can be. My Diotrephes are in the history of my life. God protects me from them now. He just doesn't let them come. When they are here, they're out. He doesn't mess with it. He's got His hand on us in a peculiar way. We cannot take that for granted in any way, shape, or form. That's why we've got to understand that the Gaiuses that we have, they are the blessings of my heart and of my soul. Maybe you're not where you ought to be, but I'll get you there. Just listen to your coach. I'll put you in the game, but you've got to learn the fundamentals of the playbook.

VII. Doctrinal Application: Wise and Foolish Israel

Now, doctrinally, 3 John puts it all together in his last book dealing with the epistles here before he writes the book of Revelation. He really hits on the sub-theme of the Bible doctrinally. This is very important. If you have any experience at all in the Bible, even just starting in it, it'll be easy for you to see how the Bible is built around two men: a wise man and a foolish man. The wise man is a man who finds the truth of God. The foolish man is someone who stays a fool and rejects the truth of God. It's just that simple. Even in that, there are some good practical lessons.

Doctrinally, these two men are the two aspects of the nation of Israel. The Gentile world is made up of two kinds of people: saved and unsaved. The nation of Israel is also made up of two kinds of people: wise and foolish. That's what we're going to talk about. Gaius represents that wise man. He represents the nation of Israel as the wise man. Diotrefes represents the nation of Israel as the foolish man. You can't miss this great truth. It's the whole Bible.

You come to the book of Psalms. The whole book of Psalms is about two men: a wise man and a foolish man.

Psalms 14:1

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

You see the two? A wise man and a foolish man. All through the book of Psalms.

You take the book of Proverbs. It's about two men: a wise man and a foolish man. The wise man in the book of Proverbs stays with God and becomes a virtuous woman in Proverbs 31.

Proverbs 1:5

A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

Proverbs 15:5

A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

Now that's true in a practical sense. It's true of... You see, when Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs, he writes it to a son. That son is Rehoboam. Do you know who Rehoboam is in the Bible? He's one of the biggest fools anywhere in the Bible. His father embraced the Word of God, Rehoboam rejected the Word of God. His father is the wisest man in the Bible. Rehoboam bears the title of biggest fool in the Bible. He messes up Israel so bad they never recover.

The book of Ecclesiastes is the same way.

Ecclesiastes 10:2

A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left.

The Bible's filled with the example, all dealing with the type of the nation of Israel. All the way back in Genesis: Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Abraham and Lot, Isaac and Israel, Saul and Samuel, David and Absalom, Solomon and Rehoboam. One's wise, one's foolish.

This wise, foolish concept is a picture of the nation of Israel at the second coming of Christ. That's why when you come into the Gospel in Matthew 7:24-29, it tells you the story of two men. One's a wise man, one's a foolish man. The wise man builds his house upon a rock.

Matthew 7:24-29

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

That rock is the Lord Jesus Christ. When the winds come and the rain comes, a picture of the Tribulation period, that house, the house of Israel, is firmly implanted on the rock. The other man, the foolish man, builds his house, the house of Israel, on the sand. Sand's a picture of this world. Rocks in the Bible are always a picture of God. Rocks are God-made. Rocks stick for the stability of God. So when a man builds upon a rock, he's building upon God. When a man builds upon the sand, sand shifts. Sand's never the same. Sand doesn't hold any weight. Sand shifts underneath of you. The wind blows it everywhere it goes. It changes shape. It changes form. It changes stability. It loses stability. When it's wet, it's strong. When it dries out, you'll sink in it. Sand is not what you want to build upon, but it is a picture of the nation of Israel building themselves upon the sand.

The most famous example is in Matthew 25:1-10.

Matthew 25:1-10

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and for you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

Picture of the second coming of Christ. Picture of the two types of the nation of Israel. Excuse me, two types of Jews in the nation of Israel. One of them is wise. They follow God. They get into the Word of God. They do what's right. One's foolish. They never follow it. One builds their house on a rock. The other one builds it on the sand.

So you're going to find that when John writes 3 John, he writes it from that standpoint. He lays it out from the standpoint that everything is built on those two concepts. In the body of Christ, you have men like Gaius and men like Diotrephes. You have one that's a wise man, one that's a foolish man. In the doctrinal arena, you have the nation of Israel. Within that nation, there are men who are going to be wise and do what the Word of God says. There's going to be men that are foolish and build their house upon the sand. It's as simple as that. But that's how the book lays out. All of it comes back to the practical side of it. All of it comes down to this: where have you, as an individual, built your house today? Is your house, your body, built on the foundation of the Word of God? Or is it built on the shifting sands of this whole world, which change from day to day? Sand changes. Rock never does.