

## **3 John 1-8 Christianity is Missions 10/28/18**

*The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.*

*<sup>2</sup> Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. <sup>3</sup> For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. <sup>4</sup> I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. <sup>5</sup> Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, <sup>6</sup> who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. <sup>7</sup> For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup> Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.*

(Pastor prays)

I love to see our church working and serving. I love to hear about the thousands of man-hours that went into Operation Charlotte. I love to see families engage together in selfless Gospel-driven work. I'm thankful to be a part of a church that believes in the power of the Gospel and who are willing to raise our children to see missions as a higher endeavor and a goal to reach, to know that hundreds of thousands of our hard-earned dollars are going to support and start Gospel work, to think that it's not uncommon for families to pick up and move to other cities to live the Gospel and plant churches...Or to hear about high-school and college students forgoing lucrative careers to give themselves to a life of mission or ministry.

I thank God that He has given us hard-working men and women who trudge through every day in jobs they hate in order to fund and pay for others to live on mission in foreign lands. In fact, that's what verse 8 in this passage says. We ought to support people like these, missionaries, so that we may be fellow workers for the truth. Let that encourage you when you feel like your job isn't Gospel friendly.

This text is a great text for those of us who want to be on the front line of missions or ministry but for whatever reason can't be. According to verse 8, every one of you who prays for, supports the church, and gives to + 1 missions, is a fellow worker in the Gospel. We are in this Gospel mission together. Let me slow down and give context to this passage. 3 John is the second shortest book in the Bible, and it's the only letter the Apostle John wrote addressing a person by name. That man is Gaius, who was probably mentored by John. Gaius is a leader in his church and John is writing to encourage him because he and his church had received brothers who were missionaries. He and his church welcomed them, supported them, showed hospitality and love and sent them out for the Gospel mission. This is a great +1 passage because in this small letter we are reminded that...

### **Our Lives are Lived for the Sake of the Name of Jesus**

We need to take this passage and examine ourselves and our Christianity. Since Christianity is missions, let's approach it like that.

### **Christians Live Spiritually**

Notice how the letter begins and what John says. Notice the real affection in verses 1-2. *The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.*

See the word “beloved”? It is said twice here and again in verse 5 and in verse 11, four times in this passage. It can be translated as “dear friend” or “dear brother.” It signifies the bond that two Christians have with one another. In verse 1, you will notice it is the truth of God in Christ that binds John and Gaius together. Here is a real Christian friendship and fellowship that is centered around the Gospel mission.

One of the great beauties of being a Christian is Christian friendship. Christian friendship always goes beyond the “I hope” and goes to the “I pray.” Look what John is praying for in verse 2. *Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.* He is praying that all goes well and that he may be as healthy physically as he is spiritually. John is saying, “I know you're doing well spiritually; I hope that physically you will do as well.” So when I pray for you, I'm gonna pray that you are doing as well physically as you are doing spiritually.

Now for some of you, that's good news, but for others of you, that means you'd better tighten up a little bit. In those Christian friendships, there is a real concern and genuine pressing toward walking with Jesus and being on Gospel mission. All too often we don't press into the strength of our Christian friendships enough. Those of you who have done mission work together and have been on mission trips together, know the genuine bond that forms around living the Gospel. And part of our ongoing press toward spiritual maturity and mission is to use the God-given joy of fellowship for the God-given call to mission. It's what the cause of Jesus does: it takes our natural relationships and turns them to supporting mission. As Christians we are called to frame everything spiritually so that our fellowship becomes missional and our friendships are spirited after the cross. Christians live spiritually.

## **Christians Walk Truthfully**

To see this, let's read verses 1-4, and as I do, notice how many times you hear the word “truth.” *The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.*

*<sup>2</sup> Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. <sup>3</sup> For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. <sup>4</sup> I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*

Four times. John is commending Gaius for walking in truth. In verse 3, the missionaries had evidently told John that Gaius was walking in truth. The entire missionary endeavor is tied to the truth of the Gospel. Ours is not a purely humanitarian mission. Ours is a Gospel truth mission. To be faithful in mission is to be faithful to the truth of the Gospel. So much of what the Apostle John writes is a defense of Gospel truth.

So when I say “Gospel truth,” what do I mean? We use four categories to describe the Gospel. We start with God. God is holy and the creator of man. That is the second category: man created in the image of God. We trust that every person here is made in the image of God and that's why I have a command of God in my life to respect you as someone created in the image of God. But that image is disfigured by sin. God's holiness is the first category. Man is a sinner and therefore, he is separated from God. This is what we believe about the Gospel, that Jesus came to live perfectly. As being fully God and fully man, he live perfectly and then died in the place of sinners, taking

the wrath of God. And in doing so, purchased sinners so that He paid for all the sins of every sinner. He did that on the cross. So that's the Gospel message but it requires a fourth category.

That fourth category is where the Gospel becomes reality for you. That category is you turning from your sin — we call that repentance — and believing in what Jesus Christ has done on the cross for you. We are driven by the fact that people without Christ will live unredeemed. They will die unconverted. We live with such urgency because God has saved us and called us to Gospel mission, truth mission. Listen, good deeds without the truth is the social Gospel. Truth without good deeds is hypocrisy. Verse 3 gives great evidence of what it looks like to be a healthy Christian. You need to be faithful in what you believe, faithful to how you live, and faithful to the Gospel mission. Christians live spiritually. Christians walk truthfully.

## **Christians Serve Faithfully**

Now we get into the heart of mission involvement in verses 5 - 6. *Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, <sup>6</sup> who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.*

The brothers and strangers are the missionaries. In verse 5, Gaius has shown remarkable hospitality to the missionaries, even though they are strangers. He gave them food, lodging, money and encouragement. We learn a couple of things from verses 5 - 6. See the little phrase “in all your efforts”? This teaches us that God is glorified when we support our missionaries and the mission. And we do so substantially with our prayers and our money and our time and in a hundred other ways.

And in verse 6 it shows in how we send them out. You see the language in verse 6. I want you to take the second half of that verse and break it down into two pieces. You will do well to send them on their journey.

You see missionaries are to be received, refreshed, provided for, encouraged, developed, sent, and celebrated. They are servants of God and must be treated accordingly. Not only that, the little phrase “send them on their way” is a technical term for early Christian missionaries. It implies the assumption of financial responsibility.

And to finish out the verse, we are to do so in a manner that is worthy of God. That little phrase reminds us that the name of God is at stake in how we are to think of missions and our involvement in missions, that we send missionaries out in a manner worthy of God. This elevates the sending and the idea of “living sent” to the absolute highest levels. Christians serve faithfully. This means that we are genuinely invested in Christ, His church, and His mission. This leads me to my last point.

## **Christians Minister Passionately**

In verse 7, the reason for being responsible for the missionaries is finally given. They have gone out for the sake of the name, a deliberate setting out on a mission to further the name of Jesus. And this is a greater cause than anything else we could ever give ourselves too. Our world is filled with such hatred, political animosity and racial bigotry.

And all too often Christians get caught up in it. And when your politics outstrips your Christianity, then you've lost sight of your Gospel purpose.

Here is a shining moment for the church. In the midst of all the hatred, political rhetoric, and racial tension, in the middle of that darkness, believers in Jesus are called to be light, to live for the sake of the name, to see our allegiance to Christ as superior to every other allegiance, be it race or politics; to view every human as an image-bearer of the living God and any Christian as a dear brother or sister in Christ.

The Gospel frees us from hate, but it constrains us to love. It demands us crucifying everything for the sake of the name. This has been an especially hate-filled week in our country. And our country, and our city, needs the Lord's Day, a day when people of all kinds come together in love for one another and worship the living God and do so for the sake of the name.

And verse 8 promises that when we give ourselves to mission, when we support missions financially and give sacrificially, we become fellow workers for the truth. And it is the truth of the love of God in Jesus Christ that drives us to keep having hope. Our lives are lived for the sake of the name of Jesus.

*(Pastor prays)*