

Encourage One Another

Reading: 3rd John

- There are three people that John talks about in his 3rd Letter: Gaius, Diotrephes and Demetrius

- It would be great to have a reputation like Demetrius...

- In verse 12 John writes,

12) Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

- You couldn't ask for a better thing to be said of you...

- Unlike Diotrephes, who John has very little good to say

- In verse 9 John writes,

9) I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.

- John plans to speak to Diotrephes, and try to set him right

- But, it is the third person mentioned in the letter that we would like to focus on today - the one it was addressed to

- John says some really lovely things to Gaius in the first six verses

- And in doing so, John gives all of us some very clear and simple advice on how to encourage one another, and I would like that to be the subject of our exhortation this morning:

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

2) Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well w/ your soul

3) For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.

4) I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

5) Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are,

6) who testified to your love before the church.

- John is writing to a specific person, Gaius, someone that John knew very well, but I believe that this is a text we can use as a template on how to encourage one another

- I see four specific ways that we can encourage one another from these verses:

- 1) Affirm Your Love for Them (Verse 1)
- 2) Pray for Their Physical and Spiritual Health (Verse 2)
- 3) Express Joy for Their Obedience (Verses 3 & 4)
- 4) Commend Them for Their Good Deeds (Verses 5 & 6)

- 1) Affirm Your Love for Them

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

- Notice how the first thing John does to encourage his friend is to tell others how much he loves Gaius
- Notice how John refers to Gaius over and over as his “beloved”?
- He says it in Verse 1, repeats it in Verse 2, and he even repeats it a third time in Verse 5
- He even tells his readers very directly in Verse 1 that he loves Gaius in truth
- So, four separate times, John affirms his love in public for his friend
- I wish we knew more about who Gaius was
- There are other New Testament references to men named Gaius, one of which was a traveling companion of Paul in Acts 19 & 20
- There may be at least two or three different men named Gaius, so it must have been a fairly common name
- We have no reason to believe that John’s Gaius is the same person as Paul’s Gaius
- All we have to go on is what John says about him here
- What John does say though, is that he loves Gaius deeply, and that would no doubt surely be a tremendous encouragement to him!
- I know it would be an encouragement to me and I suspect it would be to you too!

- It isn't enough that your Brothers and Sisters assume that you love them; you have to affirm your love for them by explicitly expressing it to them!
- Whether you use terms of endearment, like "beloved," as John does here, or you specifically tell people you love them, it is an important element in how to encourage one another!
- Do you express your love for fellow believers?
- How do you do so?
- Are the believers around you encouraged with your expressions of love toward them?
- Do they know that you love them?
- How do they know?
- If there is any question in their minds, encourage them by telling them of your love and showing tangibly your love for them

2) Pray for Their Physical and Spiritual Health

"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."

- The second way that we can encourage one another is to pray for their physical and spiritual health
- Notice that John prays that because of his love for Gaius, he wants him therefore to prosper ("that all may go well with you"), first in this obviously general sense, and then he adds more specifically that Gaius would be in "good health," even "as it goes well with his soul"
- It could be that this was a wishful prayer with John not having any specific reason to be concerned about Gaius' health, or it could be that word had reached John that his friend's health was not so good
- What's even more important, is that John goes on to pray also that Gaius would be "well of soul"
- "Soul" as you know in the Greek is psyche, which is where we derive the word psychology
- John not only prays for Gaius' physical health, but he prays for his spiritual health as well, that is, the core of his being and relationship with God

- Certainly John wants him to be physically healthy, just as you and I would want all our own Brothers and Sisters to be physically healthy
- But far more important than the issue of our physical health, is the need for us be spiritually rich and healthy at our innermost core!
- We can spiritually prosper when our health isn't the best; but it is of the utmost importance to never allow ourselves to become sick on the inside
- Whatever would threaten us in either dimension is an opportunity to pray for one another
- John's prayer should give us pause: What if such a prayer was made to God for me and it was answered?
- What condition would I find myself in physically and spiritually?
- Did you ever compare your bodily health to your spiritual health?
- Too often people give a lot more attention to their Physical Health, when in reality it is their Spiritual Health that is much more important
- What an encouragement it is when our Brothers and Sisters are concerned enough about us that they spend their precious time in prayer for both our physical and spiritual needs!
- Do you pray for others in these ways?
- How often do you lift up your Brothers and Sisters in prayer?
- Are your prayers balanced between their Physical and Spiritual needs?
- Do you find yourself focusing more of your petitions upon the physical arena of a person's life rather than the spiritual?
- Or, do you find yourself praying only for the spiritual aspects of a Christian friend and neglect their physical needs?
- One sure way to encourage fellow saints is in the area of concentrated prayers for both their material and immaterial needs

3) Express Your Joy for Their Obedience

“For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”

- The third element of how you can encourage others is to express your joy for their obedience to God
- This is something that I've never thought much about before, but did you notice how John mentioned in Verse 1 that he loves Gaius *"in truth"*?
- He says in Verse 3 that certain Brothers and Sisters known to both John and Gaius had been giving testimony to John of Gaius' personal commitment to the truth
- John then encourages Gaius directly and sincerely and truthfully by saying that he knows him to be "walking in the truth"
- It's great to see that John doesn't just mention the fact that Gaius was "walking in the truth", but he says he "rejoiced greatly"
- In verse 4, he says: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth"
- Isn't that the truth!?!
- There is no greater joy than to see your own physical or spiritual children walking in obedience to the truth!
- Do you express your joy for the obedience you see being lived out in the lives of the spiritual children in our Ecclesia?
- How much do they hear of your negativity toward them, as opposed to your joy at their positive steps in Christ?
- When you see genuine obedience and the positive steps of a pattern of walking in the truth, express your joy to those who are doing so!
- It might seem awkward at first, but I'm sure that the more you do it, the more comfortable it will become
- It may even be one of the things the Lord uses instrumentally to cause further spiritual growth in them!

4) Commend Them for Their Good Deeds

"Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church."

- The fourth and final step that we'll talk about today in encouraging one another is to commend them for their faithful efforts toward other believers
- John tells Gaius that it is a faithful thing he does in all his various ministry efforts for fellow Brothers and Sisters who are laboring in the Gospel work and who have come to Gaius for help
- It is easier to serve those we know and who we readily and easily love and appreciate; it is much more challenging however to reach out in ministry to those who are perfect strangers!
- Remember that these people were strangers to Gaius, that is, people whom he had never met yet who were his Brothers and Sisters in the faith
- Even though he had never met them, they came to him for help and were now being ministered to by him, and John was now hearing from them and was so encouraged by Gaius' outreach to them!
- What John heard about Gaius was the fact that he was met in his home or church by these strangers, and they were so served by him, that they went right back to John and testified to Gaius' love and service!
- What a remarkable testimony!
- To Gaius, these men and women were strangers no longer!
- They were precious Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and when they had real needs, he loved them with selfless service, and it overwhelmed them!
- We can be like John and look around us to our Brothers and Sisters and take note of the good things that they are doing
- We can encourage them by commending them for their acts of faithfulness, their acts of loving kindness and their acts of service to the strangers in their lives
- Do you want to see a picture of the opposite of Gaius?
- Look at this man Diotrephes in verse 10:

"He refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church."
- These two 1st Century Brethren - Gaius and Diotrephes -couldn't be more opposite!
- One is very loving and serves complete strangers because they are his true Brothers and Sisters in Christ

- The other couldn't be more self-centered and refuses to serve the Brethren who come by for his help!
- One in condemned by John, and will get what he has coming
- The other is commended for his faithful and loving actions to his Brothers and Sisters
- How scary it would have been for Diotrephes to hear John say that he was going to have to have words with him
- How encouraging it would have been for Gaius to hear John Commend him for his Good Deeds
- How encouraging it would have been for Gaius to hear John express Joy for his Obedience
- How encouraging it would have been for Gaius to hear that John was praying for both his Physical and his Spiritual well being
- How encouraging it would have been for Gaius to hear John Affirm his Love for Him
- We don't know much this man named Gaius
- For all we know this is the only occurrence of this particular individual in the Bible
- But, we can rest assured that with the kind of encouragement that he received from John, he would have gone on to become a wonderful Brother
- We can be sure that Gaius would have become well known in his Ecclesia for the good things that he did for others because John took the time to Encourage One Another
- Let us also take time in our day to Encourage One Another
- As we close, we turn our thoughts to our Lord and Savior, Jesus, who we are here to remember today
- We remember in this Bread and Wine that he died for us that we might obtain Salvation, and our thoughts turn to 1st Thessalonians Chapter 5:

- 9) *For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*
- 10) *who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.*
- 11) *Therefore **encourage one another** and build one another up, just as you are doing.*