

Applying the Truths of 3John to our Lives

v. 1 – “The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.”

The primary point to be made from this expression is that John has given himself to the encouragement, teaching, exhortation, and building up of Yeshua’s people, and this is the true expression of love, for it is doing all in one’s power to cause the eternal truth of God to blossom in the lives of those who confess Him as their Lord and Savior. “To love in truth” means not only to have a genuine love for them, but it also means to love them in full harmony with the truth as it is found in the self-revelation of God in the Scriptures and ultimately through His Son, Yeshua.

v. 2 – **Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.**

Note that in addressing Gaius this way, John has indicated his assurance that the soul of his beloved friend is indeed prospering (*εὐοδῶ*, *euodōō*),¹ and that he therefore hopes that his body is equally in good health. There is something to ponder here: How often in our modern world do we pay far more attention to our physical well-being and at the same time neglect the necessary means of grace by which we grow and remain healthy in our walk with the Lord and with others?

vv. 3–4 – **For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.**

That the Apostles regularly use the metaphor of “walking” to describe the life of faith is the very basis for the common word *halachah*, from the Hebrew הָלַךְ (*hālach*), “to walk.” Rather than nit-picking over the minutiae of the later rabbinic prescriptions, we should take pains to be sure that our *halachah*, our manner of “walking,” is patterned after the manner in which Yeshua walked.

Here, once again, John is describing faith that is real because it is demonstrated by one’s actions. He does not write about faith as merely an inward agreement with the truth, but as that which flows from the heart to one’s whole life: thought,

1 The verb *εὐοδῶ* is found only two other times in the Apostolic Scriptures: Rom 1:10; 1Cor 16:2.

word, and deed. As far as the Scriptures are concerned, faith without works is no faith at all.

vv. 5–6 – Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; and they have testified to your love before the *ekklesia*. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.

I would further suggest that some of these “strangers” who had been welcomed by Gaius and the community of believers of which he was a part, may have been Gentiles who had been disciplined in other believing communities and then sent out as itinerant teachers to help other communities of “The Way” in implementing the decree of the Jerusalem council to accept Gentile believers as bona fide members of the *ekklesia*.

Here, once again, we see how the Apostolic teaching regarding the equality of Jew and Gentile within the believing community was of utmost importance for accomplishing the commission given to them by Yeshua. Making disciples of all the nations by teaching them to observe all that He had commanded them surely would have necessitated the voice of spiritually mature Gentile believers as well. Such trained leaders would have played an important role in helping new Gentile believers to integrate into the believing community as fulfilling the promise of the ingathering of the nations (Gen 12:3; Matt 9:38; Lk 10:2; Matt 28:19–20).

vv. 7–8 – For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

These disciples who were sent out to minister to communities remote from their own homes did so voluntarily, and for “the sake of the Name.” Here, the Greek word *ὄνομα* (*onoma*, “name”) is almost certainly used by John as a metonym to denote Yeshua Messiah. Some understand John’s use of “the Name” in this text to refer both to Yeshua as well to the Father. But the weight of the evidence shows that John uses “the Name” specifically of Yeshua as the One Who is the Head of the *ekklesia* and the very One Who promised to build it as His own (Matt 16:18).

When the believing community supports those who voluntarily labor in their midst, they too are giving glory to God through their obedience to His commandments and thus join the teachers and leaders as workers for the truth.

This is an important truth that has been lost or at least diminished among a large part of the wider “Christian Church” in our times. For the work of making disciples, teaching others, evangelizing the lost, etc., is not to be envisioned as in the hands of a few teachers or leaders, but is that to which every believer in the community is to be connected. “Fellow workers” (*συνεργοί, sunergoi*) means that all combine their abilities and their means in order to accomplish the task. This means engaging in prayer, encouragement, putting hands to particular tasks, sharing that which is needed for the success of the whole, etc.

And what is the ultimate goal of being fellow workers together? It is that the truth of Yeshua as our Lord, Savior, and King, might be made known to a watching world, portraying the riches of salvation He has procured for all who will believe. Rather than being spectators in the community, John exhorts us all to see ourselves as “fellow workers for the truth.”

v. 9–10 – I wrote something to the *ekklesia*; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the *ekklesia*.

We see then, that Diotrephes stands as a very early example of someone who sought to overturn the Apostolic teaching regarding leadership within the *ekklesia*, and who likewise tried to dismiss the authority of the Apostles themselves. And we should note that John considers the situation with Diotrephes as requiring public rebuke as well as a clear warning not to be persuaded by his errant teaching. While we must do so with caution and wisdom, we too must point out those who are teaching a message contrary to the Scriptures, and warn each other not to be ensnared by those who pedal man’s own ideas as though they were God’s or who twist the Scriptures to fit their own agendas.

v. 11 – For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the *ekklesia*.

By the time John is writing his epistles, the authority of the

Apostles as embodied in their written letters and gospels, was received as the inspired word of God, even if central councils of leaders had not yet publicly decreed them to be so. Thus, for Diotrephes to deny those teachers who were carrying the Apostles' teaching, was likewise to deny the very authority of Yeshua in His having commissioned His Apostles, and thus to deny their epistles and writings as having divine authority. In essence, John warns Gaius not to follow or imitate those who, like Diotrephes, had dismissed the Apostles as having no true authority from God Himself.

And we must likewise be warned. For in the Torah movement there are increasing numbers of false teachers who are teaching that all or some of the Apostolic Scriptures are not to be received as having divine authority, i.e., are not to be considered Scripture. The schemes of the enemy are the same, regardless of the era.

v. 12 – Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

Once again, we may take the inspired words of this epistle and apply the principles they teach to our own lives and situation. Those who would take on the responsibility of teaching others cannot expect their words to have God's blessing unless their lives conform to the righteousness of the message they intend to teach. May the Lord grant us, in this Torah movement, to raise up workers, servants, and teachers of integrity so that the word of God would go forth both in word and life.

vv. 13–15 – I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

Thus both the greeting and salutation of "Shalom" is expressing one's hope for the good things to surround the one who has come or who is leaving. But among the followers of Yeshua, the word took on additional, spiritual significance, for true shalom is found in the finished work of Yeshua, making eternal redemption for all who have believed and will believe in Him as the promised Savior. To have "peace with God" is the ultimate shalom, for it not only brings settled hope and joy in this life, but is the very means by which we have life in the world to come.