

# BEWARE OF VISITING PREACHERS!

(Scripture: 3 John 1:1-4)

## Introduction:

Last week when I spoke from 2 John, we came across some false teachers. John warns us about them in this manner:

### 2 John 7,8,10

*7For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

*8Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.*

*10If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting.*

Note the word, **“they have gone into the world”**. That means, these heretics became more organized, and they were determined to take their false message to the whole world including various faith-based congregations! It is extremely difficult to know the theology of a new preacher. They could very well be speaking about Jesus, but it may be a different kind of Jesus.

Now in 3 John, Diotrephes, a leader in that church, takes a stance of not allowing even genuine preachers because of it! John was upset about blocking his own people. What should a pastor do if a visiting pastor wants to speak in your church? This is a very sensitive, difficult topic. Any pastor will have tremendous headache over this decision! It can cause a lot of commotion in the church one way or the other! Let us try to understand the complexity of this problem from 3 John!

### 3 John 1:1.

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

We are not sure who this Gaius is. There are 4 Gaius mentioned in the Bible.

There was a Gaius, a Macedonian during the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:29)

There was a Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20:4)

There was a Gaius of Corinth who had been Paul’s host! He was such a hospitable guy, he could be called the host of the whole church! (Romans 16:23) He was one of the very few people whom Paul had personally baptized!

Gaius was a very common name, just like “Jones” in western world. Gaius mentioned in this book may be a different Gaius!

This Gaius was –

- well loved.
- walked in the truth!
- brought joy to other believers through his life.
- helped Christian believers and strangers! was very strong in hospitality.

But note the phrase, **“whom I love in truth!”** What does John mean by that?

He loves Gaius dearly because of Jesus Christ, who is the truth, the way, and life!  
His love for Gaius is very special because of the Holy Spirit in Him, the Spirit of Truth!  
Truth is very special for both of them because they both read the same Word of God, which is the Truth.

The **Truth of God** is **our common bond**, and we love one another because of that binding common truth of love!

We must love one another in the Truth, in the Spirit of Truth, in the Holy Spirit!

### **3 John 2:**

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

John prays that Gaius should prosper in all aspects, both materially, and spiritually. As our soul prospers in the nuggets of God's Word, it will bring us the wisdom to prosper materially also. When the soul prospers through wisdom, it brings frugality and simplicity to our life and that automatically brings material prosperity. It is a faithful saying, when the soul prospers, wisdom comes, and everything blossoms!

But John makes a special prayer for Gaius' health! Health is more important than material prosperity! When health prospers, everything else is possible! Focus on the spiritual health of the soul through the Word first, then physical health. All other things will follow.

### **3 John 3, 4.**

*3 For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth.*

*4 I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.*

John was so glad to know through others that Gaius was walking in truth! When others give great testimony of you, it is a great thing! John indeed rejoices to see his spiritual children walking in truth. Suddenly we see Jesus in John. He was rejoicing just like Jesus would rejoice concerning His obedient children.

### **3 John 1:5-8.**

*5 Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers;*

*6 and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.*

*7 For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.*

*8 Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.*

Gaius was helping Christian brothers, especially, the strangers. Hospitality is an integral part of Christian ministry, and it ought to be done with lot of love.

Bible has a lot to say about hospitality:

- **Practice hospitality** ungrudgingly to one another. (1 Peter 4:9)
- Do not neglect to **show hospitality** to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unaware (Hebrews 13:2)
- Paul bids the Romans to "**practice hospitality**". (Romans 12:13)

- A bishop must be a **man given to hospitality!** (1 Timothy 3:2).

The early Christians were eager to open their house to Christians and strangers. What better way to share the love of Christ to a stranger than inviting that person to one's house! What better way to share Jesus than through hospitality?

Gaius was so loving, the people spoke highly of him in their church. These people went out of their way to bless the gentiles and did not accept any financial compensation for it. It is not a good idea to receive any compensation from the unbelievers, but John wants strong believers like Gaius to help them out. Strong believers in the church ought to be tithing, strong believers should be giving generously toward noble gospel workers.

Not everyone can be an evangelist or a missionary, but we can be a part of a mission force from behind the scenes.

Jesus said, "He that receives whomsoever I send, receives me; and he that receives me, receives him that sent me" ([John 13:20](#)).

### 3 John 9,10

9 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrefes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.

10 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 church.

Every church has its own politics, and in this church, a person called Diotrefes, took total control of the church, and would not listen to even Apostle John? (If indeed apostle John had written). Note this person, Diotrefes wanted to be first in the church. He was ambitious for power and was a control freak! We are not sure about the politics of that time. Probably, this was a fight between Paul's group and John's group? Why is it that Diotrefes did not want the people who walked in truth, and were sacrificial about Gospel work? If you read second John, you will see heretics running around preaching. We should not encourage heretics to proclaim any kind of wrong Gospel. When a preacher is a stranger, it is a tricky thing to allow him to speak in church. Early churches were very much controlled by the Apostles. But after apostles' death, the local churches had their own leaders and they did not want any dictation from outsiders! No outsiders could dictate local church anymore. The local church had to make the decision if they should let a preacher in or not!

My experience with traveling evangelists -

When I started this ministry, I was inundated with outside preachers' requests for preaching! It was a very tough problem. I became a bad guy whether I permitted them or not.

There were times, my good friends would come with a guest speaker at the starting time, and request for 5 minutes sharing of his ministry. Their 5 minutes will turn out to 55 minutes preaching! When I return home, I would hear an earful from my children and my wife: why did you give the pulpit to this guy?! Good question! I have been asking those questions all along.

Some preachers used the pulpit to sell whatever they wanted to sell.

Some preachers' theology brought a lot of confusion and false promises.

Some came as prophets and prophesied about common ailments like back ache, headache, heart problem or job situation. They said only those things that you wanted to hear. In other words, they became an ear tickling preacher. When they did something specific, it was rarely true.

Some were good, and it turned out good, and we were blessed.

Many travelled only to rich countries! We hardly hear them traveling to Sudan, or Trinidad, or Mongolia! Everyone wanted to come to USA or Dubai, or Canada!

Why do they come to only rich countries? Most of them come to collect money!

Why do preachers always aim for the pulpit when they step into some other church? That is mind boggling. Why can't they just come to fellowship with you?

Gertsie's uncle is a good preacher/pastor. When he came here, he just sat meekly, and listened to the preaching of Johnson, and enjoyed the fellowship with us! That is meekness, and it is a great quality. He touched me so much! He did not speak a single word, but he preached the best sermon on humility I have ever heard!

Another problem when the visiting speakers take the spot of local leaders. When I give the pulpit to our own people so that they can be well equipped, then even if somebody well-known like Ravi Zacharias or Billy Graham comes, I would like our church member to speak rather than a prominent speaker. If I schedule a preacher already, I do not like to push him away just because some better preacher appeared.

There is no need that to give the pulpit immediately just because somebody great from outside came to our church. We need to know their belief before they are given the pulpit.

A good example is the Corinthian church. (I am Apollo's, Peter's, Paul's).

This is the rule I follow concerning outside speakers. First visit, they should just participate and connect with all the church people. They could use the testimony time to share about their ministry for 5 minutes. If the Lord nudges me to use that person, I would like to use that preacher first in the Bible study/prayer meeting. If his theology is strong, then schedule a Sunday for preaching. Yes, I want humble people to stand in the pulpit, and not those who put themselves first!

Diotrephes made two important mistakes. He rejected the Apostle. He destroyed John's letter also. He did not share it in the church. That is real wickedness!

### **3 John 11, 12**

*11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.*

*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.*

There are two other Demetrius besides this one.

There was a Demetrius in Ephesus, who was a silver smith, an idol maker. He instigated a huge riot because his idol business started dwindling.

Another one is Demas, shortened form of Demetrius, Paul's companion, but he left Paul later, having loved the world!

This Demetrius was probably the carrier of this letter and he had to confront Diotrephes. This was a dicey situation. We need strength to confront, as well as gentleness, and strong leadership and love.

We must have the discerning spirit to know what is good and what is evil, and we ought to follow what is right. We shall know people by their fruits because the one who does good is of God!

We are not sure who Demetrius was. Was he a traveling evangelist also? He was well spoken of by everyone, and John personally testifies and vouches for his character. He may have carried the letter of John. We can feel the tension here. Demetrius and Gaius may be opposed by Diatrophies, and there could be an ugly fight which could result in an ugly split. A perfect storm is brewing!

### 3 John 13-15

*13 I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink;*

*14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face*

*15 Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.*

I just wonder if pen and paper were precious commodities in those days? John seemed to save them! I also concur with John. Face to face meeting is more powerful than just writing. We could speak 10000 words in few minutes than writing all of them. Moreover, our tone, our facial expressions, our eyes authenticate, and validate what we are saying. There is a great opportunity for dialogues and clarifications also. On the other hand, our writings become a memorial and it can be saved forever! Writing texts, email, even phone calls should be more like information sharing tools rather than our primary expression of our love. If you really love someone, you will create every opportunity to meet that person face to face.

John instructs Gaius to do something interesting! He was asked to greet the friends by name. He wants Gaius to personalize the letter even more. Paul does it very nicely in all his letters! He calls out name by name every person of the church.

### Conclusion:

Hospitality is a very important ministry.

We must welcome Christian ministers and meet their needs. Be careful about using those preachers in the pulpit without knowing their background.

Be wise as serpent and gentle as a dove. Have the discerning spirit to see if that person is truly from God or not!

Beware of the outside speakers. They could easily split the church through wrong teaching. (Corinthian church)

Daniel Israel

[pastor@acts242church.org](mailto:pastor@acts242church.org)

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