

Kirkwall Presbyterian Church

'The Church Bully'

3 John

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By Keith Marcy

Context: who? Where? When? Why? How?

Who? John the elder.

This John is the same man Jesus called from his father Zebedee and from the fishing boat on Lake Galilee. This John became a close friend of Jesus. This John suggested Jesus call down thunder from Heaven to destroy unbelievers. This John was brave enough to remain at the cross. To this John, Jesus entrusted the care of His mother. Now John is old. He is an overseer of some small groups of believers who have banded in faith and formed a church. His short letter is to one called Gaius, a man whose soul is grounded in the truth. He believes the Gospel and his lifestyle is proof. He not only *'talks the talk'* but he *'walks the walk!'*

Some people who claim to be believers in the Name of Jesus Christ have shown up in town. Gaius does not know them. They are not part of their circle of friends or acquaintances, but they are proclaimers of the truth. Gaius is non-denominational! They need a place to stay. Gaius gives them a place. They need food. He provides food for them in order that they might work together with Gaius' group for the furtherance of the Gospel (verse 8).

However, in the church of which Gaius is an overseer, there is another hardworking character named Diotrephes. He loves to be first. He must be controlling. He does not care who his conceited ego steamrolls into the asphalt.

John wrote to the church, on behalf of the apostles. Diotrephes rejected his letter, therefore rejecting John's calling as an apostle. Not only that, Diotrephes gossips – telling lies about John. He raises himself by putting John and the Apostles down. More than that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, the missionaries that Gaius has helped. They come in the Name of Christ; Diotrephes rejects their message. John writes in the Name of

Christ; Diotrephes rejects his message. In his behavior, we see that He rejects the Gospel of Jesus.

What is the gospel? Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners just like us. To reject that message is to trample the Son of God underfoot. To do that is to reject salvation in His name. Diotrephes has reduced his church to be a Christless social club! And what is more, to seal his doom, he stops people in his group from helping the men of God that Gaius helped by expelling them from his fellowship without biblical reason. John clinches the argument in verse 11, *'Do not be like this'* [bully, Diotrephes] *'because anyone who is evil has not seen God!'* He is a Christless leader. He wrestled control of the Church from Gaius. But is it a Church? If God has removed his candlestick (the Holy Spirit), it is no longer a Church of Christ. At best it is a social club; at worst a house of Satan.

John concludes by introducing another man, Demetrius. He is a man who lives according to the truth. What does that mean? It means that Jesus Christ is his mentor. His words, his actions, his priorities are controlled by his faith in the Man of Galilee. He *'talks the talk,'* and he *'walks the walk.'* John says *'he is a man of truth—imitate him!!'*