

## WHOM I LOVE IN THE TRUTH

3 John 1-13

Key Verse 1, “The elder, to my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.”

For the past six weeks we have studied the books of 1 and 2 John. In them, John taught two main points—first, that we have fellowship with Almighty God through our Lord Jesus Christ and second, the necessity of having fellowship among believers. “Fellowship” here means “love relationship.” It does not mean being a card-carrying member of group. This fellowship begins solely from God’s one-sided love. God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ into the world to be with us and become a ransom sacrifice for our sins so we can have eternal fellowship with him. Those who have true fellowship with God find love sprouting and blossoming in their hearts for others, especially other believers. 3 John is a beautiful example of love between believers coming from fellowship with Jesus. It is a very personal letter between the great apostle John and one church member Gaius. In this letter, John loved Gaius in the truth by encouraging him to remain faithful to the truth and explaining how to do so. May God help us to see and practice this life-giving love in the truth.

### 1. My Dear Friend Gaius (1-2)

Let’s look at verse 1. “The elder, to my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.” John begins by calling Gaius, “...my dear friend...whom I love in the truth.” In this short letter John called Gaius “dear friend” four times. “Dear friend” is also translated “beloved.” John was not writing as a boss or an inaccessible leader, but as a dear friend. Historically this letter has been attributed to John the Apostle. John had the most intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He sat next to Jesus at the Last Supper and felt Jesus’ love so personally, he called himself, “the one Jesus loved.” (Jn 13:23) Some boast about knowing this or that person. But John knew Jesus Christ, the Son of God personally. John was vitally important to the early church. Yet John, in this letter, wrote to one person in a church somewhere, named Gaius. John called himself, “The elder,” which meant “shepherd.” John was a shepherd for the whole church of God and revealed it by caring for one person, Gaius. No one really knows who this Gaius was. But he is forever famous due to John’s personal love letter to him and his faithfulness to the truth.

As we learned in 1 and 2 John, loving God requires loving our brothers and sisters in the truth. It is not optional. This includes making deep friendships in the Lord. In this letter, John revealed friendship for one person. Loving others as friends is not theoretical. We must try to make and maintain friendships, as John did. John did not have to care for Gaius. But he did because the love of Christ was burning in his heart. Making friendship

in Christ's love includes writing letters or texts or emails, expressing our affection, concern and care for others. It includes being involved in their personal lives.

Jesus himself is the best example of friendship. Jesus is Almighty God, yet he became our friend. He said in John 15:5, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." Later, even after all had abandoned him, Jesus still called them friends. After a disappointing night of fishing, the disciples thought they were complete failures. Then Jesus called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" and cooked them breakfast. When Jesus called them "friends" life grew in their souls again, so much so that Peter jumped into the water and swim to shore like a champion swimmer. This is the power of Jesus' friendship. God called Abraham his friend also. James 2:23 says, "And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend." Did you know God is in the friend-making business? Of course, we remember the incredible friendship of David and Jonathan which came from their love for God. When David was running for his life from King Saul, Jonathan, Saul's son, risked his life to protect David. David never forgot the friendship of Jonathan and said at his death, "I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women." (2 Sa 2:26) Christian love is expressed in making dear friends, as between John and Gaius.

These days most people use others for their benefit. As long as a person is beneficial to them, they will be friends with them. But real friendship cares for others in any circumstance. Recently one of our church members was found to have Covid-19. The family was quarantined for four weeks. In that time, people volunteered every day to bring them food or shop for them. These acts of friendship were fantastic and revealed the love of Christ among us. Before becoming a Christian, I was a competitive musician, because only one could win an audition. I never cared or sacrificed for anyone, even my family. But since Jesus came into my heart, God's love and friendship with others began to grow in my heart. This summer when the Summer Bible Conference was canceled, I realized we had to care for our Loyola coworkers. We prepared a one-week Bible school and made teams of pairs, to help make friends among coworkers. I also met with many coworkers one by one to pray with them and listen to their messages. It was a beautiful time of fellowship in Jesus and to make friends. Lately I have been visiting Europe, especially England and Germany because I have many dear friends in the Lord there I want to spend time with and encourage. I am disappointed I cannot visit this year because of Covid. I also have so many dear friends in Chicago ministry, such as Dr. Alan, and Pastors Ron, Kevin and David. Dr. Suh and Missionary Elijah are also my dear friends. Who could imagine I could be friends with and try to care for so many people even around

the world? This is God's grace. Still I have so much to grow as a friend. Our pastor in the past used to write hundreds of individual letters to missionaries in a day, in order to encourage them. He really was a friend like John. As John said again and again, let's love one another in the truth by making many dear friends.

In verse 2, John reveals his prayer for Gaius. It says, "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." John's first prayer topic was that he may enjoy good health. I really liked the word "enjoy." John wanted him to "enjoy" a healthy life. It means, "Be happy and healthy." We pray for our friends to be healthy and happy. Then he prayed that all may go well with him—his family, his job, his house, his dog, etc. Lastly, he prayed that his soul would get along well also. John deeply cared about Gaius personally and his happiness and blessing, not only spiritually but in everyday life. It is important to pray for all the needs of our coworkers, especially their souls. One person I know is finishing his last semester of nursing school. I pray all goes well and he is victorious. Another young man is looking for a job. I pray God may open the door. Another young woman is praying about marriage. I pray God blesses her and guides her to the man God has chosen for her. How beautiful it is to pray that all may go well with our friends, even in their souls. One dear coworker recently lost her father. May God comfort her soul. May God give us this kind of friendship to pray for others.

## 2. Walking in the truth (3-8)

As we learned, John loved his dear friend Gaius. But it was not human love. It was love in the truth. Let us think about what it means to love in the truth. Look at verses 3 & 4. "It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." What does it mean to walk in the truth? Jesus himself is the truth. He said in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." To walk in the truth means to walk in Christ Jesus. Jesus becomes our goal and standard. Jesus becomes our strength and our guide. It means we conform our will to Jesus' will and conform our actions to obedience to Jesus. Walking in the truth is not easy, even for one day. Walking faithfully day after day until the days become years is beyond human ability. But those who renew their love relationship with Jesus every day can walk faithfully in the truth. Regardless of the age or culture or life circumstance, we can walk faithfully in the truth, because the truth never changes. Jesus' command, "But seek first his kingdom and righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well," is true whether we have nothing or many things. Jesus' command, "If you love me, feed my sheep," is true whether we are young or old, in the U.S. or anywhere else in the world. Jesus' truth is universal and absolute.

John loved Gaius in the truth by encouraging him to walk in the truth of Jesus. This strengthened Gaius to be faithful even more. May we encourage others to walk faithfully in the truth also.

According to 1 and 2 John, the truth Jesus commands us to obey is to love one another, especially the brotherhood of believers. This is what Gaius practiced and what John commended him for. Look at verse 5, "Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you." Gaius was a member of a house church and apparently was not the leader. But he took responsibility to care for those who came to his church. At that time, there was not a common New Testament. Instead, many itinerate preachers went around reading letters and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus. They received no help from unbelievers. Verse 7 says, "It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans." They had no support other than what house churches provided. Gaius gladly welcomed these servants of God and supported them during their stay. He prepared a room for them and fed them while they stayed in their town. It was a beautiful act of love to servants of God. I heard for the last month two young people from Panama have been staying in Chicago UBF. I did not know anything about them. But one 17 y/o young lady has spent every day serving them. She made sure they were fed and took them many places in the city of Chicago, despite the pandemic, and keeping social distancing. I was greatly encouraged by this young lady and thank God that she welcomed strangers and cared for them so much. Gaius cared for brothers and sisters who came to him just like her. When John heard of his faithfulness to love brothers and sisters, he was overjoyed. He said it was his greatest joy. We can experience this greatest joy when we have the love of Christ in our hearts.

John then encouraged Gaius to continue showing this kind of love to brothers and sisters, especially those traveling and need of care. Verse 6 says, "They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God." To send them on their way in a manner that honors God, means to show them great respect and thankfulness. And provide a box lunch for them to eat on the way. In this way, though they did not travel, Gaius and the house church members could participate in the gospel work. Verse 8 says, "We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth." I heard it takes 3-4 people behind the scenes to support each soldier in an army. Likewise, to support gospel work, there has to be a lot of support. Gaius provided this support by showing hospitality to itinerate preachers. We also we can pray for gospel workers as well as encourage and supply their needs. In this way, all can participate in the life-giving work of preaching the gospel and raising disciples of Christ. We pray for America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. This means that all people in America may be saved and acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

Then all Americans can love one another, and we can be a blessing to the world. For this, we pray to bring the gospel to all American campuses, where the young future leaders are. This requires great sacrifice and effort, and a great deal of support. But this is our prayer topic for which we work together. Regardless of what we do, we need to pray and work together for the truth, such as showing hospitality and providing for those serving the gospel. One missionary family babysat a family's children so they could take care of Bible students. We all support our pastors who shepherd God's flock in our ministry and around the world. I'm so thankful for Joseph and Mary Park and other praise servants who have served us every week during this pandemic, so we may continue to worship and spread the gospel. I'm thankful for many serving the tech so we can stream God's word all over the world. May God help us to show hospitality and serve in whatever way we can so that we may work together for the truth.

### 3. A Warning and Encouragements (9-13)

In this final part, John gives Gaius guidance about some very difficult problems and gives final greetings. First, a warning. Gaius was the member of a house church, which was apparently led by a person named Diotrephes. John warned Gaius to watch out for Diotrephes and exposed his bad influence. Look at verses 9 & 10, "I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us. So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, spreading malicious nonsense about us. Not satisfied with that, he even refuses to welcome other believers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church." John was very concerned about the bad influence Diotrephes was giving. Diotrephes was so concerned about being regarded as the best, he did not allow others to come into the church. He apparently did not want to be exposed as second best. Instead of welcoming others, Diotrephes kicked out believers who disagreed with him. It is unimaginable. May God help us watch out for bad influences.

Second, encouragements. Look at verses 11 & 12, "Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone—and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true." Here John encouraged Gaius to imitate what is good because what is good is from God. What is evil has nothing to do with God. Then he gave an example of someone doing good—Demetrius. Demetrius was well spoken of by the believers and more importantly, by the truth of God that matched his lifestyle. It is very important to have good examples around us to watch and emulate. Recently we heard a testimony from a young woman from Northwestern. She studied Nehemiah in Milwaukee UBF. Through that she was strengthened to build the work of God at Northwestern as Nehemiah built the wall in Jerusalem as leader of the Northwestern Bible Club. It was very encouraging to see this

young lady with such fire, passion and vision for the Lord. And we were all inspired. There are many, many such stories of God moving hearts among us. Remember, we are to not imitate what is evil, but what is good. In our country America, there has been a lot of evil perpetrated even in the name of God. We must repent and no longer imitate what is evil, but what is good.

John concludes his letter with encouragements in verses 13 & 14, "I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace to you. The friends here send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name." These verses show that John really wanted to see Gaius. He wanted to see his friend. It was not a show or to get him to do something. John genuinely loved Gaius as a friend in the truth and planned to visit him. John then greeted Gaius from all the friends with him. And lastly, he asked Gaius to greet all the friends there by name. John asked Gaius to greet them one by one in his name, calling out their names as he shook their hands, as an emissary for John. John realized each person is infinitely valuable and deserved individual recognition. We also should encourage each other by greeting one another, one by one, by name.

Today we learned the beautiful heart of love in the truth of John for one person Gaius. Gaius was seemingly not an important person. But to John he was a dear friend and one he loved in the truth. Now Gaius became famous because of John's letter of friendship. How many of you had heard about Gaius before today? Perhaps now some families may want to name their new babies Gaius. John loved Gaius in the truth. He helped Gaius grow in Christ and live a life pleasing to Christ. This is true Christian fellowship. May God give us deep fellowship with the Father and with one another. May God flourish deep friendships and love in the truth among us. In our troubled times, may God use us to reveal deep friendships and love in the truth to the world.