

Series: The Confident, Loving Church – week 28

CDOBC – beginning on 2/14/10

Title: “Partnership in the Truth”

3 John 1-8 ~ October 3, 2010

OBJECTIVE: To encourage all believers to support ministry as God enables them.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Clothing Exchange – Oct. 9th
- Fall Festival sign-ups begin today in courtyard
- Welcome Class – Oct. 6 & 13
- Baptism – Oct. 10th
- RHOF – new members 10/24
- Richard Deal – Piano Concert 10/16
- Men’s Breakfast this Sat. – 6:45-8:15
- Prayer Gathering – tonight @ 6 p.m. – room #1

There was a tremendous need for hospitality in the Greco-Roman world – not just among the churches, but in the society at large. It was such a large need that among the many names for the Greek mythological god Zeus, one of the common of his names was *Zeus-Xēnios* (zēnios) – the god of strangers (Xenos is Greek for “stranger”). For the Roman, in their polytheistic religion, it was *Jupiter hospitalis* that they prayed to and acted in accordance to his wishes.

Within the Christian community, hospitality was a requirement for Elders / church leaders

1 Tim. 3:2 “...the overseer must be...hospitable”

Titus 1:6-8 “An elder must be...hospitable”

Commands to practice hospitality were frequent in the N.T.

Rom. 12:13 “Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”

1 Peter 4:9 “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.”

Heb. 13:2 “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”

The home was the center of the early church – in fact, the first known church building was early in the 3rd century. For most of

early church history, believers from a local area would meet in someone's home for Bible study, prayer, and the Lord's Supper. In 3 John, we read of a man named "Gaius" who was a member of a house church. We're not sure of the location of this church – but it's most likely somewhere in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey).

"Gaius" (Gā-īs)– was a very common name in Roman culture – no way to connect this "Gaius" with the others of the same name in the N.T.

Acts 19:29

"Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia..."

Acts 20:4

"He was accompanied by...Gaius from Derbe..."

Rom. 16:23

"Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings."

1 Cor. 1:14

"I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius..."

Turn to 3 John

Christians should be:

Prospering in the truth vs. 1-2

The Apostle John's love for "Gaius" is rooted in their common devotion and faith in the truth of Christ. Just like the book of 2 John, the primary theme of 3 John is 'truth' – and in this short letter, we will see how our commitment to God's truth has application to how we live our life and how we interact with the ministry and missions work of the church.

It's unclear in vs. 2 if Gaius is in good health or poor health – John's desire for his friend to "enjoy good health" can be taken as a prayer of thanksgiving that he would continue to enjoy good health – or as a prayer that his health would improve to that level. Either way, the emphasis in the greeting is on his prospering faith. Gaius' faith is alive and "...getting along well." For the Apostle, faith is what leads the rest of our life.

He desires that the other aspects of his friend's life prosper in the same way as his faith is prospering. If he is in poor health, notice that his poor health does not result in poor faith – it doesn't affect his soul in a negative way. The prosperity of his soul is in the lead – not the circumstances of his life!

Practicing the truth vs. 3-4

Once again, just like 2 John 4, the Apostle expresses his joy as he is told about the faithfulness of Gaius. “Walking in the truth” tells us that his entire life was under the guidance and influence of God's truth. Each decision in his life, his choices and his attitudes were lived out in accordance with God's truth.

From the pastor's perspective, I love to teach and preach God's Word – and I love when people are eager to learn about God – but the greatest satisfaction and joy is when I see people living out the truth of God! When you decide – even when it's difficult – to walk by the truth – it's a blessing and a joy to me.

Conversely, when someone under my pastoral care does not walk in the truth – and chooses to walk in darkness (1 Jn. 1:6) and to embrace the world instead of embracing Christ – my heart breaks. This is what the writer of Hebrews is talking about when they write:

Heb. 13:17

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

The Apostle John is overjoyed due to the great report he has received from some of the traveling missionaries / preachers of Gaius' faithfulness and activity for the truth.

Partnering in the ministry of truth vs. 5-8

Vs. 5 – “Beloved” is preferred over “Dear friend”. The Greek term is *agapātā* – his faithfulness in his work is acknowledged and commended. What makes his work exemplary is that he is ministering to “strangers”. *Zenos* in the Greek. In one sense they were complete strangers to Gaius – he had never met them before. However, due to their common belief in the truth of the Gospel, they were not strangers at all – but co-laborers for Christ!

Vs. 6 – Evidently, these “strangers” returned to the church where John was ministering (probably Ephesus) and shared with the entire church about their missionary journey – and part of their report was the exceptional hospitality and help that Gaius offered them. The help that Gaius offered is referred to as “love” – which brings us right back to one of the points the text has told us the last couple of weeks. Love is not separate from truth – it is a by-product of the truth of Christ. Notice in vs. 3-4, John commends Gaius for “walking in the truth” – and here we see a detail of what that involves – it involves “love” toward the “strangers” who had traveled there on a missions trip.

“You will do well” – a Greek idiom – ‘please’ in English – so John is asking Gaius to continue his ministry – but he also gives a standard for the ministry of hospitality – “...send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.”

In other words – *give them what they need* – this was a term used often in the early church in regards to missionaries. It implies receiving them, meeting their needs, and making sure they have what they need for the next leg of their journey to help them accomplish their work. And the kind of help we offer should be help that is “worthy of God”. No second hand

trinkets. No hand-me-downs. What do you give to God? Do you give him the leftovers in your life? Or, do you give Him the ‘first-fruits’ – do you give Him the best you have to offer? Do you tithe a few dollars that you might have in the wallet or purse on Sunday morning – or do you give a tithe or offering that is planned and purposeful?

So, Gaius is encouraged to send them on their way so they can do their work.

And what is their work?

Vs. 7 – their work is for the “Name” of Christ. The ministry of the Gospel exalts the name of Jesus. When we share the Good News about Christ with others – or when we help and support those who are sharing the Good News about Christ – we are honoring and glorifying His name!

Rom. 1:5

“Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.”

Acts 5:40

“They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus...”

Those who speak the truth of the Gospel do so not for their own glory and advancement – but for the glory of the Name of Christ!

Notice also that the work of the Gospel is not to be funded and supported by “pagans” – or “Gentiles” – non-believers. The work of the ministry must be funded and supported by Christians – not by non-Christians. Everyone is not called to be on the ‘front-lines’ of ministry – Everyone is not called to be a missionary or pastor – but every believer is called to support the ministry – especially the ministry of the local church.

False prophets take money from anyone they can!

Vs. 8 – The two main ideas in vs. 8 are hospitality and ministry partnership. The qualification for both of these is “such men” – which points us back to vs. 6-7 – and those who serve and proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

You might be wondering how you can show hospitality in line with this verse in today’s world – since we don’t have the same issues with hotels that they did in the 1st and 2nd century?

Here are some ways that we can practice hospitality to strangers in our modern day church setting.

- We all need to welcome strangers into our fellowship.
- How focused and attentive are you to new faces in church?
- How intentional are you when it comes to inviting someone new to a Sunday School class – to dinner after church – to your small group – to grab a cup of coffee during the week?
- Have you contacted the missions committee to offer your home to some of our missionaries when they visit us?
- Have you invited your Sunday School class or a small group from church over to your home for a BBQ, to watch a football game, or to start a home bible study?
- Have you invited another person here at church to breakfast or lunch for the purpose of asking how they are doing, to see if there is anything you can do to help them in life, to discover how you can pray for them?
- Have you ever talked to Pastor Scott about having our Jr. High or Sr. High students over to your home?

- Have you ever invited one of our single moms and their kids over to your home to love, encourage, and help them?
- Have you ever invited one of our widows / widowers over to your home for a holiday celebration?

We don't live in the first or second century – and the need for hospitality as we see it in the N.T. is not the same as it was then – but the need for hospitality has not diminished in any way over the centuries! There are countless ways that believers in Christ need to practice hospitality – and when we do, we will be partnering in the ministry of the Gospel!

Matt. 10:40

“He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴² And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”

Some people would love to do this – but it will cost them – it will be difficult – it will ruin my Sunday afternoon routine – what about my football games? What about my nap time? What about...

Matt. 10:39

“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Yes – there is cost to hospitality. Being hospitable will take you out of your comfort zone. If you're like us, being hospitable will mean extra work around the house getting the

house prepared for our invited guests. Yes, it means work, and at times some financial expense beyond your normal expenses. But this is not strictly a cost – it’s an investment! It’s an investment in the kingdom of God. Have you ever wondered what the kingdom of God is? There are actually many aspects and many objects in God’s kingdom – but the most important and the most valuable thing in God’s kingdom – besides the king – is the people of the king...fellow believers. Hospitality is one of the great ways each of us can strengthen the kingdom of God – by encouraging and strengthening each other.

Application

Learn / know the truth of Christ.

This is the basis of our love – the basis of our fellowship – the basis of our hospitality. Everything flows from the truth of Christ. The virtues of the Christian life do not lead us to truth – they are the result of God’s truth applied in our daily life. We must prosper in the truth – practice the truth – and participate in the ministry of the truth.

Practice hospitality

There are so many ways to be hospitable in our world today. It’s a command given not only to the early church – but its’ a command that still stands today.

1 Peter 4:9 “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.”

Close in prayer