



“What’s In A Name?” (III John)

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Intro: Bob Corry came to my office this past Tuesday and said he planned to sing “He Knows My Name” for the closing song in this weekend’s services. His reason was because he knew we would be studying III John, and it ends with “Greet the friends there by name.” I woke up early Tuesday morning thinking about that, thoughts I believe were provoked by the Holy Spirit. So I took a fresh look at this little epistle of II John, and the message the Holy Spirit wants to convey to us through it.

Read names of people that will automatically cause people to have an opinion: Saddam Hussein, Osama Bin Laden, Hitler, Bonnie & Clyde, O.J Simpson, Nelson Mandela, Billy Graham, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Marilyn Monroe, Marilyn Manson, Tin Tebow, Muhammed Ali.

Why do we think the things we do about people when we hear their name? It’s because of their reputation, their life, their character. Many of the names of people to whom John writes would create fond feelings in John’s soul. No less than six times he employs the word friend or friends in this letter. Four of those times its “dear friend.”

Read the text

The word for “**dear** friend” This is the same word that describes the Father speaking from heaven about his Son Jesus, “Behold my **beloved** Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The dear friend’s name is Gaius. He could be the Gaius mentioned in Acts 19: 29 Soon the whole city (Ephesus) was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia (Modern day Turkey), and rushed as one man into the theater. He is listed as continuing to travel with Paul after leaving Ephesus; Acts 20: 4 He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe (ancient Galatia), Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. A Gaius is also mentioned in the close of Paul’s letter of Romans 16: 23 Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings; And then a Gaius is mentioned in I Cor.1: 14 I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius.

My understanding is that Gaius was a very popular name in this day. So we can’t be sure which Gaius this is. What we do know is that he was a dear friend of the apostle, and that John had pastoral authority & influence in his life (note v.4). Gaius had shown hospitality to some “brothers” who he had not known personally, but who were on some travelling mission for “the Name” (v.7). Demetrius is most likely the

leader of this missions team, and John says that he is “well spoken of by everyone, and even by the truth itself” (v.12). His reputation as a man of truth was well known. See also Romans 16:1-2.

Once again let me call your attention to the close of this little epistle (read v.14b again). These are relationships that experienced a oneness in Jesus Christ. When specific names were addressed or mentioned, there arose warm feelings of sweet fellowship. There is nothing better than being in unity as a family, a community, a nation, and of course, a church.

Psalm 133:1 How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity!

But unity is a tremendous challenge, because there are so many things that have the potential to divide us.

Unfortunately in this letter, there is the mention of one whose name did not evoke warm feelings in the apostle John when mentioned. His name is Diotrephes. The only time he is mentioned in Scripture is here in III John. So all we know about him we glean from verses 9-11. We do not know what particularly local congregation he was a leader of, but wherever it was, he had considerable influence and authority (note v.10b). God recorded his actions here so that we might learn to **not** follow his example. So let’s take a closer look at this man and ask the Lord to help us to avoid the mistakes he made.

Exclusive

- We are not told what the issues were that made him exclusive. But we do know of some issues in Scripture that divided believers, and any of them could have been true with Diotrephes; Paul & Barnabas divided after a sharp debate (Acts 15:36-41); the church of Corinth divided over favorite church leaders (I Cor.1:10-12); We briefly mentioned disputable matters in the teaching on II John last week (Rom.14), and those can certainly divide believers; And then there is the “division” that took place in Antioch (see Gal.2:11-13ff); Phil.4:2-3; On my first trip to Israel, I was accompanied by Pastor Viv Laird. Viv and I got one of those deals they offer to pastors in hopes that they will host a tour themselves and bring business for the tour company. It was a great trip, and I can’t think of anyone (other than my wife) that I would have like to have done it with but Pastor Viv. But one thing happened on that trip that I will never forget (group at Garden Tomb that would not have communion with the rest of our group)...
- Luke 9: 49 "Master," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." 50 "Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you." (note context).
- John 10: 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.
- The great challenge here is determining what thing we should divide over. As we looked at last week in our study of II John, some doctrinal issues are vital enough to divide over. With that said, whatever reason for the Diotrephes division was unnecessary.

Independent

- John is an elder and an apostle, yet Demetrius spurns even John’s authority.
- King Saul would not listen to Samuel, Korah, Dathan & Abiram would not listen to Moses, Uzziah would not listen to 80 courageous priests, Balaam would not heed the wisdom of his donkey; other examples?
- People who are insubmissive become independent

He loved to be first

- The root of this is pride; This was Jacob's problem; Gen.25:24-26; Jacob's problem started in the womb; Jacob was grasping Esau's heel because he was trying to be the first one out. This was the root issue that caused the Jewish authorities to hate Jesus; It was out of envy that they handed Jesus over to the Roman authorities (Matt.27:18; also see Acts 17:5; Phil.1:15; King Saul's attitude toward David (I Sam.18:6-9); Envy and jealousy are sisters; Korah, Dathan & Abiram wanted the same positions God had reserved for Moses & Aaron (Num.16:3); If I remember right, Moses gave God five excuses why he should not have the position God was calling him to, and the 5th was "send someone else." Moses at that stage in his life was the most humble man on the face of the earth (Num.12:3); See Numbers 16:8-11; Uzziah wanted the privileges only reserved for the priesthood; Pride was also Lucifer's problem; Isa.14: 13 You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. 14 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

- Wanting to be first/pride I believe is one the greatest challenges in life. The apostles certainly were challenged in this regard; see Luke 14:1-11; Matthew 20:17-28; 23:1, 5-12; Mark 9:33-35; John 13:1-17; Luke 22:19-27.

A gossip

- Proverbs 6:16-19
- Proverbs 16:28 A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.
- Proverbs 18:8 The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts. Same one in Prov.26:22.

- John said that if he came he would "call attention to what he is doing" (v.10). Compelled by that verse, I call to your attention recent events connected to the resignation of Scott Rodriguez from our pastoral staff. Myself, along with Pastors Dave Dodge & Joe Seddio, met with Scott on the morning of April 10th of this year. I was prepared as the senior pastor to terminate Scott's employment with Calvary Chapel. I had previously met with all of the pastoral staff regarding my decision, and I asked each of them to try and talk me out of it if they did not agree. Unanimously, nine pastors agreed with the decision. I then contacted the Calvary Chapel board members, and received their full support. Because we love Scott and his family, we wanted to make things as easy as possible, so rather than terminating his employment, I recommended that he resign. Scott agreed, and he signed a letter of resignation. I want to re-read the statement that was communicated to the staff & leadership of Calvary Chapel immediately after these events, and then to the body by me via video the following weekend (I was at my friend's funeral in Kentucky).

Statement: It is with a heavy heart that I must inform you that on Thursday, April 10, Pastor Scott Rodriguez resigned his employment with Calvary Chapel. During his time here, differences in philosophy of ministry have over time prevented us from continuing to partner together on the same ministry team. We love Scott and his family, and we pray for the Lord to lead them in His perfect will. The leadership of CCSP has provided a generous severance that we trust will be a tremendous help during this time of transition in their lives.

Immediately after Scott's departure that morning, things began to be communicated on social media that were at best misleading, and sometimes outright false. The first that was brought to my attention went something like "What you will hear is not as it appears." That comment suggests that the leadership of this church was being deceptive. As comments continued to be reported to me, I immediately instructed our staff and leadership to not respond to any statements in any way. I am extremely proud of their integrity in not doing so. With that said, as a result of questions that continue to come up regarding this situation, as well as comments that continue to be made that do not reflect the truth, I need to set the record

straight. I also want to encourage those who have been involved in gossip surrounding this situation to stop the gossip. The reasons behind our decision have not changed, and our leadership is more unified than at any other time I can remember in 30 years of ministry.

There is one final thing I need to communicate. Scott had repeatedly shared with the pastoral staff that God had called him to plant a church in Tampa. Initially we were supportive of this endeavor. But concerns over what we felt were errors in judgment caused us to ask Scott to delay this move. Unfortunately, immediately after the events of April 10, Scott did plant a church, and has now leased property just north of Calvary Chapel in Largo. We do not understand this, nor do we support it.

The instructions I gave to our leadership, I now give to you. If you encounter gossip regarding this situation, do not respond, do not engage in it, and do not associate with those who are practicing it. Gossip easily becomes slander, and I Cor.5 makes it clear we are not to associate with anyone who calls himself a brother and yet is a slanderer.

Prov.26:20 Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.

Proverbs 18:21 The tongue has the power of life and death...

CONCLUSION

- I pray that when all is said and done, our names invoke thoughts of godly character, faithfulness, self-control, generosity, submissiveness, and the kind of integrity that is revealed in what we say, and what we do not say.
- James 3:2 We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.