

**National Ministries Conference
“For the Sake of the Name”**

III John

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May grace and peace be multiplied to each of you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord. Let me take a moment to publicly express again the joy, blessing, and privilege it is for me to worship with you today and to specifically have this opportunity to stand behind this prayer desk and proclaim to you the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. I'm honored to be a part of the conference this week in, and I'm grateful to be here thanking God for the life, labor, and legacy of Dr. Harry Reeder. God, in his sweet providence, I was introduced to Dr. Reeder's work as a young pastor serving in the inner city of Los Angeles, and God navigated the circumstances of life for our pathways to cross, and I rejoice in the blessing that his life and work, and the, by extension, the ministry of this church has been to me. And I want to praise the Lord for the blessing of being here with you. And I want you to know, as a church family, you have a cheerleader in Jacksonville. Praying you on the God's blessings would continue to be upon you in the days to come.

I've been asked this morning to address the conference theme: *For the Sake of the Name*. Specifically, that theme is derived from a particular text. If you would take your copy of God's Word and be turning with me to Third John, the third letter of John. It's one of the New Testament postcards. Just consist of one chapter. And I want to focus our attention on verses five through eight. I'm reading from the English Standard Version of the Bible, and there in the Word of God reads this way.

Beloved. It is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brother strangers as they are, who testify to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God, for they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore, we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

A young missionary made his preparations to begin his assignment overseas. A friend accompanied him to the ship, and as they said their goodbyes and well wishes, the friend handed the young missionary a sealed envelope. He inquired what it was. The friend said, don't worry about it now. Just put this envelope in someplace safe, and when you get into the field, if there arises a need that cannot be met. Remember that I am the Lord and open it. Then, after some years, the missionary returned home, and upon his arrival home, that same friend was there to greet him, and after they exchanged greetings. The missionary pulled out of his belongings.

The envelope still sealed and announced joyfully to his friend. In all of my travels, there never arose a need that the Lord did not meet.

That story is the truth. I'm a witness that it is the truth. God indeed is able to make all grace abound toward you, so that you, having all sufficiency in all things at all times, will still have an abundance to share for every good work. I contend that story is indeed the truth, but it is not the whole truth. Yes, brothers and sisters, the Lord does provide, but he most often provides through means agents, partners to support and supply the message, mission, and ministry of the gospel that is the heart of this third letter of the Apostle John. The focus of the body of this letter is on three men. Verses five through eight. Our text commends a man named Gaius. Verses nine and ten. Confront or correct or rebuke a man. Name. They are to face. And then verses 11 and 12 again commands a man named Demetrius. The book is written two and primarily written about Gaius. Scholarly attempts to identify this brother are ultimately just speculation. We don't really know anything about Gaius outside of what we can learn about him from the content of this little letter, but there is much to learn about him from these words written to him and about him. Note first that in verse one, verse two, verse five, and verse 11, John calls him beloved one man. Of course he is loved by the Lord Jesus Christ. But directly the term here refers to John's love for Gaius. His heart was filled with affection for this brother in Christ. That affection that John had for Gaius was rooted in two factors. On one hand, his affection for Gaius was fueled or stirred up because of Gaius. His commitment to the message of the gospel. You see that in verses three and four? Just the report of his testimony. Verse three filled the apostle with supreme joy. He says, I rejoice greatly. When the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.

Some brothers and sisters in Christ visited the city, and particularly the church where Gaius served. And when they returned back to John, they reported to the entire congregation that this brother was walking in the truth, and it filled John with joy. In fact, from verse three to verse four, he moves from testimony to principle. This report led not only to supreme joy by surpassing joy for John. He says, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. If I just may say by passing reference, that fourth verse is a good life verse for every parent, and it is a great life verse for every pastor. *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*

The truth refers to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth refers to the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Of course, that word gospel means good news or glad tidings, but the good news begins with bad news. The bad news is that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The bad news is that all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way. There is worse news. The worse news is that there is nothing good in us to commend to God for his approval. All of our righteous deeds are as a polluted garment before the Lord. There is nothing we can do to fix what our sin has broken.

But thank God for the good news that God sent his only begotten son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who lived a righteous life, a righteous life that we could never live, who died at the cross to

make atonement for our sins before God, and who rose from the dead with all the authority in his hands. Believe it or not, that good news is not even the best news. The best news, friend, is that if you are here and you have not trusted Christ as your Savior and Lord today, no matter who you are or what you've done today, if you will turn from your sin and trust in the blood and righteousness of Christ for salvation, even today, you can have free forgiveness, new life, and eternal hope.

This was the testimony of Jesus. He was walking in the truth. He had repented of his sins. He had trusted the blood and righteousness of Christ for salvation. He was living in obedience to the Lordship of Christ. And so John's affection for guys was fueled by his commitment to the message of the gospel. At the same time, John's affection for Gaius was fueled not only by his commitment to the message of the gospel, but also by his commitment to the messengers of the gospel.

And in a real sense, that's the point of our text. Verses five through eight. To feel the gravity of the text, you need to feel the tension of the text between verses five through eight and verses nine and ten. Verses five through eight commends the hospitality of Gaius. Verses nine and ten rebukes the arrogant opposition of Diotrephes. John says of him. He's a man that likes to put himself first. Verse nine. He doesn't acknowledge our authority. He's talking. Verse ten, wicked, nine sins against us. He refuses to welcome the brothers, and he even stopped those who have the desire to do so and even puts them out of the church. Against that dark backdrop. Here again, how John commends Gaius in verses five through eight for his commitment to the message of the gospel and the messengers of the gospel. What John says about Gaius here is about Gaius, but it is for us. Notice verse 11, the exhortation, the governing command of this little letter. It says, beloved, do not imitate evil, but imitate good. It is a call. This letter is a call for us to imitate good. That's the point of our text. Verse five calls Gaius faithful.

The truth of the text is that faithful Christians support gospel advancement. The example here, the good work here of Gaius, is not unique to him. It is representative of what it means to be a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful Christians support the work of advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ to the least. The last, the last, the left out and the left behind.

William Carey famously said to his colleague Andrew Fuller, I am willing to go down into the pit if you are willing to hold the rope. Hold, dear, brothers and sisters. Inevitably, there are those of you here that the Lord Jesus Christ is calling to go down into the pit to be a gospel witness in a hard place, to share this truth about the person and work of Jesus Christ among unreached people groups, to suffer for the sake of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. O friend, may you heed the call of the Lord that is on your life. But if that particular call is not your call, I ask you this morning, friend, are you willing to at least hold the rope? For those who would go down into the pit. This is the example of Gaius in the text. He was no pioneering missionary. But he was a gospel rope holder.

What does it mean to hold the rope for those who go down into the pit? Notice four characteristics in this brief paragraph. It begins with the marks. Verse five says, beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers strangers as they are, testify to your love before the church again expressing his affection for God, as he calls him. Beloved, and commends him for the faithful thing you do. It is a statement of God says character and conduct. He describes it as faithful. One handed a picture of his character. To be faithful indeed is to reflect the character of God Himself. I failed. Burdened to just put a footnote here for you, congregation, and remind you in these critical days of your life together. God is faithful. Lamentations chapter three, verses 21 through 23 says this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. And great is your faithfulness.

Reflecting the character of the Lord guide us was faithful. But it is not just his character, it's his conduct. It was reflected in what he did. It is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts. That vague language communicates a vital truth. He doesn't specify here exactly what Gaius did. He just describes it as faithful work in all of your efforts. Whatever you did. Gaius did what he could. That is the calling on every one of us.

I Peter 4:16 and 11 says, as each one has a has received a gift. Use it to serve one another as stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks should do so according to the oracles of God, and whoever serves should do so in the strength that God supplies, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. He commands God. You see it for what you might call strategic service. I believe the New Testament doesn't put as much emphasis on spiritual gifts as it does strategic service. Strategic service just means you find a need and need it.

if you happen to be in Jacksonville and happened to pass by my house and happen to see my house on fire, I hope you don't pray about what your giftedness is. I hope you'll do something to help that strategic service. You just find a need and meet it. This is what God did. It was a faithful thing you do. He says in all of your efforts for these brothers, these brothers and sisters in Christ who have passed by and needed support in their work. They were brothers. But he says they were actually strangers. You didn't help. You didn't aid. You didn't support because you all were long standing friends, or you had some deep rooted background with each other, or that there were worldly connections that drew you to one another. The thing that drew you together was Jesus Christ. You didn't know them and they didn't know you. But when you found out they were walking in the truth and they found out you were walking in the truth, when you heard mutually about faith in Christ and love for all the saints, strangers became brothers.

That's the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's often said blood is thicker than water, but blood is not thicker than baptism. For as many have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. And there is no Jew or Greek, or bond, or free, or male or female. But we are all one in Christ Jesus. And so is the mark of this one. Who

holds the rope is faithfulness. Great effort, brotherhood. And love. He says. When the brothers and sisters got back, they testified to your love before the church. We are reminded here, verse three and four speak of walking in the truth. Now, verses five and six remind us that the one who walks in the truth will also be one who walks in love. Truth and love are married to one another inseparably. Truth without love is brutality. But love without truth is hypocrisy.

Gaius walked in truth and he walked in love. It wasn't verbal love. Love. Here we are reminded, is what you do. It was good will. Self-sacrificing service for the benefit of the one loved. Not even factoring in the worthiness of the one loved. It is what each of us are called to in Christ. John 13, verse 34 and 35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you. You are to love one another. And by this will all men know that you are my disciples, as you love one another. And so we see first the marks of one who holds the rope. The bottom of verse six. You see the manner of one who holds the rope. You will do well to send him on their journey in a manner that is worthy of God. You will do well. First, and not just that which is good intrinsically, but that which is beautiful in its appearance. It is the language of Matthew 25, verses 21 and 23, where the two servants are commended with parallel language.

Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little. I will make you ruler over much. Enter into the joy of your master. It is, if you will, worthy of a well done to send the ministers, the messengers, the missionaries of the gospel, who pass your way in gospel partnership. You should send them on their journey in a manner that is worthy of God.

Send them on their way, providing food and clothes and money and whatever else they need, not just for the sake of those practicalities, but in a manner worthy of God.

The reference here to the manner reminds us that God is not just watching what we do. He is watching how we do it. I Samuel 16:7 looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord sees the heart. We're to do it in a manner that is worthy of God. Colossians 1:10 Paul prays that the church would walk in a manner that is worthy of the Lord. This is the expectation of every child of God. We are to conduct ourselves particularly for the gospel, in a manner that is worthy of God. In other words, if it bears God's name, it deserves our best.

I Corinthians 10: 31. Goes so far as to say whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

September 7th, 1860. The steamboat Lady Elgin was making her way back from Chicago to Milwaukee, and in the middle of the night. The Lady Elgin was crashed into by the Augusta, a small ship that split the whole, and it was not long before the Lady Elgin sank. Over 300 souls were lost. Many died instantly. Others were holding on to pieces of the ship, hoping for some kind of miracle. For 17 of those persons, the miracle came in the form of Edward Spencer, who in the wee hours of the morning this college student heard about the shipwreck. His brother said he was frail, but he was an expert swimmer, and he arrived on the scene and he began to swim out to rescue souls and brought one back, swam out again to rescue someone, and brought them back 17 in all until the waves became too strong for him to swim out any further,

and he collapsed in exhaustion. His brother William, who wrote a story saying that when he finally came to William, was there with them, and he said his first words in coming two were, did I do my best? Did I do my best?

Oh, friends, there is coming a day. When we will wake up in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in light of that final inspection, may we be able to say to the Lord with the time, with the opportunities, with the resources, with the gifts, with the skill you gave me. Lord, I did my best.

So we see in this text the marks, the manner and thirdly, the motive. That's verse seven, its explanatory statement in verse seven, which tells the motivation behind the welcome support and hospitality that was shared. This is a key verse about gospel work. They have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. The verse states the what -- they have gone out. The why, for the sake of the name and how not accepting anything from the Gentiles. Trusting God to provide through his people. But let me lean in to the why. Why do they go out? Why do they share the gospel? Why do they take the good news? The hard places for the sake of the name?

My daddy was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana. He ran away from home as a boy. A white family took him in and raised him and sent him to school. After his first year, financial problems arose and the family pointed him to a local family near the school who would be able to help. He went to that family's house for dinner and shared his testimony and called a ministry. And at the end of the meal, the man of the house pulled out his checkbook to write my daddy a check to pay for his next year of school. When my dad got the check, he said he obviously had a strange look on his face and the man of the house said, son, what's wrong? My dad said, you misspelled Charles on the check. The old man said, son, it's not your name that counts on this check is mine.

And this is the reminder of this seventh verse. May it be so. For whatever holds for this church in the future. There's only one name here that matters. Yes, a saving name.

Matthew 1:23 says she will give birth to a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. If government was what we needed, God would have sent a politician. If education was what we needed, God would have sent a professor. If entertainment was what we needed, God would have sent a celebrity. If money was what was needed, God would have sent an economist. If self-esteem was what was needed, God would have sent a therapist. But sin was the problem. So God sent a Savior.

And gave him notice. The sufficiency The name.

He's already been affirmed to us earlier in this service. John 14 six I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me. Let me say it again. Clearly, Jesus does not say, I will show you the way. I will tell you the truth. I will model the life. He says I, in contradistinction to everyone else *I am the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the father*

except through me. And it is the supreme name. Therefore God has highly exalted him and has given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, not will be is Lord. Aren't you glad he's not up for reelection this year?

He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. All hail the power of Jesus's name. Let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him Lord of all.

We've seen the **marks**. We've seen the **manner**. We've seen the **motives** which you know. Verse eight. Finally, briefly, the **mandate**. Those who would hold the rope there for the conclusion of the paragraph is we are to support people like these. We ought to support. It's our duty. It's our responsibility. To support people like these who have gone down into the pit for the gospel, say it's our duty to hold the rope. To support them with **our prayers**. To support them with **our provisions**. To support them with **our partnership**. Why? So that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

Those who go down into the pit and those who hold the rope. Are both fellow workers for the truth.

Hebrews is right. God is not unjust, and he will not forget the love you have shown him by serving his people As you continue to do.

You may build great cathedrals, large or small. You may build skyscrapers grand and tall. You may conquer all the failures of your past, but only what you do for Christ will last.

You may seek earthly fortune and fame. The world might be impressed by your great name, but soon the glories of this life will all be passed, and only what you do for Christ will last.

Though your armies may control each hemisphere, and your orbits out in space cause men to cheer. Your scientific knowledge may be vast, but only what you do for Christ will last.

Though your songs and prayers are heard and praised by men, they all have no meaning. Unless you've been born again. Synergy. These words don't let the harvest past. For only what you do for Christ will last.

Let us pray.

Heavenly father, we give you praise for the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, through which you have redeemed us from the penalty of our sins, adopted us into your family, and given us the hope of glory. This is good, glorious news that is too great for us to keep to ourselves. You have bid us to make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that you have commanded us. I pray for those under the sound of my voice who follow that call by going into the pit to serve you in hard places, foreign lands, among unreached peoples. And I pray. For those of us who you have called to hold the rope. May we practice total life stewardship so that we are not building for ourselves a treasure where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in

and steal. We pray. That you would help us to live and serve and pray and give and work for the glory of that name. The only name that matters. The name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Amen.