

3 John

THE ELDER, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth. I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true. I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

Weight of Concern

During one summer's holidays, our family remained in Muskoka and not only enjoyed the best of "vacation country", but had the privilege of gathering to worship among some of the churches in the area. These occasions were times of real blessing. The common thread woven through each service was a deep burden within the heart of each Pastor for the state of spiritual integrity and commitment of confessing Christians. This is not unlike the concern cited by Charles Colson, in his book "The Body". He shares the following information from George Barna's research study: "when researchers asked pastors how they believed Christ would rate their church ... 53 percent said Christ would rate the church as having little positive impact on souls and society" ("The Body", page 31). Apart from the obvious concern this should raise among Christians, there is also cause for pondering the souls deep weight upon church leaders.

This weight is comparable to that expressed by Paul when he declared: "Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:28 NIV). To such people of God, who genuinely sense great concern for the present state of Christianity (and rightly so), the Lord gives special words of encouragement. Paul, himself burdened, shared this truth: "it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:2 NIV). Paul was reminded that God calls his servants to faithfulness, not success. Scripture affirms that as long as each leader is actively and with spiritual integrity, being faithful to God, peace can be found in the understanding of a job well done before Him. A dear pastor friend stated this truth in these words: "preach, pray and plug away! - let God deal with results."

To Elijah, during his discouragement God said: "I reserve seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal" (1 Kings 19:18 NIV). The Lord reminded the prophet of the many faithful people that his servant had overlooked. Elijah was to rejoice over the committed, rather than be dismayed by the uncommitted. This truth has been captured in the familiar chorus: "Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done."

When a busy church leader, who felt the weight of spiritual "shepherdship" of thousands, was asked this question: "If you had your life to live again what would you do differently?" he replied; "I would eat more ice cream!". He had grasped an important lesson; Be faithful to God and enjoy each day that He is pleased to give. This is an appropriate summary of the above texts. Although the burden of concern is legitimate, few today will carry as heavy a weight of responsibility as the apostle Paul did, yet he boldly declared "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Should the concerned believers of today do any less?

What is my response:
