

EFC

November 5, 2023

Big Story. Bigger God. – “High Walls and Warm Tables”

2 and 3 John

Good morning, English Fellowship Church. My name is Jeremy, and I am one of the Pastors here. This morning we continue our overview of the New Testament books, as we look at 2 and 3 John.

Background:

- Both letters written by the Apostle John, one of the original disciples, who also wrote the Gospel of John, 1 John, and Revelation. Last week, as we looked at 1 John, we were encouraged that all who believe in Jesus can know with certainty that we have eternal life.
- 2 John was written to the elect lady and her children – seems most likely to refer to a local church and the believers that made up that local church.
- 3 John was written to Gaius, a faithful believer, known and loved by John.

Pray.

I. Introduction

- a. Two aspects of creating a healthy home environment: high walls (protection from those who would cause harm), but warm tables (generous, inviting, loving). The truth is, not everyone should be let in, but not everyone should be left out.
- b. This is the same for Christians and churches when it comes to who we support, give platform to, allow to have influence among us. We need to have high walls for the sake of the truth, while also having warm and welcoming tables for the sake of love.
- c. Looking at 2 and 3 John side by side gives us this well-rounded picture: high walls to not support or give influence to those who teach lies; while at the same time showing tangible and significant support through generous hospitality and to true brothers who are engaged in the spread of the Gospel message of salvation and new life in Christ.
- d. There are other themes in 2 and 3 John, some of which overlap with 1 John (brotherly love, obedience to God’s commandments, commitment to the truth); John also addresses situations specific to the recipients of the letters (Diotrephes, Demetrius). But we are going to focus on how we are to treat people who come to us on a mission.

Read 2 John.

Read 3 John.

II. 2 John: we must have high walls to avoid supporting those who are not faithful to Christ.

- a. Deceivers and false teachers
 - i. Had left the church fellowship, and had gone out into the world.
 1. 2 John 7: [For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.](#)
 2. Same description from 1 John – once were part of the church, but now are not, and have left the true faith (see 1 John 2:19)
 - ii. Just read that they did not teach that Jesus Christ came in the flesh.

1. This was a key component of those who had left the faith (see also 1 John 2:22-23)
2. There are other false teachings we must guard against as well.
- iii. Did not remain faithful to the gospel message of salvation in Jesus.
 1. 2 John 1:9 **Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.**
- b. How are we to treat such deceivers?
 - i. Watch ourselves (vs. 8)
 1. 2 John 1:8 **Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.**
 2. The way to guard against lies is to know the truth and walk in the truth.
 - a. Know what Jesus taught. (see Matt. 24:4ff)
 - i. Matthew 24:4-5 **And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.** (and then Jesus teaches them what will happen, so they know the truth as a guard against lies and liars)
 - b. Know the Scriptures.
 - i. Psalm 119:105 **Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.**
 - c. Walking in the truth (repeated 4 times in 2 and 3 John): don't just know it in your head, know it by experience!
 - d. This, by the way, is how we discern if someone is a deceiver we need to avoid supporting, or a faithful messenger who we should support!
 - i. Illustration: **False \$10 bill**
 - ii. Don't support them in a way that helps further their work, or we will be guilty of taking part in their work!
 1. Understanding the cultural setting John was writing into is essential to understand what John is saying. When a stranger would enter into a town, they would be treated as an outsider without rights. All that changed if a local resident welcomed them into their house. Then, the stranger's situation from that of "outsider" to that of "guest", giving them an open door to engage in the life of the town. When the resident received someone into their home, they were affirming to the community that their guest was a worthy person. This was the same message likely communicated in Christian greeting, which carried with it an affirmation of the Christian standing of the one being greeted. In other words, receiving and giving greeting was similar to giving a recommendation and opening the door into the community.
 - a. **Illustration: I don't normally eat street food unless I have a recommendation from someone who knows! Illustration: I like to have a reference from someone before I go to a doctor, now that Dr. Steve doesn't live here anymore!**
 2. Receiving into a house or giving greeting was like that recommendation! So, John is saying: don't support a deceiver and

false teacher by helping them have a platform or gain influence in peoples' lives.

- a. Application: If a famous Jehovah's Witness is coming to Quito to hold an evangelistic crusade, don't let them stay in your house as their base of operations for their deceptive work! Don't give your money to prosperity preachers.
 - b. Application to church life: As I said, John is likely writing to a local church and its believers. As EFC, we need to be discerning as to who we allow to teach and preach, who we allow to come and talk about missions work with you and ask you for support, and who we allow to use our facilities. We need to make sure we are not supporting false teachers.
 - iii. Still love them as people created in God's image – love your enemies, do good to those who persecute you, seek to share the Gospel with them and help them see their errors; but whatever you do, don't encourage or support their work in any way.
 - c. We need to have high walls when it comes to deceivers who are not faithful to Christ or His teachings.
- III. But 3 John tells us we must behave quite differently toward brothers and sisters who are faithfully engaged in spreading the truth of eternal life in Jesus. We must have warm tables in support of true Gospel workers.
- a. John commends Gaius for the way he welcomed and loved fellow Christians who had come to him from John,
 - i. Even though Gaius did not know them personally, he apparently made a lot of effort to care for them and support them in their work, and John wants to encourage him to continue to do so.
 - ii. John goes on to say that Gaius should send them on their journey "in a manner worthy of God". (vs. 6)
 - iii. 3 John 1:8 [Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.](#)
 - b. Note: A significant part of John's criticism of Diotrephes is that he did not support these faithful missionaries, and tried to prevent others in the church from doing so.
 - c. Warm tables are my picture of hospitality.
 - i. Example: [My Uncle Andy](#)
 - ii. Understanding this in John's day (see above), the idea of hospitality was not only a warm table generously shared, but also support and platform and helping give an open door for their ministry.
 1. Illustration: Mutual partnership in India
 - d. Application: how can we support those who are engaged in spreading the Gospel?
 - i. Individually:
 1. Pray
 2. Invite into homes (meals, lodging)
 3. Support tangibly
 - c. \$ and gifts
 - d. Service and volunteering
 - e. Materials
 - i. [Shoes, etc.](#)
 - ii. As a church:
 1. Share information and give opportunity to the church to know ways to pray and serve
 2. Pray together for missionaries and ministers

3. Facilities
 - f. Elders many years ago decided to make the church facilities available to support faithful kingdom workers and ministries, and God has opened the floodgates for us
4. Support financially
5. Encourage and support missionaries who are from our church
 - g. Ex. Lydia

IV. Conclusion

- a. So, we need to have high walls to ensure we don't support deceivers or false teachers in their work; but we also need to have warm tables and generous hearts toward those who are faithfully engaged in Gospel ministry.
- b. Importance of both sides of this: we don't want to be guilty of taking part in the wicked works of deceivers; and, we have the great privilege of being fellow workers alongside faithful gospel workers and missionaries by supporting them.
 - i. Remember, when you partner in the spread of the Gospel, it is for the glory of God in Jesus Christ, and the eternal joy of fellow image bearers! What a privilege that God would allow us to take part in such a worthy effort!