

## I Have No Greater Joy – 3 John

**Introduction** – I want to take this opportunity not only to walk through 3 John, but as we close our time in John’s epistles, to consider the tone of John’s pastoral writings. John’s ministry has covered the entire church (1 John), specific congregations (2 John) and individual believers (3 John). In all three, close to John’s heart and intentions is that their joy *may be full* (1 John 1:4), and he rejoices when he hears *that some are walking in truth* (2 John 4). His greeting in 3 John shares a similar cry: *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth* (v4). The assurance of salvation in Jesus Christ produces a walk in the truth that in turn grants joy to the congregation generally as well as to individuals be they pastors, parents, or friends. This is because this is the goal of our ministry to one another as pastors, parents, and brothers and sisters – that we might walk in truth. This is our greatest joy.

**The Messages of 3 John** – These could be broken down and identified by the three individuals named in the epistle.

**Commending Gaius** (vv1-8) – Gaius is the recipient of the letter and is whom John “loves in truth.” He is commended for showing true love (probably including hospitality) to brothers and strangers (those he didn’t personally know). John reiterates that we should support such missionaries so that we become co-workers with them in the gospel (v8). In times of persecution (and in this case, the opposition by Demetrius), such receiving of missionaries was an act of courageous faith. Jesus told us that how we treat the brethren is tantamount to how we treat Him (Matt 25:37-40). Just a side note: the “Gentiles” referred to in v7 - John is probably metaphorically speaking of any who are outside the church. The church ought to be the first place for support, for those with needs in the body and missionaries who are passing through.

**Condemning Diotrophes** (vv9-10) – Quite to the contrary, Diotrophes is condemned for his lack of support to John’s apostolic teachings, the emissaries he had sent before, and threatening others who would support the John’s “brethren.” He gossips about John and others with malicious words. His rejection of these was a rejection of Christ; Diotrophes loved the preeminence, and this lust for supremacy reveals itself in unjust accusations and other wicked deeds. He refused to use his place of leadership as a place to humbly serve and submit to authority as Jesus did (Phil 2:5-8). We must also watch out for ambitious men, for those who refuse to bow before authority. We must watch out for those who fill the church with gossip and evil words about the leaders of the church and who close themselves off from other Christians in “their” group. It is often petty. It is always destructive.

**Commending Demetrius** (vv11-12) – Finally, Demetrius, who may be delivering the letter from John, is commended to Gaius. This is connected to verse 11 as Demetrius is contrasted to Diotrophes; Demetrius is one who does what is good and is to be imitated. We do not only need good teaching; we need good examples of those who come well commended that we might imitate them. As individuals and as a church, we do not have to reinvent the wheel; there are many faithful testimonies around us and others who have come before us who teach us how to live by their faithful lives.

**No Greater Joy** (v4) – As I mentioned, let us wrap up our study of the epistles of John with a focus on the pastoral tone of John. Here is something for us all to imitate.

**The Greatest Joy in Parenting** – John speaks of himself as though he were a father and there is a joy that is peculiar to Christian mothers and fathers. **First**, parents will not agree with this verse for their children if they are not themselves walking in truth. “*No wolf prays for its offspring to become a sheep*” – Spurgeon. Never be content simply to know that your son or daughter has a good education, or has married well, or has reached a level of comfort, wealth, or earthly security, if you do not know that he or she is walking in truth. **Second**, if this joy truly is the greatest, then learn to plead the promises, to give yourself to prayer for your child (“*The joy of an answer to prayer is very much in proportion to the wrestling which went with the prayer*” – Spurgeon), and to be someone worth imitating in your conduct, in your embrace of grace, forgiveness, thankfulness, and trust in God. **Third**, if John would use your role as a parent as an example to his role as pastor, then use his role as pastor as an example to yours as parent. Pastor your children.

**The Greatest Joy in Pastoring** – Of course, this is what John is literally referring to in verse 4. Ministers, elders, and leaders are not sent from God to give you a respectable Sunday, nor to comfort you while they conduct a service of worship on your behalf. They are sent to us by God to step on our toes, to drive the sword of the Spirit deep and often painfully into our souls, to turn us from ourselves and our self-righteous arrogance and lead us to true repentance, faith, and salvation. They are given to us to direct us to the only One who can provide us with grace in our daily times of need and to keep us from falling to the temptations of the antichrists and the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The joy of a faithful pastor is to hear that *his children walk in truth*. Not only converting, not only professing, but persevering and growing in it. John and other NT writers regularly rejoice to hear that their churches are walking consistently in what they believe. What do others hear of us? God is most glorified in us when we are a people most satisfied in Him – and when this bears fruit in our walk, it is a great joy and a potent witness to the world around.