

“The Deeds of Diotrephes”

III John 1:9-11

Introduction: In the third epistle of John, the Bible describes three types of people in the church. It is one of these characters that we would like to focus in this sermon. Diotrephes was a man of influence in the church, and possibly had a following in the church. His desire was to control everything that happened in the church. He even wanted to control the pulpit, but felt threatened by the aged apostle. The last that that Diotrephes wanted was the church to receive John and follow him.

1. The Truth in Gaius 1:1-3
2. The Trouble of Diotrephes 1:9-11
3. The Testimony of Demetrius 1:12

Body: It seems like every church has members who insist on “being boss” and having their own way. Sometimes it is an officer, perhaps a longtime member of the church who thinks he or she has “seniority rights.” Diotrephes wanted the final say-so about everything in the church, and his decisions were determined by one thing: “What will this do for Diotrephes?” There was a constant attitude of Diotrephes to promote himself.

- I. His Priority v. 9- *“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes...”*
 - A. A Desired Recognition v. 9- *“...who loveth to have the preeminence among them...”*
 1. Who ought to have the preeminence in the church? Colossians 1:18
 2. Matthew 18:1, Mark 9:34, Luke 22:24
 3. Matthew 20:28, John 3:30
 - B. A Deliberate Resistance v. 9- *“...receiveth us not.”*
 1. It is incredible to think that a church leader (Diotrephes may have been an elder) would not have fellowship with one of our Lord’s own apostles!
 2. How much Diotrephes could have learned from John! But Jesus Christ was not preeminent in his life, therefore Diotrephes could afford to treat the aged apostle this way.
 3. Why did Diotrephes reject John? The obvious reason seems to be that John challenged the man’s right to be dictator in the church. John was a threat to Diotrephes, because John had the authority of an apostle. John knew the truth about Diotrephes and was willing to make it known. Satan was at work in the church because Diotrephes was operating on the basis of pride and self-glorification, two of the devil’s chief tools.
- II. His Practices v. 10- *“Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth...”*
 - John even entertained the thought of coming in person to deal with the problem.
 - Paul would have done the same thing. II Corinthians 13:2- *“I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare”*
 - A. Notice His Conversation v. 10- *“...prating against us with malicious words...”*

1. The phrase *prating against us with malicious words* means “bringing false and empty charges against us.” What Diotrephes was saying about John was sheer nonsense, but there are people who love to hear such talk and who will believe it!
 2. If in pride you want the preeminence, you will criticize anyone who may be a competitor in order to keep them from gaining more respect than you have. (John Butler)
 3. Proverbs 17:4- “*A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.*”
 4. Revelation 22:15- “*For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*”
- B. Notice His Contentment v. 10- “*...and not content therewith...*”
- C. Notice His Conflicts v. 10- “*...neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would...*”
1. People like Diotrephes will always have their enthusiastic followers because many sincere but immature and untaught believers prefer to follow such leaders.
- D. Notice His Casting v. 10- “*...and casteth them out of the church.*”
1. It made no difference whether or not a person knew and loved the Lord. What mattered was whether they knew and bowed to Diotrephes.
 2. It has been my experience that most of the distress and division in local churches, and between churches, has resulted from personalities more than anything else.

III. His Problem v. 11

- Diotrephes is not only condemned, but he is contrasted as well.
- A. What He Follows v. 11- “*Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good.*”
- B. Where is His Faith v. 11- “*...He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.*”

Conclusion: Whenever a church has a resident dictator in its membership there are bound to be problems, because people who are spiritually minded will not tolerate that kind of leadership. The Holy Spirit is grieved when the members of the body are not permitted to exercise their gifts because one member must have his own way. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will discover how many hearts have been broken and churches destroyed because of the arrogant “ministries” of people like Diotrephes. Consider what this man was doing.