

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in Truth" (3 John: 4)

Compiled by Dr. Geevarghese Yulios Metropolitan

Dearly beloved in our Lord,

On behalf of the Malankara Orthodox Church, Indian Orthodoxy, we greet the delegates of the Lausanne-Orthodox Consultations and express our fraternal Love and concerns to The host Church and all member Churches and Organizations.

I do thank God and feel honored of leading this opening Bible-study and the verse I have selected is 3 John 4: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in Truth". I feel that St. John's exhortation is perpetual to all Christians at all times. In other words, the Word of God speaks to us today that we should be walking in Truth, in Christ, with one witness while we are one in Christ.

The Third Epistle of John in the New Testament is attributed to John the Evangelist, traditionally thought to be the author of the Gospel of John and the other two epistles of John. It is a private letter composed to a man named Gaius, recommending to him a group of Christians led by Demetrius, which had come to preach the gospel in the area where Gaius lived. The purpose of the letter is to encourage and strengthen Gaius, and to warn him against Diotrephes, who refuses to cooperate with the author of the letter. The language of 3 John echoes that of the Gospel of John, which is conventionally dated to around AD 90, so the epistle was likely written near the end of the first century. Though the location of writing is unknown, but tradition places it in Ephesus. The epistle is found in many of the oldest New Testament manuscripts, and its text is free of major discrepancies or textual variants.

There is no doctrine laid out in 3 John, which is strictly a personal letter, but the overall theme is the importance of hospitality, especially when it comes to men who were working to spread the Gospel. 3 John is the 2nd shortest book in the Bible and is the only New Testament book which does not contain the names "Jesus" or "Christ"!

The context and content of the Epistle is to commend Gaius for his loyalty and his hospitality towards a group of traveling "brothers". The "brothers" are brothers in the faith or missionaries, who in accordance with Jesus' command in Mark 6: 8–9 have set out on a journey without any money. The Elder, John the Evangelist, then goes on to request that Gaius provide for the brothers to continue their journey. The Elder next describes his conflict with Diotrephes, who does not acknowledge the Elder's authority and is excommunicating those, like Gaius, who welcome missionaries sent by him. It is in this context St. John's entreaty to Gaius: "Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God." This injunction is reminiscent of several passages in 1 John (2:3–5, 3:4–10, 4:7) as well.

In Verse 12, John further introduces another man named Demetrius, who according to the Apostolic Constitutions VII.46.9 was ordained by John as bishop of Philadelphia (now Amman, Jordan). Demetrius was probably a member of the group of missionaries discussed earlier in the letter, and 3 John likely serves as a recommendation letter to Gaius about

Demetrius. Recommendation letters were quite common in the early church, as evidenced by 2 Corinthians 3:1, Romans 16:1–2, and Colossians 4:7–8.

The Elder, before ending the letter, says that he has many other things to tell to Gaius, and plans to make a journey to see him in the near future, using almost the exact language of 2 John 12. The closing verse, "Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, one by one", is typical of contemporary correspondence, with "Peace be to you".

After giving a short description of the Epistle, let me try to highlight few points which may be beneficial for our Given context.

- In this era of Soft-mails and SMS(short message service), I strongly feel that, the modest style of writing a letter is highly effected. The 3rd Epistle of John is a wonderful example for how to communicate in a meaningful manner? It is obvious through the letter; from salutation to conclusion. See the genuine love and passion expressed by the author.
- The joy of a minister of our Lord is nothing than that his/her spiritual children are keeping the precepts of our Lord and having good witness in the community. Once John was the youngest disciple of our Lord and ran ahead Peter to see the resurrected Lord; Later became the Eldest of disciples, herald of Christ, wrote the Gospel and four other entries of the New Testament; kept his entire life for the propagation of the Word of God. He kept his tempo throughout his life and stood for the Truth.
- St. John is precise to say that the Christian life style itself is the way of walking in Truth. Gaius, probably a duke of that region and not yet officially baptized, but since he is doing humanitarian work to his community and extending hospitality to the missionaries, St. John appreciates him and his work.

While we gathered together as one witnessing community of our Lord, It is our duty to 'walk in Truth', obey our Lord, and do His mission to the world. Then all our Spiritual Teachers will rejoice about us. May God bless us all.