



Northside Proclaimer

Proclaiming The Word Of The Lord

1 Thessalonians 1:8

Northside Church Of Christ Welcomes You!

March 20, 2016

I Have Met Diotrephes

Don R. Hastings

In 3 John 9, 10, we read, "I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth and casteth them out of the church."

The main characteristic of Diotrephes is that he "loveth to have the preeminence among them." Brother Guy N. Woods, in his commentary on the New Testament epistles, wrote, "The word 'preeminence,' (philoproteuon, present active participle,) is derived from philoprotos, a fondness for being first; and is, alas, a disposition too often observable in our ranks today. The spirit manifested by this man Diotrephes is wholly foreign to the New Testament and opposed to the teaching of the Lord himself. All self-serving and personal aggrandizement must be eschewed and avoided if we would measure to the standard of primitive Christianity" (A Commentary On The New Testament Epistles, Vol. VII, p. 363).

It was the love for preeminence which led to the formation of the Roman Catholic Church. This attitude is prevalent in the Lord's church and is still the cause of much dissension. The predominant characteristic of those who act like Diotrephes is still the love for preeminence. They want their will to be exalted above all others and woe be to anyone who would dare question their decision on anything.

Diotrephes may have felt that the apostle John would have been more greatly honored by the church than himself. His pride would not stand for that to happen. Those, who act like Diotrephes, are inflated with pride. This pride will lead to their spiritual destruction (Prov. 16:18). Pride keeps them from seeing their faults or listening to someone who disagrees with them. It keeps them from asking for forgiveness unless asking for forgiveness helps keep them in power. It causes them to be jealous of another's ability. If they begin to suspect that someone else is beginning to be highly esteemed by the congregation, then they feel compelled to undermine his reputation. They view anyone, who has leadership ability and does his own thinking, as a rival. What great harm this does to the Lord's church! What a great victory for Satan!

Those with the disposition of Diotrephes will split the local congregation if they don't get their way. They will hold grudges. They will lie over and over again. They will claim they have been misunderstood. They will meet privately with brethren to try and persuade them to join their side. What strife and turmoil they cause. Weak brethren fall by the "way-side." Some brethren, who were once strong in the faith, may become less active in the Lord's service.

I have met "Diotrephes" in several congregations and the meetings have not been pleasant. He is not always easy to identify when you first meet him, because he wears other names and disguises his true attitude. He can smile sweetly and do good deeds. He can be very charming until opposed. If he is opposed by someone who has very little influence in the congregation, he may choose to ignore such a one. However, if he is opposed by someone who has some influence, then that one will be severely rebuked by him "with malicious words" (KJV), usually when no one else is around. If the opposition continues, then "Diotrephes" will rebuke him publicly and endeavor to cast him "out of the church."

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Announcements

- Remember the shut in's.
- Pray for the church and one another.
- Remember the spiritual sick among us.
- Call or email Bryan to add announcements, thanks.
- We need volunteers for door knocking. Please see Bryan.
- We need volunteers for picking folks up. Please see Bryan.
- Upcoming gospel meeting: April 8-10th. Plan now!

Five Day A Week Reading Plan

Mon: 2 Sam. 9-13

Tues: 2 Sam. 14-18

Wed: 2 Sam. 19-23

Thurs: 2 Sam. 24-1 Kings 4

Fri: 1 Kings 5-9

I have found this attitude demonstrated in elders, preachers, and occasionally in other members. It is hard for many to take a position of authority without it going to their head. Because of this human weakness, God gave the qualification of "not self-willed" as a trait which must be possessed by a man who is appointed an elder (Tit. 1:7). The "Diotrephes" person is, also, "contentious" and usually "soon angry" (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). We often pay little attention to these qualifications, but spend considerable amount of time discussing whether a man must have one or two children to be qualified. It is extremely difficult to remove "Diotrephes" after he has become an elder. When he takes over the congregation and exalts himself as the head of the church, then the church ceases to belong to the Lord, for it belongs to him. The brethren become subject to him. Brethren, how can you stand by idly and permit this evil situation to go on? Where is your courage?

Peter said that elders are not to be tending the flock of God by ". . . lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2,3). In the commentary already mentioned in this article, I found this statement, "The words 'lording it over' (from katakurieuo, to rule over others high-handedly and autocratically) suggests an arrogant, domineering spirit, and is here positively forbidden to those who would serve acceptably as elders or bishops" (Ibid., p. 125). Elders should be an "ample to the brethren in humility. God will resist all with the attitude of Diotrephes (1 Pet. 5:5,6). No one should ever be made an elder if he has a love for power. Beware of men who campaign for the eldership.

If you choose to reveal the true identity of "Diotrephes" be prepared for a bitter struggle. He will strongly resent being called "Diotrophes" even though he acts just like the Diotrephes John knew. Be prepared, also, to stand alone. Some brethren may sing about defending the cause of Christ, but really want no part of a battle even though the Lord's church is being torn asunder. Paul told Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith. . ." (1 Tim. 6:12). Too many are keeping their spiritual sword in its sheath and not taking it out for use. Are you doing this or are you closing your eyes and saying, "I see no evil"?

I believe the Lord must find it a great abomination for someone to try to usurp His authority! This is an awful sin! How can we expect to find favor in the eyes of the Lord when we have dethroned Him and exalted ourselves in His place? We must remember that He has all authority and we are His bond servants. We are His sheep. We must humbly obey Him in all things. Let us greatly rejoice that we can serve in His kingdom and He will be our Shepherd! Let elders remember that they are shepherds serving under the chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4).

I believe the greatest need, in the Lord's church today, is qualified elders. God, in His matchless wisdom, made elders to be overseers of the flock. He gave qualifications for men to meet who seek the office of an elder (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1). Those, who fulfill these qualifications and are appointed elders, are a blessing to the cause of Christ. Let us "esteem them highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. 5:13). There is no greater work than that of an elder. It is a work which demands tremendous sacrifice, energy, time and wisdom. Elders, do your work well for you will give an account to the Lord of lords (Heb. 13:17).

Preachers, proclaim faithfully the glorious gospel of Christ. Proclaim it in love. Exalt Christ, but crucify self (Gal. 2:20). Preach to please Christ, not men (Gal. 1:10).

Any of us may possess the attitude of Diotrephes. We are all capable of putting off humility and putting on pride. If we are guilty of this, we cause the Lord to weep and Satan to rejoice. If you have this attitude, repent with bitter tears at once. Call upon God to forgive you. Be very determined that this diabolical attitude will never again dwell in your heart.