

The Three in John 3

John's third epistle mentions three men. The letter is written to "*the wellbeloved Gaius*". This was a man of good spiritual health but declining physical health (2). The letter was likely written to this individual because of the second man.

Diotrephes was a man who desired control of the congregation (9). He would not receive letters or messengers from John. If others in the church would receive them he would throw them out of the congregation (10). Perhaps Gaius was already put out at the time the epistle was written.

The third man is the one we know the least about. 3 Jn. 12 says, "*Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.*" I believe **Demetrius** was the messenger who brought the letter to Gaius.

The time was one of confusion. The congregation was controlled by the wicked. The righteous were put out of the church. The inspired Apostle was not listened to by the church. It is no wonder that John felt the need to clarify the faithfulness of Demetrius in such a time.

He was a man of *good report* according to *all men*. That is, he had a positive reputation. He also had a *good report of the truth*. This means his life was consistent with truth. He was not just liked by people. He was faithful to God. John concludes with a personal endorsement. We likewise *bear record* that this man is good and our record is *true*. In confusing times it is good to know who we can trust. *Ron Roberts*

Mooreville church of Christ

720 N. Indianapolis Road

Mooreville, IN 46158

December 11, 2016

Assemblies

Sunday:

9:30 a.m. Bible Study

10:30 a.m. Worship

5:00 p.m. Worship

Wednesday:

7:00 p.m. Bible Study

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Announcements

Daily Bible reading schedules for 2017 are available on the back table.

We will have our final class for the daily Bible readers on Dec. 15 at the Roberts at 7:00.

Marynell is in Chicago until Thursday to assist Ezekiel Logan Taylor and his parents.

Be careful on the roads as the weather gets colder and the streets get slick. We want everyone to be safe.

Remember to pray for the sick among us and offer what assistance you can. Elizabeth is still having a problem with her foot. Mary Allen and Jill Fisher are still battling cancer. Coughs, colds, and flu will soon be making the rounds as well. Do not forget about our shut-ins with the busyness of the season. Give encouragement wherever you can.

**Love the
sinner but
hate the sin**

Honoring the Dead

Ron Roberts

We visited the James Dean Museum when we lived in Fort Wayne. My oldest daughter, Catherine, decided to do a report on him for school. She came into my office in tears one day and said, *“This book says James Dean was a homosexual!”* I explained to her how many people will claim the allegiance of the dead for their cause. Dean had been dead for decades and could not deny anything that was written about him. The following year she did a report on Hans Christian Andersen and read he was homosexual too. I do not think the writers considered this claim to be a negative slur on the person they were writing about, but Christians feel differently.

In our culture we honor our dead at their funeral. Positive statements are made about their lives. Negative traits are put aside during this time. When the family gathers afterwards usually someone will say something about what Mom or Dad **would have wanted**. Maybe it has to do with the parting of possessions or the care of a child. We feel we honor the departed by carrying out these wishes. Of course I have heard some people say, *“Mom wanted me to have this,”* when everyone else doubted the claim. What the departed **wanted** can only be known by what they said while they were alive or what they wrote in a will.

We have recently had a lesson from Luke 16 about The Rich Man and Lazarus. Verse 22 tells us that Lazarus died and was carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom. This would be the same as Paradise that Jesus mentioned to the thief on the cross (Luke 23:43). Lazarus was honored in the Hadean realm. The rich man, on the other hand, we were told was buried. I suspect he was honored by fancy words said at his funeral, but the following verses shows he was not worthy of such honors and found himself in torments after death.

I have spoken at funerals of people who were not Christians. One man killed himself. Another woman spent all her time complaining

(according to her children). I did not speak evil of the dead at their funerals. I found no advantage to it. They could not defend themselves. Their loved ones would have been outraged. My words would have complicated their sorrows instead of relieving them. But I also did not lie or try to preach them into heaven (I could not change their place).

Had Lazarus returned from the dead as the rich man requested he would not likely have convinced the rich man’s five brothers that he was in torments (Luke 16:27-28). These brethren would have found the various good traits of their departed brother and overlooked his shortcomings. They would have felt they honored him by speaking well of him, and would have done him dishonor to accept the truth. The curious thing is that what the rich man **would have wanted** them to do was to not follow his example and not deny his character flaws.

We often wrestle with this when we teach the Gospel to someone in a denomination. Their parent or grandparent had died and was never baptized. They will contend their loved one was saved without baptism. We are then placed in a difficult position. Do we take away their false comfort, or do we try to spare them from future torment? It is best not to focus on the dead person. We do not have the ability to know, decide, or change their fate anyway. Rather than concentrating on the dead’s fate we should focus on the living’s opportunity. They feel they are honoring the dead person’s wishes by denying the Gospel when in fact (if grandma is in torments) she **wants** them to reject her and obey the Gospel. The only comfort she will ever receive is seeing her loved ones not join her when they die.

It is good to honor the dead. It is better to honor the living. But it is best to honor God. All people (living and dead) have flaws. To imitate them will guarantee we will have the same errors in life. We should follow Christ instead of men. We should obey the Gospel instead of defending the behavior of someone who did not. The best thing you can do for anyone (living or dead) is to be a godly person yourself. John said he had no greater joy than to hear of children walking in truth (3 Jn. 4).