



Eliminating Obstacles To Progress

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"I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church" (3 John 1:9-10).

Some people operate on a philosophy of just sitting back and watching the evil in others, with the hope that it will go away with time when those people outgrow that stage of their lives. Unfortunately, that does not align with the uniform teaching of the scriptures. Doing nothing is not an option if evil is to be stopped. Sitting down and watching is simply playing into the strategies of the devil and handing over control to satan to do his worst. Evil triumphs when good men do nothing. And it is better to try and fail than to fail to try. John heard about the evil deeds of Diotrephes, and took actions to stop them so that the good work of the Lord will prosper. Note the following salient points:

- 1) The evil in Diotrephes originated from self - he loved to have the pre-eminence among other church members.
- 2) His love for pre-eminence made him to reject the ministry of John and other ministers because he saw them as threats to his continued domination over the people.
- 3) To sustain his domineering position over the church members, he prated against John and other ministers with malicious words, aimed at discrediting them so that he can have a good standing among the people.
- 4) His actions did not stop at the above, but he went further to reject the brethren sent by Paul "... neither doth he himself receive the brethren". He felt threatened by these brethren because the truth of the gospel they brought would expose his errors. Therefore, to cover up his errors he put up barriers against the truth. He withdrew from fellowshiping with 'better' Christians who could correct his errors. When a person shields himself / herself from those who can correct him/her, and only enjoys the company of

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those that flatter him/her, it is usually an indication of being deceived and living in error. When a person thinks he / she is holier than other believers, and therefore wants to keep away from them so as not to be 'contaminated' or made to lose his/her 'convictions', it is often because the person is living in error. It is true that bad company ruin good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33), but we need to learn that Jesus did not lose His convictions by reaching out to the publicans, harlots, etc and winning them for God.

- 5) Diotrephes action went a step further to forbidding members of the local church that would receive such ministers from John; and he cast them out of the church. By so doing he was creating an atmosphere of fear so as to rule over the ignorant. Such actions would deprive the church of truth leaving the remnants ignorant followers of Diotrephes rather than followers of Jesus.

True discernment requires a recognition of the impact of certain actions in the light of God's word and taking the right course of action to stop evil so that good can reign. John rose up to the challenge by:

- 1) Writing to publicly expose the evil works of Diotrephes
- 2) Sending other brethren to convey the truth to the church members, when he could not go by himself (perhaps due to imprisonment or other pressing commitments).
- 3) Promising in his writings to take necessary action to remedy the situation, when if he has the opportunity to visit in person.

The above left the brethren in no doubt as to what the truth is.