Work Together for the Truth

3 John 1:1-14

Key Verse: 1:8 “We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth.”

Last week through the second letter of John the Apostle we learned how to walk in the truth and in love. Walking in the truth means living for the truth and following the truth. The truth is Jesus Christ, and the truth is the word of God. In his third letter John encourages us to work together for the truth. This is John’s prayer and the purpose for this letter. What does “work together for the truth” mean?

First, the threefold blessings (1-2) Look at verse 1. “***The elder, to my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.***” Unlike his previous letters, John mentioned the name of the recipient whose name is Gaius. Gaius is a common name in Italy like Michael or John in America. The first name of Julius Caesar is Gaius, and the grandson of Caesar Augustus was also Gaius. But the name of Gaius appears in the book of Acts 19 & 20 and it is introduced as one of the traveling companions of Paul from Macedonia. (Ac 19:29, 20:4) Gaius and Aristarchus were seized in the place of Paul while an uproar occurred in the city of Ephesus during his third mission journey. In this way Gaius went through all hardships and sufferings together with Paul during his mission trip. I used to call Pastor Ron Ward, UBF General Director, a comrade. This is because we worked together as assistant pastors with Dr. Samuel Lee for the last 10 years. We enjoyed spiritual trainings together and suffered together like good friends. John called Gaius ‘*my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.*” John, even though, he was an old man, had a deep affection and respect for Gaius as a co-worker in Christ.

What was John’s greeting to Gaius? John’s greeting was his prayer for Gaius. Look at verse 2. “***Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.***” Probably both John and Gaius were old and had health issues. But here we learn about the threefold blessings from John’s prayer. The words ‘threefold blessings’ was used first by Reverend Paul Yonggi Cho, the late senior pastor of Yeoido Full Gospel Church, the biggest church in the world with 1.5 million members (about the population of West Virginia). Pastor Cho emphasized the threefold blessings when we believe in Jesus. The first blessing is good health which is a physical blessing. Everybody wants to be healthy. Young people do not realize the importance of health because they are still young. But when we get old, health is the most important issue and prayer topic. When you are healthy, you become happy. But when you lose your health, you are not happy whatever good things happen to you. Jesus said in Mark 8:36-37, “*What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul*?” He meant if we lose our health, we are not happy even though we gain the whole world. The second blessing is a material blessing including blessings for our job, marriage, children, and so on. When we become healthy, we can enjoy all these blessings. Bu if we lose our health, all these blessings are useless, and sometimes they become a burden. When Jacob ran away from his uncle Laban at night, he drove a big family with huge wealth. He had four wives, 12 children, and many cattle and sheep. But when he arrived at the Jabbok River which was like an enclosed corner, he sent all his family members and animals ahead of him and stood before God all by himself. All these blessings became a burden to him who ran for his life. The third blessing is a spiritual blessing. Look at verse 2 again. “...*that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.*” Among all these three blessings, the spiritual blessing is best. What does “*even as your soul is getting along well.*” mean? How can our soul get along well? Our soul gets along well when we have a right relationship with God. How can we have a right relationship with God? Right relationship with God comes through faith in Jesus Christ. John said in this first letter. *This is his command*: *to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us*. (1 Jn 3:23) Paul said in Romans 5:1 that we have peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Before we believe in Jesus, we were enemies of God because of our sin. But Jesus became an atoning sacrifice for our sins, and we are reconciled to God. We became his children calling God Abba Father. Through faith in Jesus, we have a right relationship with God. As long as you have this hope in Jesus Christ, you do not lose heart. It does not matter whether you are rich or poor as long as your soul gets along well with God. It does not matter even though you don’t live in a mansion house in Ladue as long as you have hope in the kingdom of heaven. So, let us pray for all these blessings, the threefold blessings. I earnestly pray for all of us here to receive these threefold blessings while we live on this earth. Amen!

Second, work together for the truth (3-8) Gaius was a very faithful man. He was a good co-worker for Paul. He is now a good co-worker for John. John was very encouraged by Gaius’ faithfulness. A faithful man works together well with anyone, any place, and anytime. Look at verses 3-4. “***It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth***.” Gaius could work well with Paul and John because he was faithful to the truth. Great men and women of God are faithful to the truth. They are not only faithful to people, but also to the truth. John the Baptist was a faithful servant of God. He was not swayed by people’s population or persecution because he was faithful to the truth. When we are not faithful to the truth, we compromise with this world. When we are not faithful to God and his words, we are swayed by situation and people’s recognition. Gaius walked in the truth. He did not walk in the truth for a while, but he continued to walk in the truth. Who are good co-workers? They are those who are faithful to the truth and continue to walk in the truth no matter what may happen to them. Let us pray that we all may become faithful workers in Christ and continue to walk in the truth. Amen!

Look at verses 5-8. “***Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth***.” There were some brothers and sisters who had visited Gaius and his church. Gaius welcomed them with warm greetings and served them with genuine love. John was so grateful for Gaius’ hospitality to the strangers. John asked Gaius to continue to work together for the truth. In doing the work of God co-workers are very important and necessary. Even Jesus worked together with his disciples when he fed the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish. In John’s gospel Jesus said to his disciples that he worked together with God the Father. The work of God cannot be done by one person. All things are done through a beautiful co-working among people. I am very grateful for our co-workers in this church. They are like Gaius, who walks in the truth, together with Paul and John. I have lots of weak points and shortcomings, but they bear me and work together with me for the truth. Recently when I saw students walking on campus, I felt more necessity of workers in the campus. Jesus said to his disciples, “*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field*.” (Mt 9:37-38) I ask God to send more harvest workers to Wash U. We need more faithful men and women of God who can work together for the truth. I also ask all of us to pray with this prayer topic: May God advance the gospel, raise Jesus’ disciples, and expand God’s kingdom. In order to fulfill this prayer topic, may God send more gospel workers to Wash U who work together for the truth! Amen!

In order to work together for the truth the first thing we must do is self-denial. The main reason which breaks the unity among co-workers is ‘pride’. When someone hurts your pride, you get mad and want to quit whatever you do. So, Jesus said to his disciples about self-denial, “*If anyone who wants to be my disciple, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*.” Jesus also denied himself to work for the truth. He denied himself to obey God’s will through Gethsemane prayer.

 In order to work together for the truth we need one mind, one goal, and one spirit. Paul said in Philippians 2:2-4, *“…make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others*.” We can deny our selfish ambition when we work for the truth. We must work for the truth, not for your own name or your glory. We become one and are united when we work for the truth, not for yourself.

Recently I had a chance to read the biography of Sarah Barry, the co-founder of UBF ministry. She was called ‘the princess of Mississippi’ as a daughter of a rich family. But she left everything behind and went to Korea as a missionary in 1955. In Korea nothing was left right after the Korean War. But she gave all her heart and life for Bible Korea. While she was planting a church in KwangJu Korea, she met Dr. Samuel Lee who was full of shepherd heart for college students. Msn Sarah Barry and Dr. Lee prayed together for Bible Korea and campus mission, and they began to work together. This was the beginning of UBF ministry. We know how God had blessed their beautiful coworking for the truth. Even though they were different in many ways, they worked together for world campus missions. DongKyo UBF started when sister Yang In Sil and I met at Hong Ik Univ. Student Center every day and prayed for Bible Hong Ik. We were very different in many ways but we worked together for the truth. May God raise many gospel workers and spiritual leaders for the world and for next generation. Amen!

Third, are you an enemy or a friend? (9-13) After he encouraged Gaius to continue to walk in the truth, now he warns against Diotrephes, one of the church leaders, who harmed the church. Who was Diotrephes? Look at verses 9-10. “***I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us. So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, spreading malicious nonsense about us. Not satisfied with that, he even refuses to welcome other believers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church***.” According to John, Diotrephes was a proud man. He wanted to be first among all as Satan wanted to win over God. He was arrogant that he did not welcome God’s people. He spread bad rumors to the church against God’s servants. He even expelled other believers from the church. Is he a friend of Jesus or an enemy to Jesus? I know a woman deacon in a big church in Korea. She was zealous for recognition and jealous to others. So, she invited some unbelievers to the church, but soon she fought with them and expelled all of them from the church. She thought that she is above her pastor and above God. Diotrephes was like this arrogant Korean woman.

There was another man of God who served the church. His name was Demetrius. Who was he? Look at verses 11-12. “***Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone—and even by truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true***.” The name Demetrius appears in the book of Acts, Acts 19:1-27. Do you remember the silversmith who ran a business at the shrine of Artemis and ignited an uproar against Paul in Ephesus? His name is Demetrius. If he is the same guy whom John mentioned here, his conversion must have been a great miracle in his life. Through Paul’s teaching Demetrius must have been converted to Christianity. Not only he became a Christian, but also, he grew up a great co-worker for Paul and John. Here we learn that we must wait and pray to the end for those who are seemingly impossible to change. Who knows if God will change them as he changed Demetrius? Jesus said: *What is impossible with men is possible with God*. (Lk 18:27)

Through the conversion of Demetrius we have hope and faith that God can change anyone, anytime, and in any situation. Who knew that Demetrius, who strongly stood against Paul became a church leader and good co-worker for John and Paul. What Jesus said is true: *So the last will be first, and the first will be last.* (Mt 20:16) Let us pray that God may raise many spiritual leaders for the world and for next generation. Let us pray that God may send many gospel workers who work together for the truth. Let us pray that God may change us and all our children to walk in the truth and work together for the truth until America becomes a kingdom of priests and holy nation. Amen!