

DIOTREPHES, WHO LOVETH TO HAVE THE PREEMINENCE

Billy Bland

Text *“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not”* (3 John 1:9).

Purpose: To help us avoid the attitude and disposition of Diotrephes and to see God’s attitude toward such a disposition.

Intro:

1.) Appreciation is extended to brethren **Burl Lemmons, Shane Reddin** and **Phil Rowen**, the elders of the Cullendale congregation and to brother **Rod Halliburton**, the evangelist of the congregation, for the invitation to be a part of this **23rd Annual Southwest Arkansas Lectureship**.

2.) “The greatest of these is love” is ever a pertinent and vital theme.

3.) Without proper love, our “service” and “dedication” is all in vain. *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have [the gift of] prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed [the poor], and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing”* (1Cor. 13:1-3).

4.) My topic is a negative aspect of love.

(1) Some things we are not to love, “preeminence.”

(2) Attention is directed to the topic, to text and the purpose.

I. WHAT IS PREEMINENCE?

1.) “Preeminence”- Greek word “proteuo” meaning “to be first, hold first place.” (Thayer)

2.) Jesus Christ is preeminent! *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all [things] he might have the preeminence”* (Col. 1:18).

(1) Because of His relationship to God. He is God, *“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature”* (Col. 1:15).

(2) Because of His relationship to creation. He is its Creator and Sustainer, *“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether [they be] thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by*

him all things consist” (Col. 1:16-17).

(3) Because of His relationship to the Church. He is the Head, “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all [things] he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18).

3.) Diotrephes is not preeminent – though he wanted to be!

II. DIOTREPHE'S PROBLEM

1.) Diotrephes was wrong (in error) both in attitude and action.

2.) “Loveth to have the preeminence”, from Greek word-“philoproteuon” meaning- “to aspire to preeminence, to desire to be first.” (Thayer)

3.) John had written to the church, but Diotrephes received neither John nor his associates, “*I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not*” (3John 1:9).

4.) His actions included:

(1) Prating against John and others with malicious words (v. 10).

(2) Refused to receive the brethren (v. 10).

(3) Those that would receive the brethren he “cast them out of the church” (v.10).

(4) Of course, the Lord adds people to the church and Diotrephes could not remove them from it. But he must have removed them (somehow) from the local congregation. Such actions could cause weak brethren to fall away.

(5) Brother Guy N. Woods noted: “This personal letter to Gaius was a warning with reference to this designing man. 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.”

(6) Diotrephes desired to be “the boss” of the church.

5.) When John came he would remember his deeds, III John 10.

III. THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE.

1.) To be great in the sight of God, one must be a servant, “*But Jesus called them [unto him], and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And*

whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Mat. 20:25-27).

2.) Notice what precipitated this statement, "*Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping [him], and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom*" (Mat. 20:20-21).

3.) Notice the trouble it caused among the others, "*And when the ten heard [it], they were moved with indignation against the two brethren*" (Mat. 20:24).

4.) Jesus' reply, Mat. 20:25-27 (noted above).

5.) Jesus' example, "*Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*" (Mat. 20:28).

CONCLUSION:

1.) The desire to be first is an ungodly attitude, producing ungodly actions.

2.) Christ is the preeminent one! Col. 1:18 (by right of position, as God, Creator and Head.)

3.) We all are His servants.

4.) May we seek to serve Him and be at peace with one another, Jas. 1:1, 4:10, Heb. 12:14.