

Dr. Robert Yarbrough, The Johannine Epistles, Session 3 – 3 John: Notes to a Trusted Friend, Gaius

This is Dr. Robert Yarbrough in his teaching on the Johannine Epistles, Balancing Life in Christ. This is session number 3, 3 John, Notes to Gaius, A Trusted Friend.

Welcome to our continuing study of John's Letters, and we're calling these lectures the Johannine Epistles, Balancing Life in Christ.

And so far, I haven't really talked about where the balance is, although I think what we're talking about is compatible with a balanced life in Christ. But in a lecture or two, I'll talk about the balance I have in mind. But for now, I would like to start this lecture by talking about Third John.

And Third John amounts to some notes to Gaius. Gaius is the person who's addressed. And as we go to look at Third John, I just want to remind us that Third John is part of the Christian canon, the 66 books of the Bible, the 39 in the Old Testament, the 27 in the New Testament.

And it doesn't hurt when we look at a little bitty book like Third John to remind us of what the Bible is in the large sweep, so that we can place this little book that it's possible a lot of people in the church have never read, because of its location and its brevity. But if you think of the whole Bible, you can summarize the whole Bible under the letters P-M-E-E-C, P-M-E-E-C. And the Old Testament is the preparation for the Gospel.

Now it's a lot more than that. But in terms of its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Old Testament prepares for the good news of Christ's coming and his saving work. The four Gospels are the manifestation of the Gospel.

They're the showing forth of the coming of the Son of God and his work. Acts is the expansion of the Gospel. Jesus comes, Jesus lives, Jesus dies, Jesus rises, Jesus ascends, and then the word of Jesus goes forth.

And Acts tells that story. And Acts is the expansion of the good news. Then we come to the epistles.

And that's where we find Third John. It's one of a number of letters that, when you take them together, explain the Gospel in the sense of how it looks lived out. If you just had the Gospels and Acts, it might be hard to envision.

How did this play out in various cities in the Roman world? But with the help of the epistles, we see some of the issues that arose. We see some of the cities that were

affected. We see how different apostolic leaders or the associates of apostolic leaders taught the Gospel, how it was lived out, received, opposed, and so forth.

So, the epistles are very important, and Third John is one of those epistles. And then Revelation is the consummation of the good news. It tells us about things that happened in the first century.

It tells us about things that will happen in the future and into eternity. So to sum up, we want to remember that every word of God is flawless. Some translations say tested.

And he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. So even little Third John, with its somewhat enigmatic message, we can say that word is flawless, and the God who gives us the word is a shield to those who take refuge in him. So let's pause for prayers as we continue our lectures.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for preserving it through the centuries. We thank you for the perfection that there is in it, because it's your word, and you are perfect, and all your ways are perfect.

We thank you for your protection, and we pray that you would prove to be a shield for us as we take refuge in you by devoting ourselves to your word. We pray in the name of Christ, amen. There are a lot of ways of interpreting the Bible, and I'm going to interpret Third John in a very simple way.

It's a two-step way, and in English, both ways begin, or both steps begin with F. First is to see. Observe. See what was then and there.

Somebody wrote John. Somebody wrote it long ago. We've already talked about who that might have been, when it might have been, what the occasion might have been, but we're looking at the then and there.

In this lecture, I'm going to do that by reading the text, and then underneath it, I'll say what I think I see, and that leads us to step two, say. Number one, we see, we observe. Then we state conclusions that are faithful to the then and there for the here and now.

I'm not going to list all the conclusions, because that would be a long process. I'll just make some observations about what we should make of the book of Third John. This is how it is outlined.

There's a greeting to Gaius, and then there's a commendation of Gaius. Gaius was a good guy, and John affirms him. There's a bad guy here, and his name is Diotrephes, and John has some words to say about him.

Then there is concluding counsel and commendation of someone named Demetrius, and then he says goodbye. First, the greeting. It's in yellow on the screen.

The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. Beloved, and I've said before in a previous lecture, don't overlook the beloved. It's not a throwaway word.

It's a word that expresses the affection of the writer for the person being addressed. Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health as it goes well with your soul, for I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. So here are some observations based on what I see in these words. First of all, notice that this writer, he calls himself the elder, and this is also a word that Peter applies to himself in 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 1. He calls himself a fellow elder, and he's writing to leaders in a church.

John doesn't call himself a fellow elder here, but he doesn't call himself an elder. So, apparently, in the apostolic age, apostles could call themselves elders or church leaders, but the point I want to make is that he did not exalt himself. He could have made a big deal out of being the beloved disciple.

He could have at least given his name, because by this time, he would have had status. He certainly could have called himself an apostle, but he just numbers himself among those in the church with his designation of elder. Secondly, he says, Beloved, I pray, and he's also said, Whom I love in truth to Gaius, and he calls Gaius Beloved.

So, in many ways, he reminds us that we should love each other. He reminds us of how love and prayer are calling cards of believers, love and prayer. Now I've noticed over the years that many Christians testify that they struggle in their prayer life, that they don't find it easy to have a meaningful prayer life or to have a regular prayer life, and by observation we see that many times Christians are not all that loving, and sometimes we can look back on our own lives and see periods when we're not very expressive of the love of God, or we did not feel the love of God, and when you don't feel the love of God, you're probably not going to live out the love of God, but I'm saying this because I want us to see what's going on here.

There's sort of an agape force field. Agape is the Greek word for love, and as you read 3 John, it can seem very thin and directionless, but notice the relational network here between the writer and the individual to whom he's writing. Apparently, they have a history, they like each other, they have a relationship, and this is something that goes along with the gospel, and it's not just a warm, horizontal relationship.

As I've said in an earlier lecture, Beloved bespeaks the love that God has for his people, and because God has set his affection on his people, they know him, he is their father, and this gives them a status of children, you know, brothers and sisters in the faith. So, there's a thickness to the language here that's easy to overlook, because it's simple language, in English it's almost awkward because of its repetition, and we don't know for sure why John writes in this repetitive style. We don't know if it's because there was another language that was his native language, and he's writing in a kind of basic, repetitious Greek, because maybe a Hebraic or Aramaic language was more native to him.

Some have suggested over the years that he's very elderly, and so his linguistic ability is not as sharp, and his word choice is not as varied as it might have been if he were in a younger state. We don't know the answers to these questions, but I kind of like it that he repeats these things, because it's clear where his emphasis lies, and his emphasis in his walk with Christ lies in a relationship with God that results in a thick relationship with other people, and a relationship in which he prays for them. He prays that things will go well with him and that he may be in good health as it is with his soul.

So, there's a holistic concern for Gaius. It's not just his spiritual well-being. It's not primarily just his good health.

Health comes and goes in the ancient world. Life expectancy was 25 or 30 years, and there were not modern medicines and EMTs and urgent care facilities and so forth. It was much more obvious to people that you needed to be ready to die, because death was not very many years ahead of you in all likelihood.

So, John rejoices in both the spiritual health and the physical health of Gaius, and this is certainly not a basis to build a gospel of physical health on, as if one of the highest ideals of the Christian gospel was to have health and maybe to give healing. Whole movements have been built on this verse, and John doesn't envision a horizon in which if you know Christ that your health is going to be good, and if you have Christ, you can go and bestow good health on other people. A third observation is that it's an observation regarding another gospel calling card, and that is delight in the integrity of other believers.

I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, your integrity, as indeed you are walking in the truth. You know, John had the assumption that Gaius would be living a Christlike life, but apparently some people have come to where John is, and they've said to John, John, you know Gaius? John would say, yes, I know Gaius, and he would say he is living a life of fidelity to Christ. He's living the good life in the sense of obedience to God's commands, love for God, compliance with what it means to know Christ.

And notice John saying, and this is kind of unusual language, he uses an adjective here or an adverb I guess, exceedingly is translated greatly here, I rejoiced greatly when I heard that you are flourishing in the Christian faith. So, love and prayer are calling cards, but love and prayer can be pious self-indulgences, and especially if things are going well for you, you can feel loving toward other people, and you can have a life of prayer, thanking God that things are going well for you. But John is rejoicing in somebody else, and this reminds me of Christ.

You know, Christ came for the sake of other people. He didn't come to be served, he came to put himself at the disposal of others. And so this is, you know, part of the network of relationship that we see in this letter.

A final observation about the greeting, he calls believers my children. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. Now, this didn't mean so much to me when I was younger, but as I've lived to be older, I see that we, what happens when we walk with the Lord, and we do what he calls us to do, and that can be a godly parent, be a godly friend, be a Christian in teaching, be a Christian in medicine, be a laborer, whatever.

All Christians are called to disciple, to make, and to encourage other people in learning about Jesus and following Jesus. So, you don't have to be a minister or a pastor to have a legacy of faithful discipling. But what I want to encourage us in is thinking in terms of John later in life, talking about his joy that his children walk in the truth.

There's a legacy of faithfulness that the longer you are faithful to the Lord, the more grateful you are for the steps you were open to earlier in your Christian life to find more faithfulness. You know, faithfulness is always a struggle, and the younger we are in the faith, the less grounded and confirmed we are in it, and the more we can question, is this worth it? Am I on the right track? This looks like it's getting to be a bigger and bigger part of my life. And that's the way it is.

You know, God wants to open up to us and open us up to him so that we find more and more delight in him and even joy in him. I can remember earlier in my adult Christian life, I would ask, Should I go to church? And then I would think, well, you know, I can't go on a hike or I can't go fishing or I can't do this if I go to church. And the more I grew in the faith, the more I found myself involved in things that included the church and involved things that included serving God's people.

But my life got better, my marriage got better, and my soul got better. John talks here about Gaius' health and about his soul. So I'm saying that John knew the secret to a fulfilling life.

And I think he was probably already old, and I think this encourages us to look forward to growing old. But look forward to growing old in the Lord and be aware that you're building a legacy, and you'll be happier every decade that you stay faithful or seek to find faithfulness with the Lord. I'll tell this little story.

Just talking about this makes me think of when I was a child, and I was sent to the farm where my grandparents lived. And they were very poor farmers. My granddad had two horses that he farmed with.

He was too poor for a tractor. They did not have indoor plumbing. And to me, it was like a camping trip.

But they were very, very poor people. And they went to church, and my granddad was the song leader at the church. And it was a little country church, and he would stand at the front over a sword to the side, and there would be maybe 10 people in the choir.

And he wore overalls, which were a sign of a not-rich farmer. And he would lead the singing, and his hand was all arthritic. He had a big hand, but it was all twisted.

He milked cows still, but he would lead the singing. And after the choir dismissed, everybody would go to their seats, and they would be singing this song, and it said, Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before. And then something like, Every day I know him.

I love him more and more. Jesus saves and keeps me, and he's the one I'm living for. Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before.

And my granddad was in his 60s, and it seemed to me like he was Methuselah, like he was maybe 800 or 900 years old. Now I'm 71, and he doesn't seem nearly as old to me now as he seemed then. But I didn't really, it seemed like a fake song.

And I thought, How can you be in your 60s and say, Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before? As a child, that seemed like an exaggeration. But now that I'm older, and I see people dying, and I've done funerals for people, and I think about dying myself, the hope and the joy of knowing God in Christ, it gets sweeter. And that's part of this legacy that I'm talking about, a legacy of faithful discipleship, where you care for other people, and discipling is really just encouraging other people in the faith in tangible ways.

It's not all just teaching. I mean, teaching is part of it, but we can teach without lessons. We can teach by our example.

We can teach by the gestures that we make that help people to know and experience what it means to walk in faith in God through faith in Christ. So, that's all just in the greeting, and we've got to move now to the commendation of Gaius. Gaius is the person John is writing to, and he has some kind words for him.

Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are. So, these are the brothers, the people who came to John wherever he was, who testified to your love before the church. Apparently, Gaius has received them and shown them hospitality.

You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. This is a word that occurs; the Greek word is *propempeo*. *Pempeo*, I send, *pro* can mean before or ahead, and this is, I'm going to call it a technical word, but it's a word that occurs in relation to sending people out with what they need to do their job.

Not just sending them, but, you know, maybe money, maybe food, other provisions that they need for their calling. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, that would be the name of Christ, accepting nothing from the Gentiles, and that would be non-believers.

Therefore, we, who are Christians, ought to support people like these, people going out on mission for Christ, that we may be fellow workers for the truth. So, a word of explanation here would be that it seems itinerant gospel servants, you know, people who traveled doing the work of the gospel, they've brought news to John, where John is, about Gaius, where Gaius is. But they're going to return to Gaius, and John commends them, and he encourages Gaius to support them in their missionary task.

That's the seeing what's there. We can infer from that, we can say that the missionary task is shared by all believers, and it doesn't hurt to remind ourselves that after Jesus rose and before he ascended, he said to his followers, all authority on heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the ethnicities.

It gets translated nations, it gets translated peoples, they're, that's all true. Everybody, everywhere. Go and make disciples of everybody, everywhere.

Teaching them to observe all the things, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything that I've commanded you. There's that word command. And, hey, lo, the King James says, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

That's a generic commission to all believers, and we can all have a part in that. Not all of us can go somewhere where we might need help getting there, but we can all be

part of going, in that we pray for those who go, we support those who go, maybe we go ourselves. So, you can see here this commendation of Gaius is really a missionary commendation.

He's commending them for his efforts on behalf of these people who are a bridge between John and Gaius. And he commends them because of the integrity of their message. They go out for the sake of the name.

Apparently, he knows them well enough to know these people are the real deal. They're not impostors, they're not troublemakers. We have to be careful who we support in Christian work, because all you have to do is go on TV and watch various channels, and you'll see people doing all kinds of things in the name of Jesus and asking for money, for support for what they do.

And it may be legitimate, and it may be rather shady. So, Gaius is supporting the right kinds of people who are out for the right kinds of reasons. The third section of 3 John I'll call Dealing with Diotrephes.

And John says I've written something to the church. Now, that could refer to 2 John and 3 John, or it could refer just to 2 John, because 2 John is written to the church somewhere. Or it could just be 1 John.

I've written something to the church to help the church get back on track or stay on track. But here's the problem, he says. Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.

Here's John, an apostle of Christ, but here's somebody in the church who doesn't acknowledge John's authority. So, if I come, I will bring up what he's doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

Boy, we wish we knew more about what is happening here. But it's clear that there's a bad guy. And especially if you look at the wording in the original, it's the one who loves being first.

And then it names them Diotrephes. But then it's got the curious pronoun in there, auton, which is their. So this is their Diotrephes.

Their first place loving Diotrephes. So, he's like, in baseball we talk about a cleanup hitter. He's their heavyweight guy.

He's somebody that this group of people really are pushing. But he doesn't acknowledge John's authority or the apostolic authority. And that's my first point.

People who do not accept apostolic authority arise in churches. It's an ancient problem because it's easy to have a cosmetic experience with the gospel.

If you travel in various countries, it takes different forms in various countries. I've seen it take the form of places where there's not a lot of money. And often, where there's a Christian presence, there are some resources.

Maybe people have been sent from the outside, and maybe they have some resources. They're giving out Bibles, or maybe they've got medicine. There's some sign of a productive economy somewhere else in the area or in the world that they're trying to spread God's blessing.

The message of God's blessing and the material of God's blessing. And there are people who see that and they want to be part of that, but they may not want their hearts changed. They may want the material part of the blessing.

And I'm not necessarily to blame for that, because if I'm very poor and I see a way I might be able to become part of a relief agency or organization that's doing good things, why not join and do a good thing? And maybe I'm smart. Maybe I'm strong. Maybe they say Hey, we'll hire you to help us.

You know the language here, and you can help us do this ministry. Well, people get into ministry, and they may not know the Lord. And this seems like it's what happened with Diotrephes.

Diotrephes has somehow wormed his way into congregational life, and he's become a darling of people in the congregation. They like him. He's their champion.

And he loves prominence. They're prominence loving. You know, just tweak a little.

They're power-loving. They're influence-loving. Diotrephes.

And maybe he had money. Maybe he had leadership gifts. Maybe he was a great speaker.

In all kinds of ways, there are people who arise in churches, and they attract a following. They're impressive people. Over the years, I've seen it again and again with wealthy people.

Wealthy people are used to telling others what to do and other people might like to do what they want to do because it may profit them to be part of the program of a wealthy person. But it doesn't matter how wealthy you are, if you're opposing the teaching of the apostles, if you're opposing the teaching of Christ, this is not a good thing. And so, my second point here is that church discipline.

So, by that, I mean in congregations, you have to have some kind of enforcement of the terms of the relationship with God and with each other. And in many church membership structures, when you become a member, you pledge that you will be in submission to the authority of the leaders in this church. And often, you know, churches will have a doctrinal statement of some kind.

So, there's a doctrinal statement that applies to everybody in that group of churches. There'll be a leadership core in that setting. They, you could say, enforce the doctrinal statement.

They make sure that the true gospel is preached and that if people are living irregular lives, leaders will reach out to them and help them to get their life sorted out. So, this is what John expresses. He says, if I come, if he gets free from wherever he is, I will bring up what he is doing.

I mean, this is going on under everybody's nose, but apparently, he has enough influence that they can't stop it. I will bring up what he's doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not only that, that's not enough.

He refuses to welcome the brothers. So, there are people that John calls brothers. They're loyal to the apostolic message and mission.

He's stonewalling them, and he stops those who want to welcome them, and he's putting them out of the church. So, this is very brief, but it's very troubling that we have somebody who's disrupting and really changing the whole complexion of the church. Sometimes I think people think the early church was pure, and they had the power of the gospel, and they were working miracles.

And, you know, where is it now? And actually, if you read the fine print and the epistles you see, there's nothing new under the sun. From the very beginning, right under the nose of those who were trained by Jesus, there were people that rose up shamelessly and opposed the ones that Jesus had chosen and was blessing with his presence. And so, John's response is really a manifestation of the presence of Jesus.

Rivals to apostolic authority hamper the dominical mission. By dominical, I mean having to do with Jesus, the dominus in Latin, the Lord, kurios in Greek. Jesus has a mission, and the church fulfills Jesus' mission.

And John and John Gaius and the congregations there had a lifelong task of growing in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and of sharing his message, making disciples. And that mission can't go on when somebody like Diotrephes arises. So don't think in terms of, well, this is some petty squabble between John and Diotrephes.

And why couldn't John just get along? Why wasn't John more loving and forgiving? Why wasn't John more chill? And actually, I've read a number of commentaries in the last generation or two, whoever wrote this book, which many modern scholars say, well, John didn't write it. John becomes the bad guy. John is this brittle, self-important religious figure, and Diotrephes is kind of this fun-loving guy.

And he just wants there to be love and good feelings. And then John lowers the boom and makes accusations, and he's going to come in. And don't be like John.

Be like Diotrephes and just, you know, lighten up and have fun in the church. That's what it's for. And that's not what John thinks it's for.

John thinks it's for the things that we've already seen in our lectures on theological themes, integrity before God, relationship with God, keeping the commandments of God, knowing the love of God, living in the truths of God, abiding in what it is that God has called us to, loving not the world, neither the things of the world, which includes worldly authority and impressing people. So we come closer to the end of this little book of 3 John, which actually is just bristling with the reality of church life in every generation, because we're constantly seeing, if we're alert, we're constantly seeing rivals to apostolic authority arise in the church. A fourth section is these two verses, the concluding counsel and commendation.

Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God. Whoever does evil has not seen God.

Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true. I don't say anything in the notes here, because we are abbreviating everything, but it's possible Demetrius is carrying this letter, maybe carrying a packet with 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John in it.

And so as he writes to Gaius, John says, Demetrius, who to us kind of comes out of the blue, but if he's carrying the letter, or the packet of letters, he would hand it to Gaius, and you know, maybe he'd never seen Demetrius before and didn't know him for sure. So John commends him. He's received a good testimony from everyone, from the truth itself.

We add our testimony. You know our testimony is true. So in a place where the church is imperiled, it's imperiled by Diotrephes, John may have been writing from exile.

It was certainly an age of oppression of the church, at least here and there. There's always the question: Who do you trust? You know, I was part of a church training

program in which some of the local people who claimed to convert to Christianity had not really converted, and they sort of became spies in the church. And then when the moment came, they betrayed a lot of people in the church.

And the church had trusted them, but it turns out that they were not trustworthy. So in those situations, you know, people have to take each other's word for who do you trust. And John is saying, Gaius, take my word, you can trust Demetrius.

In the words I just read, we see that there's a warning: beware of whom you imitate. Don't imitate evil, but imitate good. I think in the placement of verse 11, it implies Diotrephes is an example of something evil.

And the people who support him, this is not good. So be careful, Gaius, who you fall in with, who you support, who you tolerate, and who you tolerate. And he says why.

And that's my number two. By their fruits, we can tell the good from the evil. Whoever does good is from God.

Whoever does evil is not seeing God. Some people, their words are very, very impressive. Some people, they look beautiful, and as I said earlier, they have leadership skills, and they kind of attract people, and people might not call attention to how they're really living.

And John stresses here, really just what Jesus said. That's why I use the word fruits, because Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, by their fruits you shall know them. And that's what John is repeating here.

Thirdly, what's your testimony? Do you have a testimony? You know, in Christian circles, a lot of times in the United States, we say we're going to have some testimonies, and then people will talk about how they came to Christ or their walk in Christ. And more broadly, every Christian has a record of their Christian life that you can think of. You know, how many years have I been a Christian? Where have I gone to church? Have I worked in the nursery? Have I led vacation Bible school? Have I led somebody to Christ? And this becomes our testimony.

But our testimony ultimately is not what we say about others, or excuse me, not what we say about ourselves. Because I could make great claims about myself and just be egotistical. Or I could think I'm doing great things, but my wife may know better, or my children may know.

You know, Dad looks good at church, but actually at home, he's not a very nice person. So, Demetrius had a testimony from a Christian from everyone. Other people said this guy is legitimate.

And from the truth itself. That implies that his living was in line with the gospel message and with the person of Christ. And John says we also add our testimony.

So, when we think about our testimony, don't just think about what we will say when we give our testimony on a microphone. The real test is what other people know us to be. And we can fool ourselves, and we often do.

We can fool a lot of people some of the time, but you don't fool everybody all the time. And the people that live closest to you, you don't fool any of the time. Because they have our number.

And we do well to grow in godliness in accordance not just with our testimony to ourselves, but what we see other people affirming or not affirming about us. And hopefully we have godly friends that will tell us what we need to hear in areas that we may have some rough edges or where we may need to repent, change, grow. Farewell, John says.

I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace be to you.

The friends greet you, that would be the Christians where John is, greet the friends, that's the Christians where Gaius is, each by name. So two observations. Number one, New Testament letters are readable deviations of larger truths and concerns.

He had a lot more he could have written. When you read the book of Jude, he says, I was wanting to write to you about a common salvation, but I had to write instead to urge you to contend earnestly for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. So every New Testament letter, it refers to a larger setting that there wasn't time or space.

This was all written longhand, it was written in a scroll. Maybe by the end of the apostolic period, they started writing in book form, but maybe not, because what they called the codex in the first century was the invention of what we call the book. Before that, things were in scrolls.

And so, there was only so much space on a scroll, and there was only so much time that somebody had to dictate, and there was only so much ability for somebody to get something down on paper. So he says, I've got a lot to write, but I'm not even saying it, because I hope to see you soon, and then we'll talk face to face. Secondly, observe that the gospel message received and shared creates attraction to others.

We see that word friends in there, and that's a word of affection. The gospel message received creates a desire for the well-being of others. That's the meaning of peace.

Peace be to you. God's blessing and benefit, the shalom of the Old Testament. May it be with you.

Not the force be with you, as in the Star Wars movie, but shalom, God's blessing be with you. And then again, the friends greet you. The gospel message creates a sense of shared purpose.

There was also an older movie in the United States called Friends, and it was all about the social life and connections of this group of people. And that word is a great word to apply to the Christian community. The effects of Christ's presence, they're beloved, they're beloved by God, and God has sent Christ to them through the gospel message, and they have believed.

And so through that message, God takes up his residence with them, and that presence has effects. And these effects nourish interpersonal connections. You may be a Christian who gets lots of emails because you're connected with other people.

And that connection is an antidote to something that we hear is afflicting especially younger people all over the world today, and it's associated with social media, and that is anxiety and loneliness. And the more people are connected to others through electronic means, the more barren their souls are. And we're even reading about suicides and despondency, and that's on the part, especially of younger teens, with a higher incidence, a markedly higher incidence among young women than young men.

Anxiety and loneliness. It's an international problem. But the presence of Christ nourishes interpersonal connections.

So, welfare among people, friends, connectivity, and it's not just for human enjoyment, it's for the glory of God, and it carries with it the deepest gratification that the human soul can experience on this earth. So I'm sorry that we have to stop so soon in looking at this very rich book of 3 John, and in our next lecture, we'll go on to 2 John.

This is Dr. Robert Yarborough and his teaching on the Johannine Epistles, Balancing Life in Christ. This is session number 3, 3 John, Notes to Gaius, A Trusted Friend.