

“Faithfulness to the Truth” (3 John)(5.28.23)

3 John Amplified Bible

You Walk in the Truth

¹ The elder [of the church addresses this letter] to the beloved *and* esteemed Gaius, whom I love in truth.

² Beloved, I pray that in every way you may succeed *and* prosper and be in good health [physically], just as [I know] your soul prospers [spiritually]. ³ For I was greatly pleased when [some of the] brothers came [from time to time] and testified to your [faithfulness to the] truth [of the gospel message], *that is*, how you are walking in truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my [spiritual] children are living [their lives] in the truth.

⁵ Beloved, you are acting faithfully in what you are providing for the brothers, and especially *when they are* strangers; ⁶ and they have testified before the church of your love *and* friendship. You will do well to [assist them and] send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ For these [traveling missionaries] went out for the sake of the Name [of Christ], accepting nothing [in the way of assistance] from the Gentiles. ⁸ So we ought to support such people [welcoming them as guests and providing for them], so that we may be fellow

workers for the truth [that is, for the gospel message of salvation].

⁹ I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to put himself first, does not accept what we say *and* refuses to recognize my authority. ¹⁰ For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, unjustly accusing us with wicked words *and* unjustified charges. And not satisfied with this, he refuses to receive the [missionary] brothers himself, and also forbids those who want to [welcome them] and puts *them* out of the church.

¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but [imitate] what is good. The one who practices good [exhibiting godly character, moral courage and personal integrity] is of God; the one who practices [or permits or tolerates] evil has not seen God [he has no personal experience with Him and does not know Him at all]. ¹² Demetrius has received a *good* testimony *and* commendation from everyone—and from the truth [the standard of God's word] itself; and we add our testimony *and* speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.

¹³ I had many things [to say when I began] to write to you, but I prefer not to put it down with

pen (reed) and [a]black (ink); ¹⁴ but I hope to see you soon, and we will speak [b]face to face.

¹⁵ Peace be to you. The friends [here] greet you. Greet the friends [personally] by name.

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“Faithfulness to the Truth”**

INTRODUCTION:

Last week, when God the Holy Spirit led me to preach on 2 John, I did not realize that today was Pentecost. It naturally follows that I would preach 3 John. As mentioned during the Children’s Chat, Pentecost is the birthday of the Church – the Church of Jesus Christ.

Acts 2:1–4 (NIV84) The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Peter preaches to the crowd. Acts 2:40–41 (NIV84)

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

And, the Church was created. But from the beginning, there were significant challenges. There was persecution from outside the Church. There were problems inside the Church. Last week, we heard how there were false teachers and deceivers. This week, we hear about Diotrephes whose dictatorial and prideful leadership is a roadblock to the work of the Kingdom.

The Apostle John is the last of Jesus' apostles. The others from the inner circle are all dead. I cannot imagine the gall it would take to oppose John and his teaching. But pride is a terrible sin that leads to many other sins. John has written Diotrephes directly and in response Diotrephes openly rebels against John's authority. Not only that, he refuses to support the traveling missionaries who are preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And, he puts out of the church anyone who opposes him in this act of defiance.

It sounds to me like Diotrephes has the makings of a cult leader. If John gets the opportunity, he will come and confront Diotrephes. In the meantime, John encourages faithful Gaius to continue to walk in the truth and to support the Mission of Truth - that is, spreading the gospel message of salvation.

Last week, we explored "the truth" extensively. You can watch or read the message on our website. For today let this brief summary suffice, and I am quoting Warren Wiersbe:

"True living comes from the living truth. Jesus Christ, the truth (John 14:6), is revealed in the Word, which is God's truth (John 17:17). The Holy Spirit is also truth (1 John 5:6), and He teaches us the truth. **The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to reveal the Son of God, and then to enable us to obey the will of God and "walk in truth."**"

BODY:

Starting last Sunday afternoon and going through Tuesday afternoon was the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. This is where all the United Methodist Churches in New Jersey, and a few from Pennsylvania and New York come together. It is mandatory for all clergy to attend and for every clergy person a lay member from each local church must also attend.

We worship and pray together. We celebrate some accomplishments, retirements, and ordain new pastors. We receive reports from different leadership positions and boards. The Bishop makes a state of the conference address. The Bishop's cabinet is also there to assist as the conference proceeds. AND, there is legislation that is presented and voted upon. Also note that there is a screening process for any proposed legislation.

The conference is held down in Wildwood. The practical reason for having the conference last week is that it is prior to the Memorial Day Weekend and the summer vacation season. For me, the timing seems to have the fingerprints of God the Holy Spirit imprinted upon it. Remember, this message about the church.

Some of the legislation is fairly routine, like approving a budget. Some legislation is about goal setting and visioning. There were two agenda items particularly important to me: Church closures and Church disaffiliations.

Before we look at those items, let me give you a glimpse into how the legislative process works. They use what is called "Roberts Rules." This slide gives an overview of how it works. To me it seems a little complicated and I can tell you that the most of the people only have a very basic understanding

of it. I know because of the frequent questions. The Bishop knows it very well. Knowing the process does give you an advantage in attaining your legislative goal.

And just in case the Bishop wants to doublecheck or verify the procedures, there is a Conference Chancellor, that means lawyer. She knows the parliamentary procedures AND she knows the United Methodist Church's Book of Discipline.

I don't know that there is anything wrong in this process. I will not say that it is unbiblical. But I wonder if the Lord Jesus truly feels like the Head of such a Body? Was this in the mind of God when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the people 2,000 years ago?

Let's look at this slide on Church Closures. Just giving you the numbers would have just been a statistic without any sticking power. Each church has a history. Each church was a Body of Christ. Each church was a family. Hopefully, they served their community and the kingdom of God in faithfulness to the truth. But now they are closed. We prayed for them, but it feels insufficient. Each year the list of closing churches gets longer.

Let's look at this slide on Church Disaffiliations. In 2016, the worldwide legislative body of the United Methodist Church met during the regular four-year

cycle. That body is called General Conference. It was decided then that some legislation was to be postponed until after a special commission on a way forward could develop a comprehensive compromise over issues relating to the understanding of scripture, same sex marriage, and the ordination standards of clergy.

In 2019, a special General Conference was convened to address the proposals of the commission. It was held in St. Louis and it was highly contentious and many would agree not very Christian. The parliamentary procedure top spun wildly out of control and nearly fell over.

That General Conference did approve the possibility for churches to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church denomination. BUT, it left it up to each individual annual conference to create their own specific disaffiliation process by which those churches wishing to disaffiliate must abide. The deadline is the end of 2023.

Some conferences made it fairly simple and painless. The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference was on the other end of the scale. After taking three years to create the process, it was one of the most stringent and expensive. It is estimated that by the end of this year, 5,000 churches will disaffiliate from the United Methodist

Church denomination. GNJAC only had eight churches that made it through the process, though there were many more that desired disaffiliation.

For these disaffiliating churches, they have been on a long journey. For many, like Emmaus Church, they saw this on the horizon years ago, even before 2016. It was their desire to be faithful to the truth as they understood the Holy Scriptures. Some may still need to raise the required funds to complete the process. I have not been able to find those specific dollar amounts. They must be excited but for some of those churches there has been pain along the way. Although they are highly hopeful, there is always some stress when embarking on a new journey.

The theme for this year's Greater New Jersey Annual Conference was "Possibility." We heard the Bible quoted that all things are possible with God. This is a certain truth. And, what the disaffiliated churches see as a hopeful possibility likely looks different than those of the United Methodist Church denomination.

Now, let us take a little breather with a humorous poem with a good point.

NO PERFECT CHURCH

I think that I shall never see

A church that's all it ought to be;
A church whose members never stray
Beyond the strait and narrow way;
A church that has no empty pews,
Where all the people pay their dues;
A church whose members always sing
And flock to church when bells do ring.
Such perfect churches there may be,
But none of them are known to me.
But still we'll work and pray and plan
To make our own the best we can.

~ Unknown author

Do NOT BE DISMAYED. We have already established that there have been challenges to the Church from the beginning. This is nothing new. There is no perfect church because there are no perfect people. And still, the kingdom of God is growing. Today, there are over 2 billion Christians on planet earth. The Holy Spirit is **God** the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus reigns. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord!

What is happening in the United Methodist Church denomination is not new. Several other mainline Protestant Churches have been on a very close to parallel path. But history has repeated itself again and again. The Catholic Church divided. The King of England established the Anglican Church. The Reformation birthed the Protestant Church – separating from the Roman Catholic Church.

There have been many different expressions of Methodism and Wesleyan Theology. The formation of the United Methodist Church was the regathering, or uniting, of some of those Wesleyan expressions. With the launch of the Global Methodist Church on May 1st of 2022, we have reached another stage.

{draw in a new box for the Global Methodist Church}

Even the United Methodist Church has decided to reinvent itself. One of the pieces of legislation that we addressed is called “The Christmas Covenant.” The only way it relates to Christmas is by the calendar. It was “conceived” during the Christmas season. This new Covenant is a complete reorganization of the United Methodist Church. It recognizes the serious decline in membership in the United States with a corresponding increase in membership around the world. It is a

reorganization and realignment of the different United Methodist Church relationships. The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference endorsed the Christmas Covenant for when it is presented next year at the 2024 General (worldwide) Conference.

The Emmaus Church leadership knows the things I am about to share. The handful of Emmaus attenders who came to the January 25th State of the Church meeting know a good portion of what I am about to share.

For about a year now, I have been sharing information about the Global Methodist Church, a new denomination birthed out of the United Methodist Church. The end of September, I notified our District Superintendent that Emmaus leadership had unanimously decided to pursue disaffiliation. Her response was that we needed to send \$3,500 to GNJAC to enter into the Disaffiliation Process.

Our Church leadership has been in discernment over this issue for many years. We did not want to enter into the very rigid and non-negotiable Greater New Jersey Annual Conference disaffiliation process – to spend the money and heartache where we were at the complete whim of the liberal and progressive regime. We did not send them the money. The District Superintendent

emailed us a letter saying that we could not disaffiliate because we failed to send the money. She would be in contact with me in a few days. It has been almost eight months and no one from the district staff has contacted me.

Instead of sending money to the Annual Conference, we sent significantly less money to join the National Center for Life and Liberty. They are a law firm who consider themselves a ministry. Along with hundreds of other churches, we are pursuing alternative exit strategies.

Because I have spent so much time studying and preaching about truth these last two weeks, I feel compelled to share some vulnerable information with you. We are live-streaming this and posting it on our website, so it will be public information.

Not knowing how long it might take and not wanting to be a hindrance in any way, I contacted the Global Methodist Church about becoming an ordained clergy person in this new denomination. I submitted all my pertinent information for their review. They have informed me that I have met their criteria and I am now an ordained minister in the Global Methodist Church.

The reason I have been reluctant to share this previously, is it could result in my immediate dismissal by the Greater New Jersey Annual

Conference. By the rules, I cannot be a Licensed Local Pastor in the United Methodist Church and an ordained elder in the Global Methodist Church at the same time. So, my status as your pastor is now endangered. My concern was not for myself, but for my flock, you.

CONCLUSION:

Let me close this message in a manner patterned after the way the Apostle John closed his third Epistle. Peace be to you. The friends [here] greet you. Greet the friends [personally] by name. The emphasis on friends directly relates to us. Jesus during his departing words to his disciples called them His friends.

If you check out the monument to the left of our sidewalk entrance, it commemorates the FIRST public house of worship in Atlantic County in 1744. That is 281 years ago. My friends, we are worshiping on hallowed ground.

Listen to this from the website history.com: The Religious Society of Friends, also referred to as the Quaker Movement, was founded in England in the 17th century by George Fox. He and other early Quakers, or Friends, were persecuted for their beliefs, which included the idea that the presence of God exists in every person. Quakers rejected elaborate religious ceremonies, didn't have official

clergy and believed in spiritual equality for men and women. Quaker missionaries first arrived in America in the mid-1650s.

Meanwhile, "Quaker" emerged as a derisive nickname for Fox and others who shared his belief in the biblical passage that people should "tremble at the Word of the Lord." The group eventually embraced the term, although their official name became Religious Society of Friends. Members are referred to as Friends or Quakers.

Some of you may know that William Penn, a wealthy English Quaker, received from King Charles the II a large land grant in America to pay off a debt owed to his family. Of course, this became the state of Pennsylvania as a sanctuary for religious freedom and tolerance.

It was in 1869 that the Quakers sold the very land upon which we stand to the Methodists. They were not United Methodists because that denomination would not come into existence for another 99 years. As you can see, the Church is ever evolving. What cannot be compromised is the truth.

We are commanded to be like Gaius, faithful to the truth; walking, which means living, in the truth. We are to be like Demetrius. Others will speak well of us as we live out the truth in accordance with God's Holy inspired Word. My friends, let us be

faithful to the truth no matter what the
consequences with which we will be confronted.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.