



The Southeast Sower

Southeast Church of Christ

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Diotrephes

By
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According to Proverbs 6:19, the Lord hates one who sows discord among brethren. Diotrephes was such a man. The apostle John wrote of him, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, receives us not. Wherefore, if I come I will remember his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither does he himself receives the brethren, and forbids them that would, and casts them out of the church" (3 John 9, 10).

Diotrephes was a haughty man full of pride. His way was always right and no deviation from his way could be entertained much less tolerated. It was his way or no way! Old brother Diotrephes would have his way at any cost to the church. He was an unreasonable man who would not listen to reason or the experience of others. He, in no uncertain terms, would throw down the gauntlet, thereby challenging his brethren with respect to his way. He loved to be first, loved the power, and loved the control. He was a man who kept the church from complying with apostolic authority, i.e. he refused the

apostle John. Moreover, he was a "prating" man, i.e. he "babbled," or "talked nonsense, and raised false accusations," (W. E. Vine). He brought false accusations against John and his associates with wicked words. John said he used "malicious" words or words chosen to and fitted to do injury or harm. Furthermore, John said that Diotrephes was "not content therewith" (v. 10), or he was not satisfied with just venting his feelings in talk, but he openly took measures to harm John and the brethren. In like manner, a modern day Diotrephes will do the same, keeping the church from going in the direction God wants it to go. You see, the church must go in the direction that brother Diotrephes dictates or else there will be trouble.

This case of Diotrephes, as recorded for us in 3 John, furnishes us with an example of the bad influence of one ambitious and arrogant man in the church; and further, indicates the damage that this kind of individual can do if that person is allowed to go unchecked. One man of such a disposition can ruin all the good that a local church has accomplished and can accomplish.

What's to be done with a brother like Diotrephes? John said, "when I come, I will remember his deeds..." (v.10).

The Southeast

Church of Christ meets at:

35 Walnut Court

Mogadore, OH 44260

Phone: 330.628.7432

SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Study: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:50 am

6:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 pm

John in essence is saying, "I will bring him to mind before all, by stigmatizing and punishing." If Diotrephes did not repent he would be specifically excluded from the fellowship of the church. A man who creates strife and division in a local congregation, the one who sows discord among brethren, after the first or second admonition is to be rejected or refused (Titus 3:10). A failure to do this brings strife and division into the church. Timothy was to guard against such men and avoid them, i.e. reject them, refuse them, have

no fellowship with them (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

A Diotrephes must be dealt with, and a local church cannot afford to let such a man have control over her. "No one can properly estimate the evil which one such man can do, nor the calamity which comes upon a church when such a man places himself at its head." (Albert Barnes) Such a man must be sent a message in unequivocal terms that such an attitude and actions will not be tolerated! If a local church does not do that, and a man like Diotrephes gets a stronghold, then that church is headed for destruction.

ALTITUDE SICKNESS

One of the greatest concerns of mountain climbers as they ascend from lower elevations to higher elevations is a potentially fatal condition known as "altitude sickness". It occurs when climbers rely too much on their own judgment, fitness and ability, and ignore well established safeguards by climbing too high, too fast. Ascending too quickly and lingering too long in the thin air, they become faint, light-headed, and confused. Their hearing dulls, their eyesight blurs, and their heart weakens under the increased strain. Failing to recognize the symptoms while continuing on eventually leads to serious complications and even death unless they descend to a lower elevation with higher oxygen levels as soon as possible.

Even as "altitude sickness" is a physical affliction to be avoided by mountain climbers, it should also be a

spiritual affliction to be avoided by Christians in their spiritual climb. If you don't think so then consider a few biblical examples of those who succumbed to it.

David ascended from a small, shepherd boy to the slayer of Goliath and hero of Israel, and from being a fugitive from the king, (Saul), to becoming king. He enjoyed many successes as Israel grew and prospered. Up to II Sam. 11, he was never higher as a warrior, psalm-writer, musician, and a leader. Yet, he was never weaker, because in the thin air of that prideful, high elevation he looked out and saw Bathsheba and proceeded to commit several sins. His judgment became clouded, his hearing became dull, his focus blurred, and his heart failed him. Spiritual "altitude sickness"- being too high for too long will do that.

Likewise, Peter ascended from a lowly fisherman from Galilee to one of the chosen apostles, hearing Christ's teaching on a daily basis, witnessing miracles and the transfiguration of Christ, even walking on the water with Christ (for a time). Up to Matt. 26, he was never higher. Yet, he was never weaker because in the thin air of that prideful, high elevation, the apostle Peter, after saying he would gladly die first, proceeded to deny Christ publicly three times just as Jesus foretold. His focus blurred, his ears became dull to the warning, and his heart's resolve became weak - yet another casualty of spiritual "altitude sickness."

What about us? We may not be a king or an apostle, but we too can ascend too high or

linger too long at prideful elevations. We can elevate ourselves one over another, creating an air of religious superiority (I Cor. 4:6). We can be puffed up with knowledge, creating an attitude of self-righteousness (I Cor. 8:1). We can pridefully trust in our works as the Pharisee praying in Luke 18:10. We may think we've never been higher....yet we are never weaker, because in the thin air of that prideful, high elevation our hearts become hardened and our conscience numb just like those Christ described in Matt. 13:15, "For this peoples heart is become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should hear them."

Have we ascended too high for our own good? Has the sound of God's word grown distant in our lives? Do Christ's words seem muffled? Has it become difficult to hear our friends and brethren because we've elevated ourselves so far above them? Has our focus become distorted? Or has right and wrong just become an indistinguishable haze? If so, then perhaps it's time to check our hearing, check our focus, and check our hearts and minds....and then descend from the prideful, high elevation of self, humble ourselves at the foot of the cross and allow Christ to heal us!

- Jeff Haught