



About 5-6 years ago I was working as a trainee evangelist in South Wales, and I was sent to do a mission week in Bridgend, near Cardiff. One of the families very kindly agreed to put me up for the week. It became very clear that no-where in their house was off limits along with the food and drink in the kitchen, the TV and games console, the books on the shelf. And the day I left they even sent me on my way with a packed lunch. Their willingness to do it was fuelled I believe by their faithfulness to the gospel. Gaius was faithful. John

addresses him as his “dear friend” four times in fourteen verses because of a supernatural love that binds them together, a love in the truth of the gospel. John commends Gaius for this faithfulness to the truth. He believes and teaches the gospel in a context where false teachers are around and deceiving many. Gaius is also faithful in what he was doing for the brothers. It's one thing to say you believe something, t's quite another to prove it. You can say to your spouse that you love her. But if you spend your time ignoring her it does call into question whether you actually do love her. It must be backed up by action, gifts, or acts of service, and spending time with her. Gaius was showing love by serving the brothers. Specifically, this service is hospitality even to strangers. In Gaius' mind, these people were brothers first, strangers second because they were Christians who were teaching the truth of the gospel and so they had a unique and special bond with each other. That family who for the week made their home mine, didn't know me. We were strangers yet brothers and sisters in the Lord and so there was a love there.

'All you are doing.' (v5) implies that they have told John that they are currently receiving hospitality from Gaius. The main thing about their report is his love, (v 6). And interestingly, the word love here is Philadelphia. That means love for your family. So, these teachers who have come from John, even though they are strangers, he loves them as brothers. And there can be no doubt where this love comes from. It's his faithfulness, his faithfulness to the truth. His faithfulness to the truth meant that he was captured by the love of God himself. This is why Gaius is a great example of what it means to be a Christian. Being a Christian isn't just about signing up to a set of 31 Page doctrines or a statement of faith. They are very important so that we have a clear guide on what we believe and are united around it. Without them church gets messy and turns into doctrinal carnage! The truths Gaius signed up for had gone deeper than just his head. The gospel is that God loves us so much that he gave Jesus, his only begotten son, to give his life on the Cross for sinful men, women, boys and girls. And now welcomes us to himself by grace. And that truth had really taken hold of Gaius and was in his heart and showed itself in what he did with his hands. When that message truly captures us, it changes everything about us. It had filtered down into his heart and into his hands where they impacted all he did.

Compare him with Diotrephes, (v 9), who commentators call a Christian fraud because he refused to welcome the brothers who came to him. He is an example of what it looks like when the truth remains as an intellectual concept in your head and doesn't filter down further than that. We Can become weary can't we. Maybe we feel we're the ones doing everything all of the time. Well, John asks Gaius that he keep up the good work (v 6). That is a huge responsibility that John has placed in Gaius' shoulders, to continue to show hospitality and then to send them on their way as if they were God himself. If they are missionaries, then they are messengers of God himself. How the people treated the messenger of the king was telling what they thought about the king who sent the messenger. And those who take the truth of the gospel out are God's emissaries. How you treat the messengers of God ultimately shows how you view God himself. He was treating these teachers of the truth as if he were hosting God himself. Maybe the natural challenge for us is this that how we treat the messengers of God is ultimately how we treat God. But it is also true to say that how we treat the message itself reveals where we stand with God. Are you hosting the gospel in your heart? Are you trusting in Christ as a result of hearing it? And are you living it out in generosity?

John doesn't stop at saying that Gaius was generous. He tells us what that generosity actually accomplished. That is why John says, 'It was for the sake of the Name that they went out...' (v7) That name, of course, is the Name that is above every other name, the name of Jesus Christ! They received no

help from pagans. It's clear that those who went out for the sake of the Name didn't receive help from pagans, nor did they seek it. That doesn't prohibit Christian workers welcoming help from non-Christians but in principle, Christian missionaries and workers should be able to rely on the church, and fellow believers to provide sufficient support for the work of the gospel. We ought 'therefore' to show hospitality and support such people. Welcome them into your home and send them on their way (v8) supplying them with what they need and uphold them in prayer. John says that partaking in this vital work of support is itself a gospel ministry, it is working and partnering with them for the truth. And what's interesting is that this is the flip side to what he writes in 2 John. Remember in 2 John he is warning a church, possibly Gaius' church, about the danger of false teaching and to be discerning whom you support. Showing hospitality to false teachers who had gone out into the world would be participating in their deceit. Whereas supporting missionaries who went out from John with the gospel is working with them in the truth. In other words, it is in itself a gospel ministry which anyone can do.

As points of application: John encourages us to practical faithfulness, (v 5). Remember, that isn't just doctrinal faithfulness to orthodoxy; 'Jesus came in the flesh and died and rose again!' That is important and we need it as John has spilled much ink in telling us. But gospel faithfulness must also reveal itself in action. For Gaius, the truth wasn't just in his head, it was in his heart and hands also! In what ways are we faithful to the gospel with our hands? Secondly, in what ways are we loving others? That of course is one of John's great themes throughout all three of his letters. It's something that Gaius was known for, (v6). I wonder if it's something that you would like to be known: as someone who loves? Thirdly, motivated by faithfulness and love, Gaius' example encourages us to be generous with what we have for the sake of fellow Christians. Gaius opened up his home so that the brothers could have somewhere to stay. What do we do with what God has given to us? Maybe it is our home, our money, possessions, our spiritual gifts and practical skills. 3 John encourages us to use them for the benefit of others. And fourthly it challenges us to think about in what way are we supporting the work of the gospel. This simple act of generosity motivated by the truth and love for Christ and the brothers was itself a ministry. In what ways can we serve? In what ways are we supporting those who have gone out for the sake of the name? The gospel that we believe is meant to become visible in the way that we live. Gaius believed the truth, and that truth produced faithfulness, love and generosity. And through his support of those who went out with the gospel, he became a fellow worker for the truth. This evening, let's not just stop at: DO I believe the gospel? Let's ask, 'what is the gospel producing me? Is the gospel in my heart, my heart and in my hands?'