

Who Loves Preeminence

by Wayne Goff

"I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us" 3 John 9.

"Loves ... the preeminence" (loving being first; ambitious of distinction). Diotrephes was a power-hungry man. He loved being the one who made the decisions, who held power and control over others. Today, we would say that he was on a "power trip."

Sadly, the brethren in the church to which the beloved apostle John wrote did not have the courage to stand up to the man and put him in his place. Diotrephes even refused to accept the apostle John himself! Furthermore, he was not content to exclude an apostle of the Lord, but he also excluded *anyone* who would associate with John! Thus while Diotrephes was in total control, he was not approved by God.

Something needed to be done. John said that if he came he would call to mind the *"deeds which he does"* and the *"malicious words"* which he spoke against John and good brethren. We can only hope that John got the opportunity to set straight the poor church where Diotrephes worshiped.

The mentality of Diotrephes is the exact opposite of the spirit of Christianity. It is not surprising that some brethren develop a sinful, power-hungry attitude. What is surprising is that good, humble brethren in otherwise sound churches will put up with it. Sometimes I am afraid that brethren think that they are to be Christ-like(?) and just sit back and let Diotrephes run the church. But Christ's spirit never suffered fools gladly.

Paul tells brethren to be *"like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind"* (Phil. 2:2). Diotrephes had no intention of doing anything of the sort. Diotrephes only loved **his** ways, **his** ideas, **his** mind set. One must wonder if he even had justified his thoughts and actions in his own mind. Some brethren consider themselves the only "saviors" of the brotherhood. Did Diotrephes think like that, or was he just evil?

The danger of church leaders becoming like Diotrephes is obvious from the warnings given about elders. They are not to be *"lords"* over the flock (1 Pet. 5:3). Jesus Himself taught us that while the Gentiles have kings who *"exercise lordship"* over them, it shall *"not be so among you"* (Lk. 22:25-26). Do you think Diotrephes knew these things? If he did, he obviously rejected them. What about you and me, brethren? Will we behave like Christians or like Diotrephes? Will good brethren today suffer a Diotrephes when he is among us? Is God pleased with us when we do? Think on these things seriously.

And finally, be thankful for the good elders we have. None of them have the attitude of Diotrephes, and all of them are interested in the church's well-being. They habitually consult the brethren before making important judgments, and yet they do not hesitate to lead the church as God would have them. Continue to pray for the church — its elders, its deacons, every member, and the preacher. Good things will continue to happen when you do.

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