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Greet One Another (vs. 13-15)

3 John 1:13-15: “I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.”

What a wonderful book this 3 John is. Isn't it a wonderful book? A small book; the smallest book of the Bible, and yet, what wonderful truths. We come to the end of this book, and it would seem as if it's a minor detail. The minor detail being the close of the book, but it really is a major detail. So, we're going to be looking at what the major detail is all about and what John is saying.

Now, once again, in the context of this book, it's much like the context of 2 John as well as 1 John; that is, we're dealing with an infiltration in the church of this heresy called Gnosticism. One of the places in which it's mentioned is 1 Timothy 6; just to define the phrase itself again. As it starts off, it begins to convey that you don't want to love money if you're going to be in ministry, and you need to flee from the things that will draw you away from the important things; which are the things that you should be pursuing according to verse 11, “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.” These are the things that you should be pursuing instead of the love of money.

As he goes on, he talks about the fact that he wants Timothy, who was the pastor of the church at Ephesus, to guard against the heresies and the false teaching. Of course, many of them are actually generated by money. In other words, his whole point there in 1 Timothy 6 is that some perceive godliness actually as a means of gain in verse 5.

So, in 1 Timothy 6:5, there are those that have “constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.”

He's talking about them using it to finance and make money, but as Paul will say to the Corinthians, “we are not like many, peddling the word of God.” (2 Corinthians 2:17)

When you drop on down, he ends with this false teaching, and a warning against it. He says this in verse 20, “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge””.

So, Paul was having to deal with it, and we know that John was having to deal with it; especially when you read the first epistle of John, in which there's a denial of Christ coming in the flesh. In

particular, he mentions that in 1 John 4. It's one of the reasons why in the Gospel of John, John writes the fact that Christ has come in the flesh because he's making reference to this. Now, you would say, "What difference does that make in the whole Gnosticism thing?" Once again, Gnosticism was trying to get you out of faith being real and get you into the realm of it being academic. Ah, there's the connection. So, "if we could just get you thinking about, talking about using all kinds of interesting rhetoric and debate, wrangling about of words; perceiving religion as something that you do and experience in a particular moment so that you actually don't have to live it in the flesh." If they could deny Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, that somebody could actually live a life of perfection in the flesh, then they can make everything that you do academic. So, you're coming to church, and you're listening to truth; "That was an interesting message. Wasn't that an interesting message the pastor had?" They might even comment about it; might even rate me a number nine or seven on the sermons that I preach. The whole emphasis is just about the discussing of the matter; it's not about actual change. So, once again, people leave the doors, and we create this genre of an ethereal feel; sometimes, "we're so spiritual." However, there's nothing about the real contact of the flesh. So, John will emphasize this. He says, "Let me tell you something, it's changing; it changes me." So that you and I, according to Paul in Romans 12, present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. The things that we do, according to James, if someone has a need, we don't just walk up to them and say, "Be warm, be filled, be clothed." We actually look for a way to help them.

John will say in 1 John 3:18, "let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." Once again, bringing it down to the reality because if in fact you can deny the reality of Christ in the flesh, then you deny the power of God to transform this. That's an interesting way of living. The ramifications of that create this erroneous, cold, indifferent or performing mentality in a church. So, people get on a stage, and they begin to act. Well, it's just acting, but you know, "That's what our faith is, just acting. It's not real." And the same thing is true with those that are cold and indifferent. One of the places that you see this is Colossians 2. He talks specifically about that kind of religion. It goes on both sides of the spectrum. So, you have some that deal with the whole entertainment realm; it's just about the feeling and emotion of that particular moment. Then, you have the other, and it's very austere and regimental. Well, religion has taken both of those sides, but it's a sense of knowledge. "It's all about our philosophy of how you worship." Ok, your life should be changed. See, that's the point.

So, it says this in Colossians 2:16, "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—

(Colossians 2:17) things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

(Colossians 2:18) Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement...."

That's pretty interesting, isn't it? So, if we could just build a monastery in the middle of nowhere, then we can be pleasing to God. That's not true.

"... and the worship of the angels..."

"Well, I had an experience." I mean, was there a reason why Paul wasn't allowed to share his experience of going to the third heaven? Paul actually did go to the third heaven, but he was not allowed to talk about it; that's why he had the thorn in the flesh. Why? That man would take his stand on the experience, rather than on the humbling before God. "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6) He says, "Therefore, to keep me from exalting myself from that experience..." Church is oftentimes a place where people stand and by the time they're finished, you're going, "Wow, I wish I was as holy as they were." That's not what you should be thinking. You should be thinking, "I need to humble myself; get right with the God, and I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." We're not looking to place paragons in front of you to where you can say, "I feel horrible; I'll never be that." The goal is to help you see that Christ is the only righteous one, and it's only Him that can change you. He can change everything about you. So, you can't write yourself off at that particular juncture. Some take their stand on "self-abasement, and the worship of angels;" some "stand on visions" and they're "inflated without cause by his fleshly mind." Now, that sounds like Gnosticism; "mind" and "thinking." Once again, it's very esoteric, "Us four, no more. We're so spiritual; if only you could be spiritual too." You could cut it with a knife.

It goes on and says, "and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied..." (Colossians 2:19) Then he begins to talk about the fact that we need to die to the elemental principles of the world; if you look in verse 23, you need to make sure that you don't trust in matters of man-made religion.

(Colossians 2:23) "These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence."

"I did something wrong. So, I just beat myself really hard." It's not going to work. It's not going to make you a better person. It's not going to keep you from doing it. You'll just go back and say, "Well, I'll beat myself five more times so that I can do it again," because your heart never changes. However, the wonderful thing about Christ in us, the hope of glory, is that when He changes us, we don't desire to do the things that we used to anymore. There is a transformation of the things that I do and the behavior that I have. It's one of the statements that Peter is dealing with in 1 Peter, "Keep your behavior excellent." How do you do that? Well, that's the power of God within you. In the midst of suffering, you can still keep your behavior excellent, but that's the power of God in you; that's not your resolve or your ability to do that.

So, Gnosticism will talk about being righteous and all the discussion. You'll take five to ten seminars talking about what holiness is and walk away with everybody being unholy; because their perception is "Wow, guess what I learned," rather than "How the Lord has changed my

life.” So, it’s not a minor detail, it’s a major issue. The major issue is that our love has to be of the whole body; in other words, all of us need to be a part of this.

So, as we look at this passage, we’re going to be talking about a very seemingly simple and innocuous thing; that is, greeting one another. Let me just say this too, if you keep your finger here and go to the book of John; I know that I give you a bunch of references, but hey, by the time we’re done, you’re going to know the Bible. That’s one of our goals anyway. At the end of John 20, John tells us “Many are the things that I have written to you who believe, but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.” So, obviously, John could have written a lot more stuff, but he was very selective in the things that he wrote. Then, he tells us this in John 21:24,

“This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

(John 21:25) And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.”

He could have written a lot of other stuff. Yet, we have this third epistle, so compact and so small. When he ends in 3 John 1:13, he says, “I had many things to write to you,” but there’s a reason why he doesn’t; it’s directly connected to this working against the false teachings of Gnosticism. If there’s anything that a Gnostic would love, it would be writing books. So, if you’ve ever read the end of Ecclesiastes, the writing of books is endless. Everybody has their own opinion. You can make a lot of money writing books. So, that’s probably another reason, but the thought is “I have this insight nobody else has. So, I’m going to write a book about it. Hey, if we make a few dollars in between, then that’s good too.” It’s the whole perception of more knowledge, more power and better understanding that has infiltrated the church. In case you didn’t know that because “the more we know;” every now and then, you’ll have this new Bible study where somebody comes up with a new way of seeing things, and I’m going, “Ok, there is no new way. It is the way.” Man just loves that “new” information. It’s that sense of discovering something new that man is drawn to; actually, it’s what caused us to be thrown out of the garden. I’m not telling you to not go on hikes or anything like that.

If you look at 3 John, he’s saying “I could have written a lot of stuff, but I chose not to for a particular reason.” In this ending, we begin to see that he is expressing something to us, and that’s what makes it so important. He begins to express a desire. Now, the desire that he has is to be with them, here it is, “face to face.” Now, John is the perfect guy to write about personal touch because if you remember in John 13, he was the one leaning on Jesus; so, the personal touch. That’s why if you look at the beginning of 1 John 1, he’s saying what we have seen and what we have handled with our hands. What is he talking about? He’s talking about the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. “I hugged Jesus.” Could you imagine hugging Jesus? Let’s put it another way, could you imagine hugging the Creator of the universe? You don’t forget

about that or the fact that here perfection is personified in the flesh. Scripture says that He went about doing good; never sinned ever. Can you imagine? It's possible.

I remember hearing a message a number of years ago, Chuck Swindoll, and he said, "I'm fairly convinced that it's possible to be sinless." He said, "We're not, but Scripture says, 'We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.'" That's why we press on towards that mark of the high calling. Our desire is to be that. Not that we want to be in the sense of braggadocios or like the Pharisees, but we want to be like Him. The more you and I know Him, the more we want to be like Him. I remember as a kid, there were certain people that I just wanted to emulate. If you were to ask me why, I'd go, "Man, he's just so cool. That's the guy I want to be like." That's what should be pulling our heartstrings; that's what pulled John's heartstrings. It wasn't the sense of the Law anymore. Here again, Gnosticism will get it to be academic. It's not academics that will draw you closer to the Lord. It won't do it. What will do it is a relationship.

So, as he comes to the end, he begins to talk about the fact that "I would write to you, but I've chosen not to." The phrase that he used here is "I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing." The Greek word that is used here, "*thelō*" for "willing," is making reference to "it's not my desire at all to write anymore, but it is my desire to come to you." He goes on and says, "But I'm not going to do this with pen and ink." Once again, it ties into the whole anti-Gnostic perception.

He then goes on to say in verse 14, "but I hope to see you shortly." Paul says something similar to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 16:7, saying, "When I come, I don't wish to see you just for a short time; I want to stay awhile." So, you get this picture that these guys are not austere, distant people; they are extremely loving. In fact, one of the things that we see with Paul when he began to leave the church at Ephesus and he was heading towards Jerusalem, he knew that he was probably going to be locked up when he goes. So, at every port that he went to, people were hugging him and crying, "Don't leave me." When you read 1 Thessalonians 1 and 2, you begin to see the relationship that Paul had with the church at Thessalonica. He refers to himself as a mother and as a father. So, in both cases, he's basically saying, "We had a relationship, and the things that I did, you knew that I loved you. You could tell that everything I said was not just something that I was debating about, but something that I felt for you." So, you begin to see that personal connection.

That's why Paul will say even to the Romans, who he had never seen before, in Romans 1:11, "For I long to see you." You say, "Well, Paul, you've written to them. What's the big deal?" "No, I have to come and see you." So, it is that same point that we see within the passage. Now, as we go on, we're going to see that we're dealing with all of the senses. If you read with me, it says this in verse 14,

"But I hope to see you shortly..."

And you say, "Why is it important to see somebody?" Well, facial expressions for one; you begin to see the gestures of people and the presence of somebody. It's a very different thing

that even if you're seeing somebody on a video, I hate to say this, but it's actually better than a video, 3D. Now, I know they're going to come out with 3D, but it's still better.

(3 John 1:13) "I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink;

(3 John 1:14) but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak..."

Now, when he uses the word "*laleō*" for "speak" within the text, he's dealing with articulation. So, "speak" has more to do with sound than words. So, he's talking about articulation and inflection. Words have sounds and music; you can hear them and the intensity oftentimes when somebody says something. We all have had the experience with texting somebody, when they text us and we go, "I wonder what they meant by that." Whereas, if they were to say it, we would go, "Oh, I get it. So, you're not mad."

Then in verse 14, when he uses the phrase "face to face," it's actually "mouth to mouth." Now, the word "mouth" comes from the root word meaning "like a cutting sword." That why Revelation says that Jesus will open His mouth and a sword will come out because "mouth" is making reference to a sword. Now, the reason why they use that word to describe "face to face" is because this is a very sharp sword. So, when it cuts, it cuts very clearly and precisely. Another word could be used for a sword that just beats things up. So, the picture is "When I come, I want to talk face to face so that everything is clear; there's nothing ambiguous and everything is made obvious to you about the things that I feel." That's one of the things that being face to face does. It just clarifies everything. He's saying, "I want to be face to face and I long for the peace of God to be with you."

Now, as he ends the passage, he then encourages "go embrace another." It reads this way in verse 15, "Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name."

So, he's saying to get personal; get to know everybody and greet them. The word that he uses for "greet;" I've seen it defined by the word "salute" but that wouldn't be doing it justice. "*Aspazomai*" is the Greek word that is used, and it's in reference to "embracing." In fact, the word itself means "draw them near to you." So, you want to know why we hug each other? It's biblical. We're forced to. God told us to. The point is that we're dealing with something that is drawing the body together and how necessary it is.

I don't know if you know this, but there's actually a psychology of hugs. Did you know that? So, for those of us that aren't as esoteric as I am, I'll let you know what it is. Obviously, I'm not a medical scholar, but according to psychology and the medical field, there is what is called an oxytocin hormone that is actually released when you're hugged. The longer the hug, the more the release. Now, what they say is that this particular hormone is actually from the hypothalamus. I think that's somewhere in your toe. So, it releases a sense of association, trust, and relationship in your brain. Now, we're just talking about the physicality of it, but we know that God created us, and He created us to do certain things. There is a value to the things that

he tells us to do. From what I understand, the main purpose of the hypothalamus, here again, we're getting technical, but it's to keep the body stable and it manages your hormones; keeps you from going wild and crazy I guess, in some cases. So, this is a place where hugs begin to function in your life. I understand as well that it also reduces what is called cortisol hormone, which is in your kidney. Now, that hormone is actually called the stress hormone. So, it reduces stress when you're hugged. By the time we finish, everybody is going to be hugging each other, going, "I need the medical." They say that it will do these things, it will lower your blood pressure, change your negative mood, reduce feelings of loneliness, anxiety, anger and depression. It will boost your immune system. So, when you hug somebody, you're going to get the germs, but hey, your immune system will be stronger. Talk about a paradox. Strangely enough, it will actually relieve pain. It's like when a child is in pain, and they have a sore. So, the mother hugs them, and it actually releases the pain that they feel. They have found of course that it's also a way in which we show appreciation, we give comfort and support to people and express love while forming a connection with one another. So, when Scripture says, "greet one another; embrace one another; draw them near to you," there is a reason for it; even beyond the physical, it is the relationship that we're building. In fact, one of the statements that Paul makes in Ephesians 4:16, "from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

"Fitted together", that's an interesting way that he describes it within the passage. So, it's mentioned 19 times in Romans 16, "Greet one another." We would use "*aspazomai*," "hug one another." It will be mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:19-20, 2 Corinthians 13:12-13, Philippians 4:21, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, Peter, and John. Do you think it's important? In each case, it's actually used in the imperative which means it's not optional. It's something that God tells you to do. It's something that we do that has an impact. I was thinking about how oftentimes children are neglected in this area. They say that when a child is neglected, especially in the physical realm in which they're not embraced, the impact of that neglect is depression and inability to form and maintain relationships; behavioral challenges such as poor impulse control, social withdrawal, and problems coping with and regulating their own emotions; all because they weren't hugged. Things that we would perceive to be a minor detail really are a major detail. As he closes this book, there's a realization that all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for correction, reproof, and training in righteousness.

Unfortunately, because so much of Gnosticism has infiltrated the church, we'll read a passage like this and think we can understand it, but John is virtually saying, "You guys don't understand Jesus at all. He loves you; He wants to have a close relationship with you." We have oftentimes talked about this, but there's a reason why He goes to fishermen that are very physical guys; you can just see the brotherhood coming off of the boat together and had a great catch. It really goes past the ivory halls that we've oftentimes talked about.

There's an example of this in Luke 7. Some of our most endearing passages, if you just skip over them, and your perception is tainted by virtue of academia that often comes into the church, then you're going to miss what Jesus is really like. That would be a sad thing, wouldn't it? In Luke 7, Gnosticism had infiltrated the Pharisees, Judaism at that juncture. So, it was all about knowing stuff; in fact, Jesus says that everything they say is correct, but don't do what they do because they don't know how to practice this stuff.

(Luke 7:36) "Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

(Luke 7:37) And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,

(Luke 7:38) and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume."

Well, in verse 39, the Pharisee is indignant about this. "What is going on? Do you have any idea who this woman is? She's a sinner." As if we're not all.

(Luke 7:39) "Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.

(Luke 7:40) And Jesus answered him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' And he replied, 'Say it, Teacher.'"

The interesting thing about this is that if He was a prophet, then he would know what was going on and Jesus says, "I know what you're thinking." So, he kind of shut him up right away, but He tells a story in verse 41,

"A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

(Luke 7:42) 'When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?'

(Luke 7:43) Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You have judged correctly.'

(Luke 7:44) Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

(Luke 7:45) 'You gave Me no kiss...'"

Do you think that God would really want you to kiss Him? That's a pretty interesting question, isn't it?

“You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet.

(Luke 7:46) ‘You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.

(Luke 7:47) ‘For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much...’”

Now, the question is what is the most important thing to Jesus? That somebody loves Him. Think about that. See, Gnosticism will make everything austere or about entertainment, but it’s all about detachment. Our faith is about real. So, you have these real pictures of real people that are real sinners that have truly been forgiven and the love that’s poured out. Who do you think Jesus wants to be with?

The same thing is true in Luke 10. We’re all familiar with the story in verse 38, “Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.

Luke 10:39) She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word.”

It has the connotation of enthrallment, adoration, and a desire to be with somebody. I’m sure there were people outside the door, but she wanted to be close to Him. That’s what the church is about. Sure, you could worship and watch TV, and do all those kinds of things, but you wouldn’t be close to the body of Christ. Sure, you could write them a note and let them know that you care, and all those kinds of things, but you couldn’t hug them. All of these things are a description of telling us that the word of God is about you being all there in a relationship. It’s what it’s about.

(Luke 10:40) “But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone?’...”

Of course, there’s the whole thing of the regiment of doing stuff. Churches are so busy, and if you’ve done a lot of stuff, then you’re really righteous. That’s not true. If that were true, then we would have to pull this text out of Scripture. According to this passage, God would rather have you at His feet more than anything else. The day is going to come when we’re going to say, “We did all these things in Your name.” He’ll say, “Yeah, but you didn’t do what I wanted you to do.” “What did you want me to do?” “Be with Me.” The whole fundamental point of us and the greatest reward that you and I will ever get, according to 2 Timothy 4, is if we loved His appearing. Think about that and the words that are used, “His appearing.” That your desire was to see Him face to face. Of course, John will make mention of that saying that on that day, that’s what purifies us; that someday I’m going to see Him face to face. There is a reason for hugs. There is a reason for us coming together. There’s a reason Scripture says, “Don’t forsake your own assembling” and when you come together there is a reason why you need to embrace one another. You’re actually in many respects, drawing the body together by virtue of doing that; just think of all the health benefits.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your love for us, and for Your relationship with us; that it was so real. The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld a glory that we could've never imagined, a hug from Jesus. How amazing that was, and how wonderful it is to realize that the God of the universe chose to define Himself as "love." Many of us are seemingly a little bit afraid to go to heaven, but not if we understand who You really are. There's a day coming when we're going to be in the presence of love; we're going to see love face to face. We're going to be able to embrace You because You give us new bodies for that very purpose and forevermore, we will be with You.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I'm just asking you to examine what you understand to be your faith. Is it something austere? Is it something that has to do with memorization? Does it have to do with academia? Is it something about accumulating knowledge? Is it about performance? Is it about looking a certain way or is it actually about a relationship? When you come to the body of Christ, are you competing with one another or are you looking to just demonstrate the love of God? I mean, It's a gamechanger. John would say that when you come together, would you pull the person next to you and just tell them that God loves them? Would you convey to them the love of Christ in a very tangible way?