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DEALING WITH DIOTROPHES

“I wrote to the church, but Diotrophes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church” (3 John 9-10). I have met Diotrophes and he is a nice person. He is concerned about the church and has deep convictions. He visits the sick and offers to help if someone is in need. He is respected because he is zealous for personal evangelism. He is also misunderstood and has been the object of a smear campaign among brethren. He had a problem with a brother, but it

was nothing more than a personality clash and now the brother is worshipping with another church by his choice. Maybe he is right—the brother can be stubborn sometimes. He was creating waves and if it was not for Diotrophes, the church would be a mess. Does this sound familiar? A Diotrophes is not necessarily mean and hateful—at least not on the surface—but you dare not cross him because he will use coercion, exclusion, force, and mandate to accomplish his purposes. Problems from outside the church are bad enough, but problems from inside the church can be devastating. The apostle John confronted Diotrophes who was censuring brethren and then driving away members who

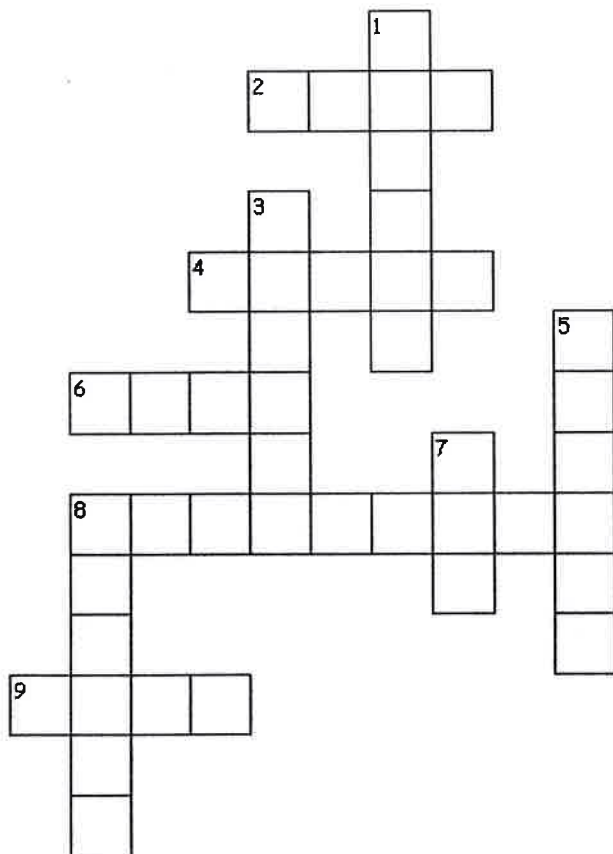
dared help the ones he had refused. It was not a doctrinal deviation; it was a moral deviation. In the meantime, other members such as Gaius and Demetrius needed encouragement and support. Evil men like Diotrophes sometimes have commendable traits. They may not be completely bad and unlikable. For example, Absalom was charming, handsome, and popular, but he was a threat to the nation of Israel because he was rebellious. Satan deceives us into admiring the positive characteristics of a Diotrophes while ignoring his sinful attitudes and actions. The result is that he wreaks havoc in a congregation and his supporters are enablers. He excuses his misconduct in the name of standing for the truth or maintaining the purity of the church, but sin is sin and he should be exposed. He wants to rule the church, but he has not learned the true meaning of leadership from the word of God. He views criticism or disagreement as a challenge to his authority and he will always be mystified that Moses could lead a nation and be the meekest

of men (Numbers 12:3). –
Jeremy Joy. **ATTITUDE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST** “I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he,” Lk. 7:28. As I was reading about the life of John the Baptist recently, I couldn’t help but take a moment and reflect on the beauty of humble service. In this verse, Jesus pays tribute to the great work of John in preparing the way for Jesus while at the same time commenting on the humble nature of the work itself. This is something John fully embraced and acknowledged, understanding that his work would consist of promoting someone much bigger than himself as he was fully prepared to diminish into the background once Jesus began making His own disciples. “You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.’ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now

complete. He must increase, but I must decrease,” (Jn. 3:28-30). John, who was familiar with the experience of drawing a crowd, stood by and watched as crowds flocked to learn from and follow Jesus. “And they came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness – look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him,’” (Jn. 3:26). Rather than being consumed with the bitter jealousy of a rival competitor, John saw himself as the friend of the bridegroom, considering it an honor and a great joy to witness Jesus’ following growing in number. While it is so encouraging to see this loving humble attitude in John, it is equally touching to see the humility of the bridegroom. Jesus saw it fitting to pay tribute to this humble servant, reminding His very own disciples of the great importance of John even in the overall grand scope of Christ’s own mission. I see two very simple yet important lessons to take from the attitude of both John and Jesus in the area of humility. First, like John, let’s humbly do whatever we can to

help the progress of Christ and the gospel grow with the sole mindset of rejoicing that God gets the glory regardless of whatever attention or perceived importance falls our way. Second, like Jesus, let’s be willing to give credit and acknowledge humble servants whose efforts should never be diminished or forgotten. When you have a moment to look through the names Paul lists in Romans 16, notice how many brethren Paul gives a shout out to. Let’s be humble servants who rejoice that God is glorified when the gospel is successful, and be mindful to acknowledge the faithful service of our good faithful brethren. “There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self.” Ernest Hemingway - Daniel Ruegg

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ACROSS

2. Adam and Eve's second son, a keeper of flocks (Gen. 4:1-2)
4. Lamech took for himself two _____ (Gen. 4:19)
6. Cain was of the _____ one and slew his brother (1 Jn. 3:12)
8. Can killed Abel because his brother's deeds were _____ (1 Jn. 3:12)
9. Adam and Eve's first born son, a tiller of the ground (Gen. 4:1-2)

DOWN

1. Cain asked if he were his brother's _____ (Gen. 4:9)
3. Lamech's second wife was named _____ (Gen. 4:19)
5. For killing Abel, Cain became _____ from the ground (Gen. 4:11)
7. Cain settled East of Eden, in the land of _____ (Gen. 4:16)
8. Cain became angry when God had no _____ for his offering (Gen. 4:5)