

Through the Bible

III JOHN

Zac Poonen



Illustrations by Vinay Kuruvilla

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CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

69, PARADISE ENCLAVE, BELAHALLI
KANNUR POST, BANGALORE - 562 149
INDIA

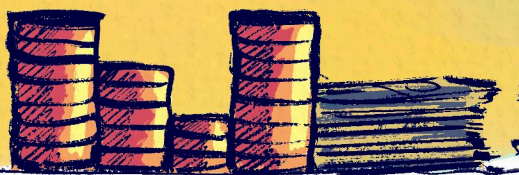
3rd John



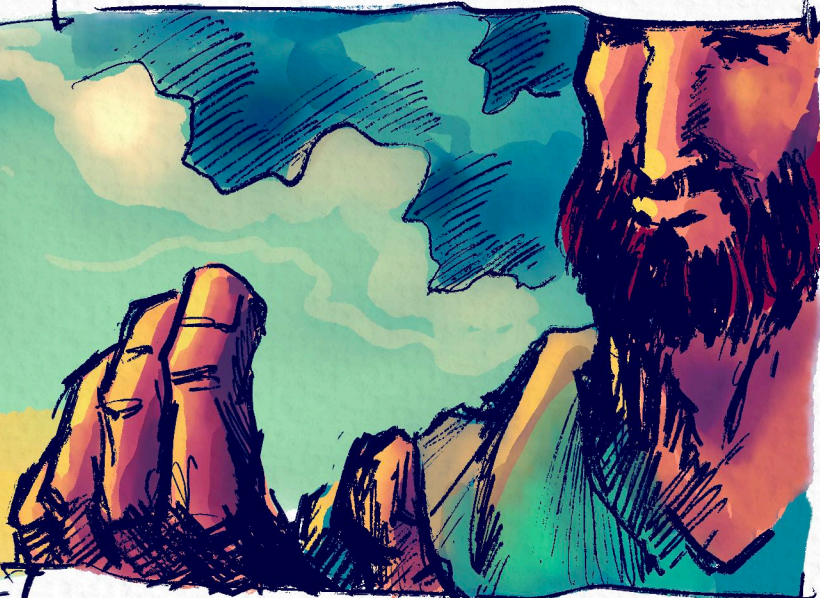
HIS LETTER TELLS US ABOUT A **GOOD** ELDER AND A **BAD** ELDER. THE **GOOD** ELDER IS **DEMETRIUS** (1:12) AND THE **BAD** ELDER IS **DIOTREPHES** (1:9).

IT ALSO TEACHES US SOME **FUNDAMENTAL** PRINCIPLES OF **SERVING** GOD -- ESPECIALLY IN RELATION TO **MONEY**. THIS LETTER WAS WRITTEN TO A BROTHER NAMED **GAIUS**.

Prosper \$

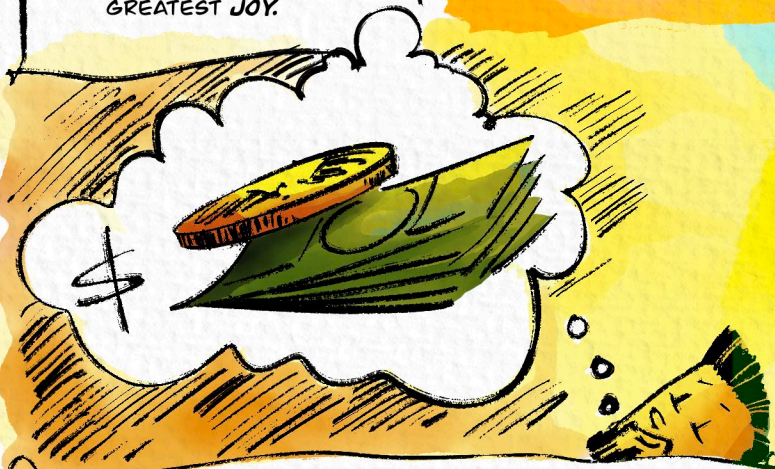


IN 1:12, WHEN JOHN SAYS, "BELOVED, I PRAY THAT IN ALL RESPECTS YOU MAY PROSPER AND BE IN GOOD HEALTH, JUST AS YOUR SOUL PROSPERS", HE IS ONLY SAYING WHAT **WE** WOULD ALL SAY IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND. BUT THIS VERSE HAS BEEN **MISINTERPRETED** BY THOSE WHO PREACH THE "HEALTH-WEALTH" GOSPEL



WAS JESUS A **RICH** MAN? NOT AT ALL. HE HIMSELF SAID THAT AT TIMES HE DID NOT EVEN HAVE A PLACE TO **LAY** HIS HEAD. TO PROVE A POINT ONCE, HE HAD TO **BORROW** A COIN. HE DIDN'T HAVE ONE HIMSELF. TO PAY HIS **TAXES**, HE HAD TO SEND PETER TO CATCH A **FISH** AND GET A COIN OUT OF ITS MOUTH. THAT **CLEARLY** PROVES THAT **FINANCIAL** WEALTH IS **NOT** THE WILL OF GOD FOR ALL HIS CHILDREN.

1:4 IS A WONDERFUL VERSE: "I HAVE NO GREATER JOY THAN THIS, TO HEAR THAT MY CHILDREN ARE WALKING IN THE TRUTH." THIS IS WHAT EVERY FATHER AND SPIRITUAL FATHER (CHURCH-ELDER) SHOULD HAVE AS HIS GREATEST JOY.



EVEN MANY CHRISTIAN FATHERS UNFORTUNATELY FIND THEIR GREATEST JOY IN KNOWING THAT THEIR CHILDREN ARE EARNING A GOOD SALARY.

THERE WERE BROTHERS IN THOSE DAYS TRAVELLING FROM PLACE TO PLACE PREACHING THE GOSPEL, AND THEY USUALLY RECEIVED HOSPITALITY FROM THE BELIEVERS IN EACH LOCALITY.

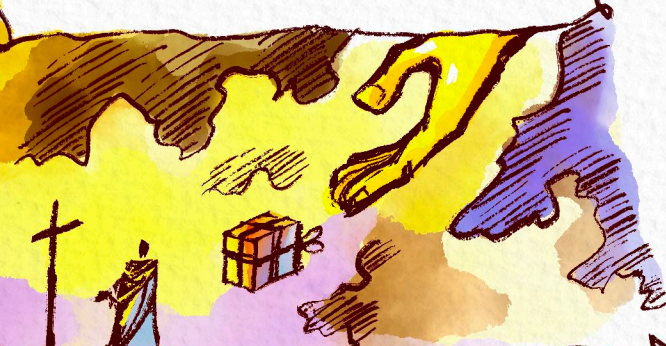


WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL HOWEVER AS TO WHO WE ALLOW TO STAY IN OUR HOMES -- FOR THERE ARE MANY WANDERING PREACHERS WHO SEEK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE HOSPITALITY OF BELIEVERS.

THERE WERE NO SALARIED PREACHERS IN THE FIRST CENTURY.



SO THE PRACTICE IN THOSE DAYS WAS FOR A KNOWN BROTHER TO INTRODUCE SUCH PREACHERS WITH A LETTER TO THE HOME WHERE THEY STAYED.

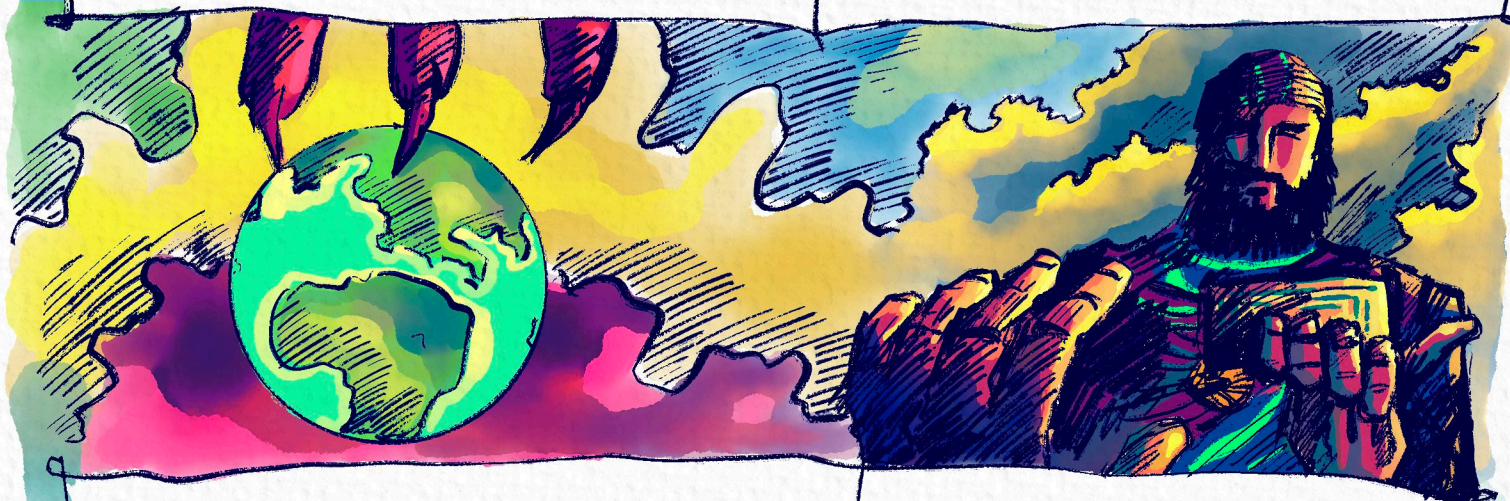


TRUE SERVANTS OF GOD TRUSTED GOD TO MOVE PEOPLE'S HEARTS TO PROVIDE THEM WHAT THEY NEEDED, AS THEY WENT FORTH SEEKING GOD'S KINGDOM FIRST AND PREACHING THE GOSPEL.



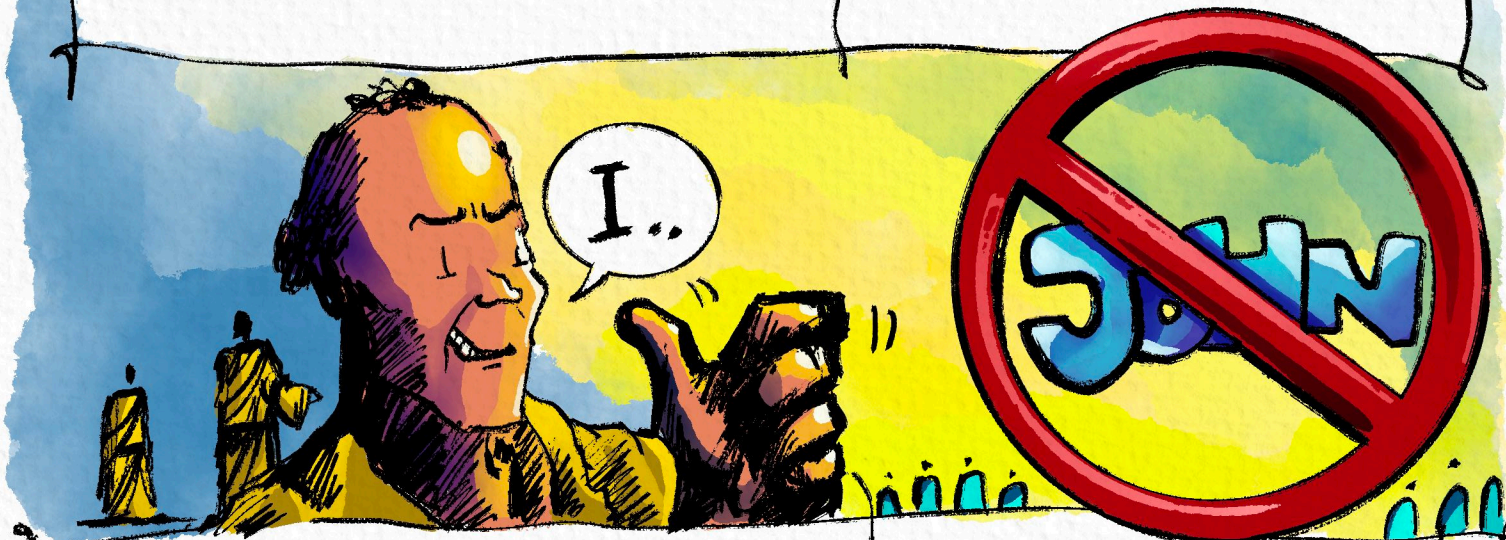
WE ALSO SEE IN 1:7 THAT THE PREACHERS IN THOSE DAYS "RECEIVED NO MONEY FROM NON-CHRISTIANS". TO GIVE TO SUPPORT GOD'S WORK IS A PRIVILEGE AND AN HONOUR THAT IS RESERVED FOR THE CHILDREN OF GOD ALONE.

HOW SADLY DIFFERENT IT IS TODAY WITH CHRISTIAN PREACHERS WHO CONDUCT EVANGELISTIC MEETINGS. BEFORE THEY PREACH GOD'S FREE SALVATION TO THOSE UNBELIEVERS, THEY PASS A COLLECTION BAG IN FRONT OF THEM AND COLLECT THEIR MONEY.



1 JOHN 5:19 SAYS THOSE WHO ARE NOT BORN AGAIN ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE EVIL ONE. DOES A COUNTRY EVER COLLECT MONEY FROM AN ENEMY IN ORDER TO FIGHT THAT ENEMY?

ELISHA REFUSED TO TAKE NAAMAN'S MONEY, BECAUSE NAAMAN WAS AN IDOL-WORSHIPPER.



JOHN THEN WRITES ABOUT DIOTREPHES, THE BAD ELDER. DIOTREPHES LOVED TO BE A LEADER. MANY AN ELDER STARTS OUT AS A HUMBLE MAN. BUT GRADUALLY HE CAN COME TO A PLACE WHERE HE BECOMES BIG IN HIS OWN EYES.

DIOTREPHES MUST HAVE SOUGHT TO DISPLACE JOHN'S AUTHORITY IN HIS CHURCH BY PROMOTING HIMSELF BEFORE HIS CONGREGATION.

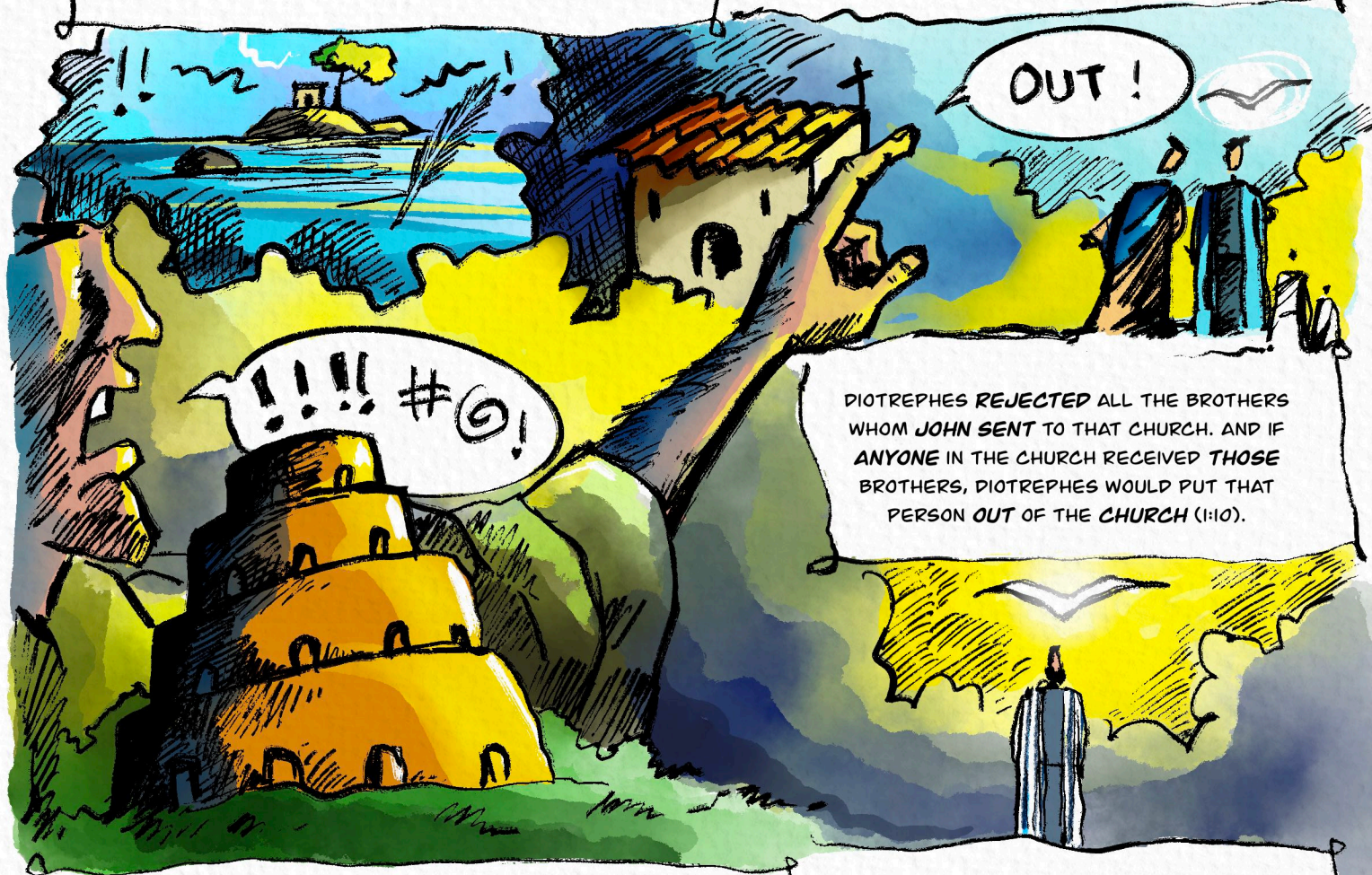


PEOPLE WHO HAVE GROWN UP AS CHILDREN UNDER SOME SPIRITUAL FATHER SUDDENLY BEGIN TO THINK THAT THEY ARE SOMEBODY IMPORTANT AND TURN AGAINST THEIR GODLY LEADER.

IF YOU ARE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE A GODLY BROTHER AS YOUR ELDER AND YOUR GUIDE, RESPECT HIS ADVICE. NO MATTER HOW MUCH GOD ALLOWS YOU TO GROW, NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE USES YOU, HUMBLE YOURSELF. THAT BROTHER MAY NOT FORCE HIS AUTHORITY ON YOU BECAUSE HE IS A GRACIOUS GODLY MAN.

BUT JOHN DOES NOT PLAN TO GIVE UP. HE CARES FOR THE CHURCH THERE AND SO HE SAYS, "WHEN I COME THERE, I WILL POINT OUT HIS SINS TO ALL THE OTHERS." JOHN WAS NOT AFRAID OF EXPOSING ARROGANT ELDERS BEFORE THE CONGREGATION.

DIOTREPHES EVEN ACCUSED JOHN WITH WICKED WORDS BEFORE THE CHURCH (1:10). WE SEE HERE THAT EVEN JOHN, THE SAINTLIEST MAN ON EARTH AT THAT TIME, WAS ACCUSED BY AN ELDER OF A CHURCH.



DIOTREPHES WAS A DICTATOR, NOT AN ELDER. THERE ARE DICTATORS LIKE THAT IN MANY CHURCHES TODAY, WHO SEEK TO CONTROL THEIR PEOPLE AND NOT SERVE THEM. DON'T EVER STAY IN SUCH A CHURCH, FOR IT IS BABYLON, THROUGH AND THROUGH.

THEN JOHN COMMENDS DEMETRIUS WHO HAS RECEIVED A GOOD TESTIMONY FROM EVERYONE AS A GOOD ELDER. HE SAYS THAT THE TRUTH ITSELF BEARS WITNESS TO DEMETRIUS AS A HUMBLE GODLY MAN.