

3 John

Introduction: This third epistle of John, like the second, is not general but particular, both being written to individuals. It is to Gaius whom John commends throughout. It contrasts the ill-reported-of Diotrephes with the well-reported-of Demetrius. An unnamed church, of which Gaius seems to have been a member, was being troubled by a proud, ambitious man who assumed excess authority and dispensed with anyone who might be a challenge to himself. It is one of only two epistles that does not conclude with an Amen (James being the other).

1. There are other mentions of a Gaius in the N.T. **ACT 19:29; 20:4; ROM 16:23; 1CO 1:14.**
 - A. It might be questionable that there was only one Gaius on record.
 - B. There are other names in the N.T. that refer to different people, even Jesus. **COL 4:11.**
 - C. "...the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth."
 - (1) well-beloved: Dearly loved, greatly beloved. [c/w **MAR 12:6**]
 - (2) He was certainly beloved by John (**vs. 1, 2, 5, 11**) but also was favorably mentioned by brethren and strangers for his "truth in action." **vs. 3, 5-6.**
 - (3) John loved him *in the truth* (c/w **2JO 1:1**), a bond that is grounded in Christ as the very Truth itself. **JOH 14:6.**
2. John wished Gaius prosperity and health commensurate with the prosperity of his soul.
 - A. prosper: *intr.* Of a person, community, etc.: To be prosperous, fortunate, or successful; to flourish, thrive, succeed, do well.
 - B. His soul was prospering, and this is most important. A fool may otherwise prosper but it is unto his own destruction. **PRO 1:32.**
 - C. Christ represents health of soul and body. His concern for men's souls did not detach Him from "...doing good, and healing..." (**ACT 10:38**) and His atonement guarantees perfect healing of His spiritual brethren. **MAT 8:16-17 c/w 1CO 15:53.**
 - D. Worldly prosperity in the absence of good health means little. **JOB 2:4.**
3. There seem to have been brethren who were doing mission work to strengthen churches with apostolic comforts (c/w **ACT 16:4-5**) who returned to John with a mingled report about what they had experienced at the church where Gaius was.
 - A. They testified of the truth in Gaius in which he actively walked. He was not one who held the truth in unrighteousness. **ROM 1:18.**
 - B. He was not like Diotrephes who flagrantly would not receive the brethren. **v. 10.**
 - C. The truth was first in Gaius by regeneration, then brought to the surface by conversion, and proved genuine by his walking in it.
4. John's greatest joy was not to hear of good health of the body but of his converts walking in truth.
 - A. (**PRO 23:24**) The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.
 - B. To a godly preacher, the lack of this walking in truth is disturbing. c/w **GAL 2:14.**
 - C. It may be observed that knowing the truth can make one free (**JOH 8:32**) but only if one walks in it as he ought; otherwise it condemns him. **JAM 4:17.**
5. Gaius was faithful in his doings to all. c/w **GAL 6:10.**
 - A. He would have favorably and courteously received the brethren as fellowhelpers to the truth, not refused them as threats to power. **v. 8.**
 - B. This faithfulness may have included his charity observed and sought for for the sake of the brethren. **vs. 6-7 c/w LUK 16:10-11.**
6. The brethren at some point had borne witness to the church where John was of Gaius' charity towards themselves, and John encourages him further in this regard. c/w **TIT 3:13.**
 - A. "Who goeth a warfare at any time of his own charges...?" (**1CO 9:7-9**).

- B. Faithful men who have the wherewithal to help those in gospel labors do well to support them. Those who cannot further the work by their persons will secure good reward by furthering it with their purses. **MAR 9:41 c/w HEB 6:10.**
7. They were evidently Jewish brethren on a mission for Christ with John's approval. c/w **v. 9.**
- A. They had not sought support from the Gentile churches, perhaps to prove a point as Paul did. **1CO 9:12, 15; 2CO 11:9; 12:13-14.**
- B. This would also deflect suspicion of covetousness on the part of these Jewish saints. c/w **1TH 2:5-6; 1PE 2:12.**
8. Godly people should receive such as these: receive them hospitably and supply for their needs and journey. c/w **PHIL 2:25-30; 4:15-16.**
- A. The ordinary gift of "helps" is valuable to church life. **1CO 12:28.**
- B. Supernatural gifts were handy and served their purpose, but gifts like helps are good for even poor widows (**LUK 21:3-4**). If you can't raise the dead, try raising your hand to help.
9. "I wrote unto the church..." yet that letter did not become Scripture. c/w **COL 4:16.** That letter was likely a letter of commendation. **2CO 3:1.**
- A. But even with such an introduction, Diotrephes "...receiveth us not." Not receiving the emissary who has official authority is to reject the one Who sent him. **LUK 10:16 c/w 1JO 4:6.**
- B. Diotrephes loved to have the preeminence, and this is the wrong kind of spirit for a minister of Jesus Christ. **MAT 20:20-28; 23:6-8.**
- C. John's naming of Diotrephes was not backbiting or slander. Diotrephes publicly was known for these tendencies, per **v. 10.**
10. prate: *intr.* To talk, to chatter: usually dyslogistic, implying speaking much or long to little purpose; formerly also to speak insolently, boastfully, or officiously; to tell tales, blab.
- A. Empty wagons tend to make the most noise.
- B. Contrast his malice with **COL 3:8; 1PE 2:1.**
- C. Those with genuine godly authority wield it cautiously, even reluctantly (**2CO 1:23-24**) but those who do not have genuine godly authority are likely to wield it like a club.
- D. When Diotrephes cast the righteous out of the church, he may have been doing them a favor. **ISA 66:5; 2CO 6:17-18.**
11. "Gaius, don't be like Diotrephes. Follow good." c/w **EPH 5:1; 1JO 3:10.**
- A. We should "...Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (**ROM 12:9**).
- B. We are all followers in one way or another, and what we follow says a lot about our hearts. **2TI 2:22; 4:3-4.**
12. Demetrius had a universally good report of men. c/w **ACT 16:1-2; 1TI 3:7.**
- A. Most importantly, he had a good report *of the truth itself*. The light of truth did not condemn him, it drew him and justified him. **JOH 3:21; LUK 7:29.**
- B. Demetrius had apostolic testimony to his character. Better to have a genuine Apostle speak well of you than to have all men indiscriminately speak well of you, or a Diotrephes. **LUK 6:26.**
- 13-14. As in the previous epistle (**2JO 1:12**), John limited his writing in deference to personal interfacing.
- A. This models the Lord Jesus Christ Who limited His written words to us that we might expect fulness when we meet Him face to face. **JOH 21:25 c/w 1CO 13:12; 1JO 3:2.**
- B. John's use of "friends" here speaks of brethren who are also Jesus' friends by their obedience and self-sacrificing love (**JOH 15:12-14**), which Diotrephes lacked.