

John's Letter to Gaius 3rd John

3 John 1:1 The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. Gaius was one of Paul's traveling companions. In Acts 19:29 we learn that he was from Macedonia, probable Thessalonica. In Acts 20:4, we learn his home now is Derbe. Roman 16:23 indicates that Gaius was Paul's host at the time of the writing of the letter to the Romans. In 1 Corinthians 1:14 we learn that he was one of two in the city of Corinth whom Paul baptized.

² Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.

There are three passages in 3rd John that begin with the word "Beloved". Just as in 1st and 2nd John, each time this word is used it is followed by 1) a statement or directive, 2) then an instruction, and 3) then an explanation or example. Such is the case again in this book.

Speaking solely to Gaius, and not you or me. John says, "I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers". This statement should not be construed to imply that all should "prosper and have good health". John's words are simply a hope or prayer that as Gaius receives this letter, he is still in good health and doing well. The word "prosper" simply means "things are going okay on your (life's) journey". John knows that Gaius's spiritual life's journey is going well. Gaius' soul prospers.

³ For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth.

The instruction concerns Gaius walking in the truth. He says, "For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth". This is easy to understand. In the gospel John states that Jesus is the "way, the truth, and the life". (14:6) Just as verse 1 states that John loves Gaius in truth or in Christ, so here John is rejoicing by the reports that Gaius is continuing to walk in the truth of Christ. In 1 John 2:6, John states the importance of walking in the truth. In 1st John he indicates that if you "say you walk in the truth you ought to walk in the same manner as He walked." John was thrilled to hear that Gaius was walking like Jesus walked.

⁴ I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

The explanation for this is that John says, "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth". This verse shows the great joy that comes from knowing that those who are younger in the faith, that you are not presently with, are continuing to be faithful to the cause of Christ. "Walking in truth," or rather "Walking in Christ!" At this point we are not sure if this is the same Gaius who traveled with Paul. Paul baptized a Gaius in Corinth (1Cor. 1:14) and here John calls him one of "my children." With no more information about this man we simply do not know if they are one and the same. The important thing to understand is that this Gaius once sat under the teaching of John and had not failed to remain true to Christ.

⁵ **Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers;**

Again to the "Beloved" John makes a statement, an instruction, and an explanation. In this verse John says, "You are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers", John is commanding Gaius on how he has treated the brethren. In verse 3 we found that it was "brethren" who came to John and bore witness that Gaius was "walking in truth". Here we see that John knows that Gaius is good to all who come to the church in his home, whether stranger or acquaintances.

The Bible teaches that God is no respecter of persons which means that he is fair to all. He treats all the same. The "rain falls on the good and the bad," Jesus says (Matt 4:45). God does not show favoritism. We are to walk in like manner. There are some in the church that treat some people differently than others. They will jump through hoops for some but would not step over a toothpick for others. But this way of doing things is not of God. We should be like Gaius who "accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers." The brethren are important to Gaius and John has used this opportunity to commend him.

⁶ **and they bear witness to your love before the church; and you will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers with the truth.**

John states that "they bear witness to your love before the church." This instruction is important. As the brethren came to John's home church, they spoke of Gaius' love shown toward them. John continues the instruction by saying "you will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God." Gaius has made sure that the traveling brethren were set on their way with all their needs met, the way God meets needs.

⁹ **I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.**

This was not the first letter John wrote to the church in Gaius's home at Corinth. One of the previous letters written to the church was rejected by Diotrephes. John says, "I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, ... does not accept what we say." Even though Diotrephes was prominent in the church, he was not a friend to the church nor did he have a relationship with the Father or His Son.

John says that Diotrephes "loves to be first among them." It seems that every church has a "Diotrephes." They are the ones who always seek attention and power. A key word might be "control" or "leadership." John describes this person's methods in verse 10.

Some might say that Diotrephes was a Christian operating in a carnal mind. But one essential element of the faith is to let God's word interpret God's word. In 1 John 4:6 John states, "We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the Spirit of error." In this verse John says that Diotrephes "does not accept what we say." Purely, Diotrephes is an opponent of Christianity and no friend of the church.

¹⁰For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church.

When John gets to Corinth, he “will call attention to his [Diotrephes] deeds.” Notice Diotrephes’ deeds. First he “unjustly accuses us with wicked words.” Second, he “does not receive the brethren.” Third, he “forbids” those who do receive the brethren. And fourth, he puts those who receive the brethren “out of the church.” There are people just like Diotrephes in the church today. They are opponents of Christianity. We are not to be like Diotrephes, nor are we to imitate him.

¹¹Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.

John speaks to the beloved with a final instruction concerning Diotrephes. His statement is “do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.” Notice the Hebrew style of presenting a negative followed by a positive. “Do not imitate evil!” “Do what is good!” Diotrephes does evil, but you do good!

John also says, “The one who is good is of God.” Don’t be like Diotrephes, be of God. John continues by saying, “the one who does evil has not seen God.” Do not be an opponent of Christianity, but be of God.

¹²Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we also bear witness, and you know that our witness is true.

John introduces Demetrius, a Christian brother. Demetrius has received two precious testimonies. First he has a good testimony from everyone. The church knows that Demetrius is from God and does good. Second, Demetrius has a good testimony from the truth itself. God through Jesus Christ says Demetrius is good and from God.

John also says “we bear witness that Demetrius is of God and has a good testimony or witness.” John places his own testimony and witness on the line when he says, “You know that our witness is true.” Since we have sent Demetrius to you, know he is true, because our witness is true.

¹³I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink;

Concluding his letter, John states he had many things to write to you but I am not willing to write you. Verse 14 gives a clue why he does not wish to write something to them.

¹⁴but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

John states he hopes to see them and speak face to face. Some things just should not be written; it should be delivered face to face.

"Peace be to you." It's the peace that passes all understanding. It's a peace that only comes after you have seen God and experienced His marvelous grace. John is saying "to you who are of God - Peace!"

"The friends greet you. Greet the friends by now." The word "greet" begins with an alpha in the original. It carries along with it a sense of union. Together the friends (in union) greet you. Salute them. But it also involves individuals. Speak to each one by name. The friends greet you - greet the friends - those of God.