

3 JOHN

1 The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

Gaius was a dear friend of John. This is the same Gaius that Paul mentioned when he commented about baptism. Paul said: I thank God baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius. This letter is a personal letter written by John to his friend Gaius. Notice, he is a friend that John loves very much. The reason that John thinks so much of him, is because he also is a student of truth. John showed his own appreciation for Gaius by calling him “well-beloved” four times in this letter. He probably was a member of a church somewhere in Asia Minor that was under John’s influence.

Be sure to notice that John compares three very different types of people in the church. Gaius, a hard working Christian, Diotrephes the exact opposite of what is needed in a church leader, and finally Demetrius, another winner of the type needed in every church.

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

John wishes, and no doubt prays for, Gaius physical health and prosperity. Notice that John's wish for prosperity for Gaius has a condition on it. He knows that his soul is prospering, and John wants him blessed to that extent. Clean living brings good health many times. Some of the diseases that we have, we bring on ourselves with the type of life we live. Heart disease, some cancers, A.I.D.S, are examples of things we do to ourselves.

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

Gaius walked the talk. Apparently his Christian walk was so good that others bragged to Paul about him. We see from this that Gaius, indeed, is prospering in his soul. His daily walk bears out his faith in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Just as parents can have no greater joy than that their children lead a victorious Christian life, the same is true of spiritual children. Spiritual children and grandchildren are those we have helped to lead to the Lord.

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

In 2 John, mention was made of hospitality to traveling Christian workers. This was of crucial importance in the early church since there was very little money for paying these traveling missionaries. It seems that Gaius was filled with hospitality for all the Christian brothers, whether they were strangers to him, or not. He was faithfully carrying out the commandment to love God and his fellow man.

6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

Some of those whom Gaius had helped along had evidently brought word back to John of Gaius's hard work. To "bring forward" would entail the full range of financial, travel, and other assistance necessary to host and then send along a visiting Christian leader whose only support was the generosity of other believers. When Gaius stands before the Lord Jesus on judgment day, he will hear Him say, "Well done thy good and faithful servant". Jesus will remind Gaius that what he had done to the least of these he had done for Jesus also, because he did it in love of the brethren. This brother shared what he had with those less fortunate than himself.

7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

John gives several grounds for practicing hospitality in a "manner worthy of God". First, one must show hospitality to those who have pure motives. These itinerant missionaries went out "for the sake of the gospel". They must be doing their ministry for God's glory not their own.

Second, one must show hospitality to those who are not in ministry for money. Since the missionaries were "accepting nothing from the

Gentiles”, the church was their only means of support. This little tidbit also shows us that these were Jewish churches.

Third, those who show hospitality participate in the ministries of those to whom hospitality is shown. This let's us know that we have a small part in the work of the missionaries we support.

8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

To help missionaries and similar workers to continue in their calling is to share in their work. Christians are obligated to bear their share of the burden of such work. The person who supplies the support for the missionary is just as involved in the missionary work, as the one who actually goes with the message. In other words, Gaius will get a missionary's reward.

9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

Both John and Paul called troublemakers by name. Diotrephes was the exact opposite of Gaius so far as kindness and hospitality to God's servants went. He even denied John's apostolic authority over the local congregation. As a result, the church was denied the revelation of God that came through John. We see the opposite of Gaius in Diotrephes. He is a very selfish man, who wants all of the authority in the church. It is very difficult for me to believe that anyone would refuse John the privilege to come to their church.

10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

John's apostolic authority meant that Diotrephes had to answer for his behavior. The apostle did not overlook this usurping of Christ's place in the church. Diotrephes opposes John's teaching, either John's stress on Christ's nature or the need for Christians to demonstrate love at all times. He also opposes the exercise of hospitality such as earned high praise for Gaius from the elder. It seemed he did not want the Christian brothers to come to the church, and he went so far as to

throw the members out who welcomed other Christian brothers. This is pure jealousy, which has no place in the church. It seems John has talked to Diotrephes privately about his problem and had sent others to speak to him and since none of this worked. John will expose him to the whole church when he comes, and it may be his turn to be thrown out. John had great authority in the early church and this Diotrephes would have to listen to whatever reprimand John had for him.

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Demetrius' reputation was well known in the region. Demetrius had to be the one who brought this letter. He was a trusted Christian and he lived before other Christians in such a way that they all knew he was a Christian. John is giving him a good personal reference here. The verse begins the commendation of Demetrius in the next. Gaius was to imitate Demetrius as the correct role model for his actions. John's statement indicates that Diotrephes' actions proved that he was never a Christian. This is John's way of saying that faith which does not result in works is no faith at all. Salvation is not by works, but salvation does produce works. John does not specifically mention Diotrephes, but that is probably who John says not to follow here.

12 Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

Demetrius is apparently someone Gaius has not met. John thinks well of him and commends him to Gaius. It seems likely that Demetrius is in charge of the traveling missionaries in that area.

13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:

Gaius church and Diotrephes churches may have been in neighboring towns. John expected to visit both shortly.

14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends

by name.

This is a typical closing to John's letter. He promises to come and see them very soon. The peace he speaks of is the peace of Jesus. He includes all the believers, including you and I, when he speaks of friends in his greeting.