

## Commentary on the Book of 3 John

### **1The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.**

The apostle John describes himself as an elder, likely implying that he is older, well-respected, and considered an authority figure in the church, especially given that he is an apostle. He writes to Gaius, who may or may not be the same as the Gaius referred to elsewhere in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 1:14, Romans 16:23, Acts 20:4, Acts 19:29). This Gaius is beloved by John as he emphasizes again in verses 2, 5, and 11. This Christian love is founded in truth in that Gaius holds to the truth that is in Christ and His Word, without which Christian love disintegrates.

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

John tells Gaius that he prays for his physical health and all other aspects of his life. He wishes him to prosper and be successful, particularly in regard to his health. John is confident of his spiritual well-being and in regard to the state of his mind and heart in regard to Christ and His Word. Gaius is spiritually prosperous and healthy, and John prays that his body will match the state of his soul.

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

Several men had come to John and bore witness to him that Gaius was walking in truth. This brought him great joy.

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

John, being advanced in years and having devoted his life to the advancement of the gospel and the truth, finds his greatest joy in the fact that God is being honored in his spiritual children. Obviously, that a physical offspring walks in truth is a great honor to a parent. But to have those who have grown spiritually outside of our earthly family as a result of our spiritual labor is also a great joy. John's joy is not just that a certain person knows Jesus but that they are walking consistently and persistently in Him, sowing spiritual seeds of their own. We, like John, should find great joy when we see others doing well spiritually as a result of our spiritual labor. We will reap in due season if we do not lose heart (Galatians 6:9).

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

John tells Gaius that he is doing well to continue laboring on behalf of his brothers and sisters in Christ. He is continuing to do what he can to help them grow to maturity in Christ. He does this even for believers whom he does not personally know, knowing that

they are all members of the body of Christ. Thus, they are all family, and he does well to treat them as such.

**6and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.**

Thus, word has come back to John of Gaius' hospitality and kindness through these people as they speak highly of his love to others in the church. Thus, he tells Gaius to continue in his hospitality and kindness which honors God. It seems that these men were traveling missionaries, and he is able to look after their needs as they pass through.

**7For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.**

These men had left home for the sake of carrying the gospel of Jesus Christ to others. They didn't take money and goods from those who did not know Christ, but rather they depended only on the support of the church.

**8Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.**

Those who do step out in faith in service for Christ need to be supported by the church as fellow laborers of the truth. Even if we don't know them we can partner with them in the advancement of the gospel. The key is that they are doing what they are doing not for their own gain but truly for the glory of Christ in the proclamation of His gospel.

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

John speaks of a letter that he wrote to the church perhaps in Gaius' home or another church that he was familiar with. Instead of respecting John's apostolic authority, Diotrephes refused to listen and obey what John said. He did this not because he believed he was right but simply because he wanted to dismiss John's authority and usurp it for himself. He wanted to be number one, having recognition, notoriety, and authority.

**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, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church.**

If John is able to come and visit this church, he will be sure to point out Diotrephes errors and arrogance. Otherwise, some might get led astray (Revelation 2:20). Thus, John is very bold to identify who the wolf in sheep's clothing is. Diotrephes speaks maliciously about John and other respected men of God. Of course, his accusations are incorrect. Diotrephes won't even receive those who come through in the name of Christ, let alone support them in their work. He goes so far as to not allow any other in the church to take them in. If somebody violates his desires, then he puts them out of the fellowship. This

he does without following the appropriate guidelines for church discipline and without Biblical grounds for carrying it out. Thus, it is clear that he is on a power trip and that someone with obvious authority such as John needs to put him in his place.

**11 Beloved, 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.**

Those who are of God are to live as God desires. Rather than learn from those who do wrong, we are to observe those who do right and do as they do. Our godly behavior demonstrates that we are indeed children of God. Those who continue in sin demonstrate that they are children of the devil (1 John 3:10).

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

One such person who is walking in righteousness is Demetrius. Others would readily testify to his goodness as does the Scripture. Since he obeys the Word of God and follows the truth, there is reason for John to affirm his character. John, emphasizing his apostolic authority, says that those who read this letter can be assured of his judgment in this matter.

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

**14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face.**

John has other things that he wants to say, but he would rather speak to Gaius face to face. He is expecting to see him shortly, so he chooses to wait until he sees him in person to address these issues. Some things are better said in person than on paper, but obviously this is all that God wanted us to have as part of His written, inspired Word.

**15 Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.**

John blesses them by wishing them the peace of God. Whoever these friends were it is clear that Gaius knew who they were and would have been blessed to know that they were thinking of him. Those whom Gaius knew that also know John were to be greeted on behalf of John. This interconnectedness and community of the church from city to city was a beautiful testimony of unity in Christ.

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