

3 John Exegetical Notes

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

This short letter by John is written to a man named Gaius. We know very little about Gaius except what we find in this short letter. However, we can say that Gaius apparently was a godly man who served in one of the many churches over which John presided.

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

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This verse is not a prescription for the health and wealth gospel as some would like to make it. Rather it is a greeting to a friend. When we say hello to our friends we do not wish them calamity or misfortune, rather we wish them well. John's greeting to Gaius is no exception. Gaius' soul prospered, and John merely wished that physically he would prosper in the same way.

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.

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

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Here we see the concept of truth again. Gaius walked in the truth, and as a result his reputation preceded him. John's great desire as a pastor was that all his flock would walk and live the truth that he proclaimed. When he heard that his children walked in truth it brought great joy to his heart.

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

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:

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Gaius followed the pattern of the lady to which John addressed his second letter. The difference between these two is that in 2 John the warning is against receiving those who deny Christ, in this letter the warning is against rejecting those who do preach the truth. Gaius did not have this problem, however, as John heard reports back from those to whom Gaius showed hospitality of his character and care for them.

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

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

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The reason for extending hospitality is given here. Those who went forth to preach the gospel did not have with them an American Express card or Visa Gold card. Rather, they depended on the love and hospitality of the believers to whom they visited for shelter and food. Those who showed hospitality to them partook of their labors and in fact became fellow helpers of those who preached the word.

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

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.

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Whereas Gaius showed true hospitality, another named Diotrephes would not extend a welcome to the true messengers of the gospel. He did this because he wanted to have the preeminence in the church. Apparently he thought of himself as someone important, and as a result desired to control the church and be the one with the final say in matters. By refusing to receive the messengers of John, he refused to receive John.

Not only did Diotrephes reject the messengers of the gospel, but he forbade anyone in the church from extending hospitality to them. In other words, it wasn't enough for him to reject the messengers, he did not want anyone else to receive them either. Those that did, he threw out of the church!

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.

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John exhorts Gaius to not follow the pattern of Diotrephes, but to follow the one who is good and who receives the messengers of God and treats them with hospitality.

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.

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One such person to be emulated was Demetrius. Unlike Diotrephes whose reputation preceded him for evil, this man's reputation preceded him for good. John commends him, and encourages Gaius to hang in there and exhibit the same kind of behavior as that of Demetrius.

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

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.

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As in his second letter, John closes with the hope of soon visiting Gaius personally and encouraging him face to face. Most likely, John will also meet with Diotrephes and call him out due to his refusal to accept the true messengers of the gospel.