

3 John

Introduction of John to Gaius

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

Being curious, everyone would like to know everything they can about Gaius. Sadly, unless we assume or guess that he is one of the other three men by this name, there is nothing more than his name mentioned here. He is extolled by John. It is interesting that he uses the same type of terminology as he did in the gospel.

*When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and **the disciple standing by whom he loved**, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! John 19:26*

*She runneth therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to **the other disciple whom Jesus loved**, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him. John 20:2*

*That **disciple therefore whom Jesus loved** saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. John 21:7*

*Peter, turning about, seeth **the disciple whom Jesus loved** following; who also leaned back on his breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee? John 21:20*

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

While some see in this verse an undue emphasis on the physical health, it seems more like another great compliment to Gaius. Paul could not have written such words to the Corinthians, nor could many of the prophets to Israel. To be able to speak in this manner infers that Gaius was a very spiritually minded man and that his growth as a Christian was all that it should be.

This is one of the few times that our physical prosperity and health is addressed in the Scriptures. Although the English translation reads “pray” in the ASV, it is not the common word for “prayer,” but there is no doubt that this is a justified translation and all the modern translations follow it. The reason some question whether it should be so translated centers on physical prosperity and health which some question the validity of praying.

Main Body of the Epistle

It is clear that this is a letter about two men. One a faithful Christian who appears to be persecuted for his good works. The second is an evil man. John is commending the former and exposing and condemning the latter.

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth.

The first thing is the greatest priority of all. Those who had visited and returned to John bore witness and testified regarding the truth. How rare it is to find these words. So much of the Bible is concerned with error and false teaching. Here we have a man to be highly commended because the truth that is in him is the same as the truth of the Scriptures. He has rightly divided the word and has no reason to be ashamed. John is pleased and joyful to hear of anyone who is faithful and doing God’s will.

4 Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

For John there is no greater joy and happiness than to hear about this. Paul spoke many times about these things. The faithfulness of those he worked with would determine the fruit from his labor and whether he had run in vain or had some fruit to lay at the Lord’s feet.

*But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? 10 You observe days and months and seasons and years. 11 **I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.** Gal. 4:9-11*

*Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 **holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.** 17 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Phil. 2:14-17*

*For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and **our labor might be in vain.** 1 Thess 3:5*

There are other reasons. Every faithful servant of God will rejoice when others are faithful as it means they are saved and have the same prospering soul and John saw in Gaius.

5 Beloved, thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest toward them that are brethren and strangers withal;

After truth, comes the applications and fruits that prove the truth. Jesus was very clear that believing the truth was important, but so also was taking care of the needs of His brethren. Peter and John both emphasized this truth also. Hence when John finds a man who not only holds to the truth, but also loves the brethren, he has great joy.

*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, **inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.**' Mt. 25:34-40*

*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit **in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,** 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 1Pet. 1:22-24*

*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. **He who does not love his brother abides in death.** 15 **Whoever hates his brother is a murderer,** and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 1Jn. 3:14-15*

***If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar;** for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that **he who loves God must love his brother also.** 1Jn. 4:20-21*

6 who bare witness to thy love before the church: whom thou wilt do well to set forward on their journey worthily of God:

John encourages Gaius to continue doing this great work. They had already borne witness regarding Gaius and his great love. Such testimony can be very beneficial in motivating others to act in the same way. He encourages him to continue doing such good works. God has asked for these things and in order to do it worthy of God we must seek to meet whatever standards he has asked us to do. Paul put this into perspective. Those who were helping Paul were gaining fruit.

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Phil 4:17

Jesus also touched on this.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matt 6:19-21

7 because that for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

In fulfilling the great commission, they followed Paul's thinking.

*7 Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, **because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge?** 8 I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. 9 And when I was present with you, and in need, **I was a burden to no one**, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And **in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself.** 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. 11 **Why? Because I do not love you? God knows!** 2 Cor 11:7-11*

***My defense to those who examine me is this:** 4 Do we have no right to eat and drink? 5 Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? 6 **Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?** 7 Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? ... 11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? 12 If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? **Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.** 1 Cor. 9:3-7, 11-12*

Although there is nothing wrong with taking money from the labor of preaching and teaching in the Name. But there is always the danger of the charge of being insincere or only doing it for the money. For the sake of appearances Paul became all things to all men, refusing to take money in order to gain as many as possible.

Yet the money must come from somewhere. Someone has to help these men to do the work. Who better than mature Christians?

8 We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers for the truth.

When such people arrive, they should be welcomed, aided and encouraged. In this way we become fellow workers with them. We are removing from them the need to be concerned about their physical needs so they can focus on the spiritual. Paul's arrival in Philippi is a classic example. We saw his normal thinking in the previous verse. But when he arrived in Philippi:

*And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, **If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide (there). And she constrained us.*** Acts 16:15

Later as Paul spoke to them he reminded them of their generosity from the very first day.

*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 **for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,*** Phil 1:3-6

Following the same line of reasoning, he told the Philippians that all that they had done for him was treasure in heaven and thus fruit to their account.

*Nevertheless **you have done well that you shared in my distress.** 15 Now you Philippians know also that **in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.** 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. 17 **Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.** Phil 4:14-18*

Paul used this same reasoning as he spoke to the Romans about the contribution for the saints in Jerusalem.

*It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been **partakers of their spiritual things**, their duty is also to **minister to them in material things.*** Rom 15:27-28

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

We do not have any specific letter. 2 John does not correlate in any way. It could have been the rejection of his first letter, but seems best to conclude that this is a letter God did not choose to reveal to us. Regardless of the letter, its contents are obvious. John had encouraged the entire church to do what he is encouraging Gaius to do.

Diotrephes was a man of faction. Thinking that John and other faithful brethren would remove some of his preeminence.

*philoproteuo ... (philoprotos, fond of being first, striving after the first place; from *philos* and *protos* ... to aspire after pre-eminence, to desire to be first: 3 John 9. (Thayer, NT:5383)*

This was the very thing that Jesus worked so diligently to remove in his own disciples and Paul warned we must avoid and flee from it.

*Ye know that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it is not so among you: but **whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister; 44 and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all.** Mark 10:42-44*

*"The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' 26 But **not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.** Luke 22:25-27*

*(doing) **nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; 4 not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.** Phil 2:3-4*

Diotrephes was none of these things. Instead he saw the church as his means to become great and powerful and he saw John and those who were coming to preach and teach the gospel to the Gentiles as a threat to his authority and position.

10 Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth and casteth (them) out of the church.

The full details of his conduct are now described. His works are first, "prating against us"

**phluareo* signifies "to talk nonsense" (from *phluo*, "to babble"; cf. the adjective *phluaros*, "babbling, garrulous, tattlers," 1 Tim 5:13), "to raise false accusations," 3 John 10. (Vine, W. E. NT:5396)*

He slandered and sought to destroy John's influence among the brethren, but not only that, he also refused to receive the brethren. He sought to condemn them in some way as false teachers or ungodly men. Finally, any brother or sister in the church there who did accept them was disciplined and cast out.

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

Thus there is a stark contrast between Diotrephes and Gaius and Demetrius. The latter are worthy of imitation because they are following the Scriptures and putting forth a good example. Diotrephes attitude and example are evil and must not be followed. As in his first letter, John again reminds them that fellowship with God is based on our actions and attitudes regarding good and evil.

12 Demetrius hath the witness of all (men), and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness: and thou knowest that our witness is true.

We know nothing further of this man. Some put forth the idea that he was a member of the church there. Others that he was one of the men who was coming and that John was encouraging Gaius to help. Paul spoke in a similar way to the Corinthians.

But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. 17 For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord. 18 And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches, 19

and not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, 2 Cor 8:16-19

13 I had many things to write unto thee, but I am unwilling to write (them) to thee with ink and pen: 14 but I hope shortly to see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace (be) unto thee. The friends salute thee. Salute the friends by name.

`1As in the previous epistle, John has more to say, but deems it best not to put it down on paper.