

3 John

Background

- Although the name of John is not mentioned, the author has been reported as the apostle John since the earliest times.
- Those who commented about the letter also placed John in Ephesus at the time, late in his life.
- Gaius could be the same as one mentioned before (Acts 19:28, 20:4, Romans 16:23, 1 Corinthians 1:14), but it was a common name. The Gaius of Acts 19:28 is from Macedonia. The Gaius of Acts 20:4 is from Derbe. The Gaius of Romans 16:23 and 1 Corinthians 1:14 is from Corinth.
- Demetrius probably is not the silversmith of Acts 19:24, but possibly.
- Diotrephes is not mentioned elsewhere.

The Text

- (1) “Truth” also appears in verses 3, 4, and 8. As in 2 John, “Spirit” could be used in the same place.
- (2) Praying for physical things appears to be appropriate if kept in context.
- (3 – 6) As in 2 John and most of the other letters, the motivation for writing was encouragement
 - (3) The excellent reputation of Gaius had spread, so John reported that fact.
 - (4) The foundation of John’s joy was derived from the successes of faith. John expressed the same sentiment in 1 John 1:4 and 2 John 4.
 - Paul’s expressions of joy are found in Philippians 1:4, 1:18, 1:25, 2:2, 2:28, 3:1, 4:1, 4:4, 4:10; Colossians 1:11, 1:24, 2:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 2:19, 2:20, 5:16; 2 Corinthians 2:3, 7:4, 7:7, 7:9, 7:16
 - James 1:2
 - 1 Peter 1:8
 - (5) Gaius’ generosity had become well known.
 - (6) The recipients of Gaius’ generosity reported it to other congregations.
 - Encouraging those who do well and reporting good work to others is an important function within the church.
- (6 – 8) Helping those who travel and teach the gospel is a good work.
 - (6) These teachers were already on the road, not raising support for future work.
 - (7) They did not claim support as a right. Paul did the same (1 Corinthians 9:4 – 18, 2 Thessalonians 3:9), although he accepted gifts when appropriate (Philippians 4:10 – 20).
 - (8) In helping such teachers, we participate in their work
 - Christians are encouraged to support such works (Titus 3:13, 1 Timothy 5:17 – 18, James 5:4, Colossians 4:10, Philippians 2:29, Romans 16:2, Acts 18:27).
 - Not everyone has the faith or is physically able to become a travelling teacher. But if everyone did so, all would starve. Those who stay home, work, and share are essential to the process.
- (9 – 11) The desire for position happens in the church, too.

- Diotrephes' motive was revealed by an inspired writer, not assumption.
- "Receive" meant to both honor and financially support.
- Diotrephes' words were forcefully delivered nonsense.
- Diotrephes' claimed authority over the actions of others and the authority to regulate church membership.
- John draws the conclusion that Diotrephes has not seen God.

(11 – 12) Do the right thing.

- John does not ask Gaius to oppose Diotrephes, but to do what he knows is right.
- Stick with those you have decided are the right ones to follow (hegemony).
- Stick with those who show the results of the Spirit dwelling in them.
- If congregations followed this pattern, poor leadership would die of starvation.

(13 – 14) As in 2 John, personal visits are superior to letters.

- Peace would be in short supply with Diotrephes around; but only if you let his poor behavior overcome the truth.
- Greet the friends according to their inner quality; greet them with encouragement as John did in verse 3.
- Congregations have an obligation to spread peace.