

A Study through 3 John

INTRODUCTION.

- A. As we pointed out in the introduction to Second John, neither Second John nor Third John contains a claim of authorship. However, due to the style of writing and commonalities shared with first John, most scholars attribute these last two letters to John.
- B. Third John is a very short epistle or letter to a Christians named Gaius.
- C. This letter tells us Gaius was attending a congregation where a man named Diotrephes was exercising an ungodly and selfish control over the church. John commends Gaius faithfulness and addresses the problem of Diotrephes.
- D. Let us begin with John's salutation towards Gaius.

I. CHAPTER ONE.

- A. Salutations towards Gaius. (3 John 1:1-4)
 - 1. John addressed this letter to "*Gaius, whom I love in truth.*" He then expressed his prayer for Gaius. (vs 1:1-2)
 - a. While it is true there were several people named Gaius seen in the New Testament, we have no definitive way of identifying this Gaius.
 - b. What we do know for certain is this Gaius was a faithful man who showed hospitality to those teaching the truth.
 - 2. John had rejoiced when he had heard of Gaius' faithfulness. (vs 1:3-4)
 - a. It is apparent other brethren had witnessed Gaius' faithfulness to God and to the truth.
 - b. We too should . . .
 - 1) Walk in the truth. Walking in the truth is much more than professing a belief in the truth.

Walking in the truth is to live our lives making every decision based upon the truth of God's word.

- 2) Rejoice when others walk in truth. As Christians, we should always rejoice with other Christians who are faithfully serving the Lord.

B. John encouraged Gaius to continue showing hospitality towards those who preach the gospel. (3 John 1:5-8)

1. Gaius had faithfully given assistance to brethren and strangers. (vs 1:5-6)
 - a. There were many people during the first century who traveled preaching and teaching God's word. It was a good thing for Gaius to help these brethren in their endeavors. Consider as example the apostle Paul and those who traveled with him. (Acts 21:5; Romans 15:24; 2 Corinthians 1:16)
 - b. In a similar way, faithful Christians should be willing to help those who are teaching and preaching the doctrine of Jesus Christ. (cf. Galatians 6:6)
2. These brethren, whom Gaius helped, had "*went forth for His name's sake.*" That is, these brethren and strangers were preaching and teaching the gospel. (vs 1:7-8)
 - a. Take notice of the phrase "*taking nothing from the Gentiles.*" Those to whom John was referring did not take help from "the Gentiles" or those who were not believers. There may be many different reasons why these teachers did not seek nor take help from unbelievers. Once such reason may have been fear of criticisms or misunderstandings as to their motives.
 - b. This section addresses the complete opposite of 2 John 1:10-11 which states that one who receives and helps

one a false teacher shares in that teacher's "*evil deeds.*"

- C. John addresses the sin of Diotrephes. (3 John 1:9-11)
1. John had previously written to the church where Gaius attended. However, Diotrephes, would not receive John's teachings. (vs 1:9)
 - a. John gives us insight as to Diotrephes motives. This man loved to "have the preeminence."
 - b. We do not know what role Diotrephes played in the congregation. He might have been serving as an elder, local evangelist, or just a teacher. Either way, Diotrephes exercised a selfish authority over the congregation.
 - c. As Christians, we must do all things without selfish ambitions or conceit. (Philippians 2:3-4)
 2. Diotrephes was standing opposed to the teachings of the apostles and would put sound brethren out of the church. (vs 1:10)
 - a. Diotrephes would go about talking accusative nonsense against John and others who taught the truth. The ESV renders "*prating against us with malicious words*" as "*talking wicked nonsense against us.*"
 - b. Diotrephes would also publicly reject and refuse anyone who came bearing the truth.
 - c. The apostle John, probably one of the oldest living Christians with the longest history, would deal with Diotrephes and his deeds.
 3. John reminds Gaius to "*imitate*" what is good. (vs 1:11)
 - a. In light of the false teachers of the day and in light of Diotrephes, John reminds Gaius to "imitate" or walk in the pattern of that which is good. Following after or imitating that which was good showed a person to be of

God.

- b. However, to follow after that which is evil reveals a person does not know God or “has not seen God.”

Such as Diotrephes.

D. Demetrius had received a good report. (3 John 1:12)

1. Little is known about this Demetrius. It is likely this Demetrius was the one who carried John’s letter to Gaius.
2. What little we know about Demetrius is enough to tell us a great deal.
 - a. Demetrius had “*a good testimony from all.*”
 - b. Demetrius had a good testimony “*from the truth itself.*”
 - c. John, whose testimony was true, also bore witness of Demetrius.

E. John’s closing remarks. (3 John 1:13-14)

1. As with his second letter, John expressed his desire to visit with Gaius and the local congregation. (vs 1:13-14)
2. We see a similarity between the closing of this letter and the closing of 2 John where John wrote, “*Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete.*” (2 John 1:12)
3. One clear difference suggests a sense of urgency in John’s desire to visit Gaius and the congregation. John does not appear to reflect the same urgency regarding his visit referenced in 2 John 1:12.
4. John also tells Gaius to “*greet the friends by name.*” This phrase tells us John was known to the brethren in association with Gaius.

CONCLUSION.

- A. John’s letter to Gaius, while short, is very encouraging and edifying. This letter likely gave Gaius hope and reassurance in the situation

regarding Diotrephes.

- B. The letter also serves as a warning to us as to the existence of those who would attempt to thwart the efforts of the gospel. We must always stand behind and support those who are teaching properly the doctrine of Jesus Christ.