

3 John

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3 John 1:1-8

Vss. 1-4

- Much of the first four verses were covered in last week’s introduction. The letter is a personal letter addressed to a certain man named Gaius, a very common name in the first century. It is likely that this Gaius was a member of the church that 2 John was written to and that this letter is meant to bring balance to the message from 2 John (see below). John identifies himself as “The elder” and says that Gaius is one “whom I love in truth”. This implies that John and Gaius had an existing relationship, and it shows the deep respect John has for Gaius.
- Again, following standard first century letter writing, John opens with a greeting and then offers a prayer for prosperity and good health, but adds the Christian twist to the opening by adding that he prays that Gaius’ soul prospers just as well.
- Vss. 3-4: John points to what is *always* key for him – not just what a person says they believe, but how one is living their life for Christ, the quality of their day-to-day discipleship. Walking in the Truth is how we clothe ourselves. The true disciples literally clothes himself or herself in the Truth of Christ, so that all anyone sees is the Truth of Christ, the Way of Christ, and the Life of Christ, all presented in the Love of Christ wherever the disciple goes, no matter whom the disciple meets. **Strong faith *IN* Christ always produces good works *FOR* Christ.** Both 2 John and 3 John deal with the Christian virtue of hospitality. John’s point in 2 John is to NOT show hospitality of any kind or degree to false teachers. As we will see, here in 3 John we are called upon to show generous hospitality to strangers, especially traveling preachers and teachers who are faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Evidently such travelers have shared with John about the very generous hospitality shown them by Gaius. Likely he has invited them into his own home, fed them, perhaps clothed them, spent time talking with them, and almost certainly gave them money for the journey before they left. These are the things a good Christian host is to do.

Vss. 5-8

- Vs. 5 a-b: John tells Gaius that the traveling preachers have come through sharing not just about the hospitality Gaius showed them during the time they spent with him, but about all they saw in him as he lived out his faith. Gaius is acting faithfully in whatever he does for the church. He is the example John wishes all the church would follow.
- Vs. 5c – 6a: Gaius has truly shown his light in his care of and hospitality for strangers. So impressed were the itinerant preachers and teachers who reported to John that they wanted to stand before the whole of John's congregation and tell of the Christ-like person who cared for them on their journey. This practice cannot be understated in terms of its value up until recent times. Peter urges his churches to "Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another" (1 Peter 4:9). Paul tell Timothy that a widow has been honored when she has been hospitality (1 Tim. 5:9-10). He tells the Roman church to always practice hospitality (Rom. 12:13). Hebrews tells us to always be ready to show hospitality "for thereby some have entertained angels unaware" (Hebrews 13:2). Give a listen to the song, "Master of the House" from "Les Miserables" for a glimpse into the life of an inn. Even pagans worked to create networks of hospitality to avoid staying a public inn. The church wanted to show the world that in the church you are always with family.
- 6b-8: Whoever brought the letter to Gaius (Demetrius in vs. 12?) seems to have brought several other preachers and teachers with him. So John admonishes Gaius to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God, though he knows that this is exactly what Gaius will do without being prodded. These men are worthy of our best because of what they have sacrificed for the Kingdom of God. These men have left their homes, their wives and children, their occupations, everything for the cause of Christ. They truly are the superheroes of the church. They would take nothing, not a drop of support from pagans, relying totally on the care of the church for their needs. And its not that they believed money or food from pagans to be tainted, its that they wanted whatever they gave to the pagans to come without the slightest string attached. There were plenty of traveling pagan preachers too and for a price they would read you palm, tell your fortune, whatever you wanted to hear. Christian preachers would share with them the Truth of God but wanted to do it without any mercenary motives.
- John says another reason to support such people is that by so doing we become fellow workers with the Truth, fellow workers with the missionaries themselves. Not everyone can pick up and leave. Not everyone is called, for it is a calling. But we all can join in the work with them, holding the rope as they wander out into the deep that they might save some.