

3 John

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

2 Beloved, I pray that everything is going well and that you are living a moral life² to the extent that your inwardness is in a good way.³

3 Now, I rejoiced exceedingly when the brothers came⁴ and bore witness to you with respect to the truth, to the effect that you are living in the truth.⁵ 4 I have no greater joy than this, when I hear that my children⁶ are living in the truth.

5 Beloved, you are doing belief,⁷ whatever you have accomplished toward the brothers, even this toward strangers.⁸ 6 They, whom you do well to send on their way in a manner worthy of God, have testified to your love before the group.⁹ 7 Now, they went out on behalf of the Name,¹⁰ receiving nothing from the Gentiles.¹¹ 8 Therefore, we are morally obligated to be supportive of such men, so that we may be their fellow workers with respect to the truth.¹²

9 I have written something to the group,¹³ but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them,¹⁴ does not welcome us.¹⁵ 10 Therefore, if I come, I will call attention to his actions, which he does by slandering us with evil words,¹⁶ and not being satisfied with this, neither does he himself welcome the brothers,¹⁷ and he hinders those who desire to do so, and he throws them out of the group.¹⁸

11 Beloved, do not imitate evil,¹⁹ but good.²⁰ He who does good is of God.²¹ He who does evil has not seen God.²² 12 Demetrius has been spoken well of by everyone and by the truth itself.²³ Indeed, even we testify,²⁴ and you know that our testimony is true.²⁵

13 I have many things to write to you,²⁶ but I do not wish to write to you with paper and ink. 14 But I hope to see you shortly, and we will talk face to face. 15 Shalom to you. The friends²⁷ greet you. Greet the friends²⁸ in accordance with the Name.²⁹

¹ ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ – whom John welcomes into the believing community and is devoted to caring for by intellectually promoting Gaius' faith with the message of Jesus as the Messiah in the midst of his own belief in the truth, the apostolic message that the Father possessed and communicated via the Son and his apostles, and that John spells out in more detail in 1 John (cf. especially 1 John 1:1-4). Loving God and his people in the midst of believing the truth of Jesus as the Messiah and intercessor for sinners is central to John's understanding of manifesting authentic belief (ἀλήθεια is used 6 times in 3 John).

² εὐοδοῦσθαι [εὐοδόω – from εὖ meaning well and ὁδός meaning way] καὶ ὑγιαίνειν [ὑγιαίνω – from ὑγίης meaning sound, uncorrupted]

³ καθὼς εὐοδοῦταί σου ἡ ψυχή – your inwardness, that is characterized by a commitment to the same values as Jesus, moral goodness and God's gracious mercy

⁴ ἐρχομένων ἀδελφῶν – when the traveling band of Christian teachers, who were taught by John and sent out by him to proclaim the apostolic message, returned to Ephesus to report on their journey (cf. v. 7)

⁵ καθὼς σὺ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατεῖς – pursuing morality, especially promoting true understanding in other believers, while remaining humbly repentant and expecting God's eternal mercy through Jesus as Messiah and intercessor at the final judgment (cf. 1 John)

⁶ τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα – those who have become believers in Jesus the Messiah through John's proclamation of the apostolic message, whether directly or indirectly, as long as John could verify that they received the accurate message

⁷ πιστὸν ποιεῖς – Gaius has authentic inwardness which manifests itself in belief in the truth of Jesus as the Messiah and in commitment to goodness and mercy, which he has performed by welcoming John's emissaries.

⁸ εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοῦτο ξένους – Even though Gaius had never before met the emissaries from John, he welcomed them, because he recognized that they were proclaiming the truth of the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah (cf. 1 John).

⁹ ἐνόπιον ἐκκλησίας – have spoken openly about Gaius' love for God and his people, believers in Jesus the Messiah who pursue goodness and mercy, in front of the whole Christian community in Asia Minor

¹⁰ ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος – perhaps short for יהוה-עשה, found 104x in the Old Testament, referring to the transcendent Creator and all that his name, Yahweh, means; or referring to the name of Jesus and all that is involved in his being the Messiah

¹¹ μὴδὲν λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνικῶν – They are not expecting the populace of Asia Minor to support them, since people are fundamentally hostile to the biblical message.

¹² ἡμεῖς οὖν ὀφείλομεν ὑπολαμβάνειν τοὺς τοιούτους, ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ – The brothers rely only on Christians for their support and hospitality, not on non-Christians, in spite of the cultural norm of universal hospitality (cf. 2 Corinthians 8,9). But if they find non-Christians who are not opposed to the message, they still would not expect them to pay for the gospel, since only believers understand the wisdom and grace behind it. The question of supporting Christian teachers may not be as relevant today since they are not sent directly by apostles; so it is impossible to know who is apostolically approved and who is not.

¹³ ἔγραψά τι τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ – 1 John to the community of believers in Asia Minor

¹⁴ ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν – interesting reason that John gives for Diotrephes' rejection of the biblical message. Was there any thing about Jesus per se that caused him to reject it, e.g., Jesus' death as the king of Israel?

¹⁵ ἡμᾶς – apostles and, therefore, the apostolic message; the plural of apostolic identity, in order to emphasize their authority (cf. 1 John 1:1; 2 John 5)

¹⁶ ἃ ποιεῖ λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν – Diotrephes is denouncing the apostles for their belief in Jesus as the Messiah (cf. 2 John 7).

¹⁷ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς – emissaries from John sent out to proclaim the apostolic message

¹⁸ καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐβάλλει – Diotrephes is committed to ostracizing authentic Christians who hold to the apostolic message and love other Christians.

¹⁹ μὴ μιμοῦ τὸ κακὸν – John does not want Gaius to imitate Diotrephes. He probably has to say this because of the confusion and effect that Diotrephes and others like him are having on the authentic believers.

²⁰ ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγαθόν – cf. v. 12, Demetrius

²¹ ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν – Only people of changed hearts are actually theists. Therefore, the person who pursues morality and God's gracious mercy while being humbly repentant because of his continued moral depravity is genuinely a believer in the one true God. In this context, also, those who welcome the band of teachers who were sent out by John and who embrace the apostolic message are not only doing what is good but also are doing it because of God's work within them to change their hearts and make them his children who will inherit the eternal Kingdom of God. Ethics (Kierkegaard)!!!

²² ὁ κακοποιῶν οὐχ ἑώρακεν τὸν θεόν – John can easily define evil as rejection of the apostolic message such that a person in this context does not welcome the band of teachers from John, refuses to recognize the profound problem of sin within him and therefore rejects God's offer of gracious mercy through Jesus as the Messiah, thus not recognizing who God really is, even while claiming to understand God accurately, i.e., while focusing on the Mosaic Covenant.

²³ δημητρίω μεμαρτύρηται ὑπὸ πάντων καὶ ὑπὸ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας – Demetrius is perhaps someone whom Diotrephes has singled out and criticized, thus casting doubt in people’s minds as to the authenticity of his Christianity. But John knows how Demetrius has responded to the teachers from John and to the apostolic message.

²⁴ καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν – plural of all but indefinite inclusiveness; “I, John, and all believers who agree with me, including the ‘brothers’ and others in Ephesus who are part of my immediate community, testify to Demetrius’ goodness as one who is living in the truth (cf. vs. 3,4)”

²⁵ καὶ οἶδας ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθῆς ἐστίν – On the basis of both the objective and subjective evidence, i.e., John’s eyewitness accounts of Jesus and their grasping the importance of being reconciled to God for the sake of His forgiveness for their immoral condition, John’s readers can say that they really do know John as an apostle is speaking truth with the apostolic message.

²⁶ πολλὰ εἶχον γράψαι σοι – to Gaius specifically apart from the circular of 1 John

²⁷ ἀσπάζονται σε οἱ φίλοι – Fellow believers in John’s Christian community send their best to Gaius.

²⁸ ἀσπάζου τοὺς φίλους – John sends his best to fellow believers in Gaius’ Christian community.

²⁹ κατ’ ὄνομα – perhaps short for יהוה , found 104x in the Old Testament, referring to the transcendent Creator and all that his name, Yahweh, means; or referring to the name of Jesus and all that is involved in his being the Messiah