

The Third Epistle of John

Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth. (3 John 1:8 NASB)

3 John 1-2

Someone read 3John 1:1-7

Someone read vv 8-14 (15)

The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. (3 John 1:1 NASB)

“The Elder”

Who did we identify the as the author?

And why did we say he doesn't identify himself by name?

And as I showed you last week, the earliest and best MSS of the NT each have “of John” (*Iōanou*) both at the beginning and end of this epistle.

“Beloved Gaius”

Gaius of Corinth

1 Cor 1:14; Rom 16:23

Gaius of Macedonia

Acts 19:29

Gaius of Derbe

Acts 20:4

Apostolic Constitutions (ca 370ad) says that John appointed bishop of Pergamum.

Findlay argues, based on this tradition and the proximity of Pergamum to Ephesus, that both 2 & 3 John were sent to Pergamum.

Most commentators agree that this tradition is too late and too sparse to be relied upon, and the recipient is not to be identified with any of the Gaiuses that are mentioned in connection to Paul.

Apparently, “Gaius” was one of 18 names available to Roman parents. It was a personal name (as opposed to a surname or last name), and by this time, was generally only used by family and close friends.

This illustrates why he was “beloved:” John and Gaius knew each other intimately. John was not loved Gaius merely for his actions, but he felt like family to him.

The name suggests that he was a former pagan, although he may have been a Jewish believer who took a Roman name.

The fact that “beloved” (*agapētōs*) is repeated 3 more times in reference to Gaius indicates that this letter was one of commendation and encouragement. The fact this adjective has the definite article makes it an intensified noun (*tō agapētō*), as rendered in the King James, *the wellbeloved Gaius*.

And whose love, ultimately, was John expressing?

God...1 John 4:11

Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. (3 John 1:2 NASB)

Notice how John skips over the customary greeting and launches immediately into his prayer.

See, e.g., James 1:1, or Paul’s “Grace and Peace”, e.g., Rom 1:1ff

He addresses Gaius directly as “Beloved” (*agapēte*). This is not a casual greeting; it is the God-given bond uniting Christian brothers and represents their deepest obligation to each other.

This letter’s purpose is to strengthen and encourage Gaius in facing Diotrephes and his opposition to him; His arrogance and false teaching, even going so far as to put those who oppose Diotrephes out of the church.

John’s prayer is inclusive: “in ALL respects.” It speaks not so much of John’s desire as Gaius’, that he would prosper in ALL things. It is holistic, speaking of Gaius’ emotional, physical, and relational life.

“prosper” literally means “that you be led along a good road.” One commentator paraphrases it like this: “That you may make a safe voyage of it.”

What does the passive voice imply?

The action is done for (or to) you. One above Gaius and John is implied, namely God.

There is a practical reason why John wishes his friend good health. What is it?

John would not wish his friend burdened by Demetrius and his fellow missionaries if his friend were ill.

John adds “just as your soul prospers.” Why do you think he adds this?

He’s expressing his confident assurance in the spiritual welfare and health of Gaius.

John wishes that Gaius’ physical health would be as strong as his faith. This is vital to the further services John intends Gaius to render. The order is important: The spiritual is the standard measurement for the physical.

As one commentator puts it:

The Church is beset with many and varied dangers from without, but none are so damaging right now as the spiritually sick saints within.

This serves as a wonderful example of prayer both for the physical as well as the spiritual wellbeing of our fellow Christians.