

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 3-4

Someone read 3John 1:1-7

Someone read vv 8-14 (15)

For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. (3 John 1:3 NASB)

Somebody read the first word in the NIV/NASB. The word 'for' is in the Greek. What effect does it have when it is removed?

It makes John's flow of thought less clear. It gives the reason for his prayer. Unfortunately, the NIV is notorious for omitting connecting words like this.

John wasn't merely "very glad," he was overjoyed (or "gave me great joy" - NIV; "rejoiced greatly" – ESV). In the Greek, this is: "Rejoiced exceedingly, exceedingly." (*echarēn lían*). Greek often uses doubling like this to exaggerate or lay stress on a feeling or thought. John uses the same expression in 2John 1:4, and Paul uses it in Phil 4:10.

Interestingly, the NASB renders it "rejoiced greatly" in Phil.

Who are the "bretheren?"

Obviously fellow Christians

Perhaps travelling members of John's congregation, or itinerant missionaries.

What tense are the verbs "came" and "testified?"

Simple past tense, which might suggest they only came once.

But, these brothers did not just come once, or testify once. They did it multiple times. These are present-participles in the Greek: "coming" and "testifying." Literally, "brethren coming and bearing witness to your truth."

What 'truth' is John referring to, here?

Doctrinal truth about the Gospel

And / or appropriate Christian behavior

1 Jn 2:21-23 and 1 John 1:6; 2:4; 3:18-19

Most probably both are meant, here

Here we have a glimpse of the stream of travelers between churches in the region which enabled John to keep tabs on their spiritual health.

Christ came at just the right time in history – the Roman roads were so sophisticated, that many still exist today. This made possible frequent visits, which was particularly vital when the Gospel was still being disseminated by word of mouth (but, of course, believers still had the OT scriptures; all the NT authors used the LXX most of the time).

Further, as Terry pointed out, Greek was a precise language, and was the *lingua franca* of the whole known world, was flexible, and capable of representing the Gospel with clarity.

One commentator said this: “The implication is these brethren had witnessed Gaius giving open expression of his adherence to the truth of the Christian message as well as supporting and defending it in daily conduct. The fact that he possessed ‘the truth’ showed he had a living faith, and this brought forth ‘love’ in the life of Gaius.”

The final clause of v3 can be taken in one of two ways:

1. A form of indirect discourse that reiterates the brothers’ testimony (NASB)
2. It can also be taken as John’s own conviction about Gaius (NIV, ESV, NET)

In this view the report that Gaius is living in the truth confirms John’s own evaluation.

Robertson says there is an implied contrast with Diotrephes, but this is unlikely as Dio has not been mentioned, yet.

“Walking” means what in this verse?

The whole round of daily activities. The present tense denotes this is characteristic conduct: “continue to walk in the truth” (NIV)

The word “truth” does not have the article (“the”) which makes “truth” qualitative; which means Gaius’ very nature is “truth.” Everything about him, his character and conduct, project “truth.”

I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. (3 John 1:4 NASB)

Again, John mentions that “joy.” It is literally: “greater than these, I have no joy.” The Elder’s supreme joy is to know that the members of the churches under his spiritual leadership have lives directed by the Gospels and are committed to its teaching. John’s life was rich with joy, but there was no joy greater than hearing reports like those of Gaius. It was unsurpassed!

Instead of “joy,” (*charan*), some MSS read “grace” (*charin*). One influential witness is Codex Vaticanus, a copy of which I handed out last week. But the whole discipline of textual criticism is designed to evaluate what are called “textual variants” and determine the most likely original.

Read from Bruce Metzger's *Textual Commentary*.

In this case, it is almost certainly a scribal error. Either the scribe mistook the *apha* and wrote *iota*, or he was trying to add a more theological 'spin' by writing Grace instead of Joy.

The concluding clause: "to hear that my children in the truth" explains further why John feels such elation.

To hear is in the Greek *akouō*. What English word does that sound like?

"My children" could be a reference to John's spiritual children that he converted himself. But it probably has a broader meaning here, that is, his Christian children, believers for whom he feels a warm, fatherly affection and a sense of responsibility as their spiritual mentor.

The word "truth" had the article, indicating John has a specific truth in mind. What do you think it is?

God's Truth. They had not merely understood it intellectually, but had understood in their hearts as well.

Such reports concerning his dear children always produces joy in the hearts of Christian leaders everywhere.

Textual Variants

ΤΩΝΟΥΚΕΧΩΝΧΑΡΙΝ
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XARIN

Codex Vaticanus

ΧΑΡΙΝΛΙΑΝΕΡΧ-

XARAN

Codex Sinaiticus