

3 John: Notes to Gaius

Preliminary canonical note:

The Bible Summarized: PMEEC

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| The OT is the PREPARATION FOR | the gospel (the good news of Christ Jesus' saving work) |
| The Gospels are the MANIFESTATION OF | |
| Acts is the EXPANSION OF | |
| The Epistles are the EXPLANATION OF | |
| Revelation is the CONSUMMATION OF | |

Prov 30:5 Every word of God is flawless;
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

A note on method of interpretation:

1. *See*. First observe. See what *was*, then-and-there. Below this will be carried out by reading the text and at points explaining.
2. *Say*. State conclusions faithful to the then-and-there for the here-and-now. Below, sample (not all) conclusions will be listed in boxes.

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| I. Greeting to Gaius (1-4) II. Commendation of Gaius (5-8) III. Dealing with Diotrephes (9-10) IV. Concluding Counsel and Commendation (11-12) V. Farewell (13-15) |
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I. Greeting to Gaius (1-4)

3 John 1 The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. 2 Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. 3 For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

1. “The elder”: John did not exalt himself—just “an elder”
2. “Beloved, I pray”: Love and prayer are calling cards of believers
3. Another gospel calling card is delight in the integrity of *other* believers.
4. “My children”: the legacy of faithful discipling (instructing, shepherding). Look forward to growing old in the LORD!

II. Commendation of Gaius (5-8)

3 John 5 Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, ⁶ who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

It seems that itinerant gospel servants have brought news to John where John is about Gaius where Gaius is. But they will return to Gaius. John commends them and encourages Gaius to support them in their missionary work.

The missionary task (Matt 28:19-20) is shared by all believers. Not all can go, but all can be part of going.

III. Dealing with Diotrephes (9-10)

3 John 9 I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first [ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης = their first-place-loving Diotrephes], does not acknowledge our authority. 10 So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

1. People who do not accept apostolic authority arise in churches.
2. Church discipline is sometimes unavoidable.

3. Rivals to apostolic authority hamper the dominical mission.

IV. Concluding Counsel and Commendation (11-12)

3 John 11 Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God. ¹² Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

1. Beware whom you imitate!
2. By their fruits we can tell the good from the evil.
3. Our testimony is finally what others say about us, not what we think about ourselves.

V. Farewell (13-15)

3 John 13 I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. ¹⁴ I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name.

1. NT letters are abbreviations of larger truths and concerns.
2. The gospel message received and shared creates attraction to others, desire for their well being (“peace”), and a sense of shared purpose. These effects of Christ’s presence nourish interpersonal connection, an antidote to current anxiety and loneliness.