

# THE THIRD LETTER OF JOHN



An Explanation of This Letter  
Especially for You

Ger de Koning

ROCK  
SOLID  
11



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Rock Solid #11 (Part III)

Ger de Koning

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Cover design: Jan Paul Spoor

Layout: Jan Noordhoek

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## Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

### **Old Testament**

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah



Mic – Micah  
Nah – Nahum  
Hab – Habakkuk  
Zep – Zephaniah  
Hag – Haggai  
Zec – Zechariah  
Mal – Malachi

**New Testament**

Mt – Gospel of Matthew  
Mk – Gospel of Mark  
Lk – Gospel of Luke  
Jn – Gospel of John  
Acts – Acts of the Apostles  
Rom – Letter to the Romans  
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians  
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians  
Gal – Letter to the Galatians  
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians  
Phil – Letter to the Philippians  
Col – Letter to the Colossians  
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians  
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians  
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy  
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy  
Tit – Letter to Titus  
Phlm – Letter to Philemon  
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews  
Jam – Letter of James  
1Pet – First Letter of Peter  
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter  
1Jn – First Letter of John  
2Jn – Second Letter of John  
3Jn – Third Letter of John  
Jude – Letter of Jude  
Rev – Revelation

## Explanation of general format

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS** are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

**BRACKETS** [ ] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

**SHARP BRACKETS** < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** \* are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

**ALL CAPS** in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

## The Third Letter of John

### **Introduction**

The third letter of John shows the tenderness of love expressed in helping those who have gone out for the truth. It is the other side of what you have seen in the second letter. That letter deals more with the steadfastness of love in refusing to give hospitality to false teachers. You may summarize the message of the second letter in the words: 'Do not receive!' (2Jn 1:10) and of the third letter in the word: 'Receive!' (3Jn 1:8).

If we would only have had the second letter, we would be in danger to become strict, insensitive and suspicious. Therefore the third letter is a necessary and at the same time wonderful supplement to the second letter. It causes the balance that is necessary in the judgment of what presents itself as being Christian.

Besides the order to receive the true servant of God, this letter also gives a vivid picture of the church life in the second half of the first century, with timeless instructions for the people of God.

It is also remarkable that in this letter the name of the Lord Jesus is not mentioned. What you do find is a general reference to 'the Name' (3Jn 1:7).

With some characteristics John portrays some people: the hospitable and spiritual Gaius, the commendable Demetrius and the self-interested, uncompassionate Diotrephes. That also gives a good division of this letter:

1. Greeting (3Jn 1:1-4).
2. The God fearing Gaius (3Jn 1:5-8).
3. The dictator Diotrephes (3Jn 1:9-11).
4. The pious Demetrius (3Jn 1:12).
5. The plans of the apostle and blessing (3Jn 1:13-14).

### **3Jn 1:1-4 | Sender, Recipients, Walk**

*1 The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. 2 Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. 3 For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, [that is,] how you are walking in truth. 4 I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.*

V1. “The elder” is John in his status as an old man. He writes to the “beloved Gaius”. Beloved is a word which he uses three more times, but it is missing in the second letter, which he wrote to a lady.

There are three persons in the New Testament who are named ‘Gaius’ (1Cor 1:14; Rom 16:23; Acts 19:29; 20:4). None of these three person seems to be the man to whom John is writing. It is also not of importance in order to understand the message of this letter. Of this particular Gaius, John writes five positive characteristics:

1. his soul prospers;
2. he has a good testimony;
3. it can be testified that ‘the truth’ is in him;
4. he walks in the truth;
5. he acts in faithfulness.

These are the characteristics that you may strive for that they may be found with you too.

John loves Gaius “in truth”. He certainly appreciates the hospitality of Gaius very much, but still, that is not the reason for him to love him. John does not love Gaius for natural reasons, but on the basis of the truth of God. It is a love between two persons who have the same Divine nature. That goes much further than only appreciating someone for his hospitality. It means that the heart has been captured by the truth. It is about truth in the innermost being, about truthfulness which is shown in a sincere act and walk.

V2. John starts with a personal wish for Gaius. That wish is not meager. He wishes Gaius that “in all respects” he “may prosper”, that means on every area of his life. Thereby the health of his soul is at the front. The health of

his body, his appearance, is not unimportant, but that of his innermost being is more important.

It is not to be taken for granted that if your soul prospers your body automatically prospers. You can taste from what John is saying here, that there is no automatic connection between the condition of the soul and that of the body. The argument, that if your faith is alright it is automatically also alright with your body and you therefore do not need to become sick, is not correct.

You also need to be careful with the reverse case, that if you are sick there must be something wrong with your faith. You are not to derive from the physical condition of a man how his spiritual condition is. The friends of Job have experienced that to their shame when God blamed them for the hard, judging words they spoke to Job.

V3. John can say that the soul of Gaius prospers because other people have told him about what they saw with Gaius. Some “brethren” came to John who have been with Gaius. These brethren have seen the way Gaius lives and that has impressed them. They told the old apostle about that. In their message they testified to “your truth”, that is the truth of God, which was accepted by Gaius and which he familiarized himself with. We hear something similar in the expression ‘his treasure’ (Mt 13:52) used by the Lord Jesus, referring to someone who has made God’s Word his own.

Similarly, it is not about you having the truth, but whether you can be identified with God’s truth. God gives His truth to His own. That is seen in the life of Gaius, in his words and deeds. That is something to which others can testify. You may read books about something and tell something about it, but that is not your truth. Your truth is what you have lived through of God’s truth.

This has got nothing to do with what you can hear today that everyone has ‘his own truth’. That refers to people who do not submit themselves to God’s Word, but believe their own opinion about all kinds of things to be ‘truth’. John speaks about the truth *of God*, but which has become ‘your truth’ when you have made it your own by faith and practice. You see that with Gaius. He ‘walks in the truth’. The brethren testified to him that he

walks in it, and therefore his whole life is in accordance with the revealed truth of God.

When John heard that from those brethren about Gaius, he “was very glad”. As in the second letter (2Jn 1:4), the words ‘rejoiced greatly’ indicate intense joy and the depth of compassion for the spiritual well-being of the other. This great joy relates to what John heard about a fellow believer. That is not opposed to joy in the Lord; on the contrary, it is inseparable from it.

Hopefully, you rejoice not only in the Father and the Son, but also in everything you see of the Lord Jesus in someone else. You also rejoice when believers visit you and tell you good stories about other children of God. Unfortunately the stories are often more focused on what the brother lacks or what his failures are. Try to focus on the positive things that are present with your brother and sister.

John speaks about ‘brethren’ who came to him and not about some ‘gentlemen’. ‘Brethren’ is an honorary title and is a lot more affectionate than the distant ‘sir’ or ‘madam’ that at times is also used among believers. In the name ‘brethren’ you hear the sound of the family relationship of the believers that comes from the fact that they are children of God. It is also nice to consider that Gaius does not testify to himself. He does not need to.

We also should not speak about ourselves, about things we have done. “Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips” (Pro 27:2). You must always beware of the danger of boasting on what you have done for the Lord (Mk 6:30). Of course you may tell about what God has done through you (Acts 14:27; 15:4,12). See also how the Lord testifies to the work of Mary, a testimony that will be passed on by others to still others (Mt 26:13).

V4. For the old apostle there is no greater joy than to hear of his children “walking in the truth”. It is about walking in the truth of faith, the whole truth as we find it in the Scripture. It is not about accepting an orthodox truth of faith, but about what has become visible in your walk. That’s what it is with Gaius who in spiritual sense is one of the children of John (cf. 1Cor 4:14-15).

It gives John a joy that cannot be surpassed when he hears that his children are walking in the truth. He rejoices in the Lord Jesus and therefore he rejoices in all who also rejoice in that Person. For that reason he speaks about “no greater joy”. This unsurpassable joy is therefore not only found in the fellowship with the Lord, but also in fellowship with one another.

This joy is nothing else than the joy of heaven. In heaven all God’s children will behave themselves perfectly in accordance with God. Only the new life, that is the Lord Jesus, will be visible there. To each spiritual minded elder believer it is a joy which is non-replaceable or unsurpassable when he sees the characteristics of the Lord Jesus in the lives of young believers. To walk in the truth is to walk as He has walked. He did everything as God wanted. Because He is the life of each child of God, it can also become visible in each child of God. If you listen to the voice of the good Shepherd and follow Him, it will surely become visible.

Now read 3 John 1:1-4 again.

Reflection: Is it to be testified of you that you walk in the truth? Why is it / is it not?

### **3Jn 1:5-7 | Go Out for the Sake of the Name**

*5 Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially [when they are] strangers; 6 and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. 7 For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.*

V5. After addressing Gaius as “beloved” in verse 2, John does that again here. In verse 11 he will do that once more. By that he convinces Gaius of his love for him. There is indeed a reason for that. Gaius has much that is commendable and therefore worthy as an example for you to follow. But what John mentions first, is that he is “acting faithfully”. Of all services the main characteristic is faithfulness, which is also appreciated and rewarded the most by God (1Cor 4:2). Not your gift or the results of a certain work that you do for the Lord, but the faithfulness with which you do everything, is important to Him.

Gaius has acted faithfully toward believers, brethren, who were completely unknown to him. They unexpectedly stood at his door. He did not get rid of them, but he did faithfully to them “whatever” he accomplished. In reality, the hospitality that Gaius showed to the brethren he showed to the Lord (Mt 25:40). Hospitality is a responsibility and privilege for us all (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2), but especially for overseers (1Tim 3:2; Tit 1:8) and widows who are supported by the church (1Tim 5:10). Hospitality should not be granted reluctantly, grumbling, but wholeheartedly (1Pet 4:9).

These “brethren” were welcomed because they brought the truth. Probably they were poor brethren who came from a modest background and were uneducated, who were travelling in complete dependence on the Lord. They looked on Him for Whose Name’s sake they went out. They were not appointed preachers. They travelled without formal mission and without visible source of income.

John does not address his letter to them, but to Gaius and over his head to all believers who want to be used by the Lord to support such travelling believers. They enjoy their ministry and they owe them to support them in their needs (Gal 6:6). Gaius acted according to the principle that “you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing” (1Cor 9:9a). Although the church



that Gaius joined seemed not to act accordingly and failed to do so, Gaius was still able to act like that in personal faithfulness.

The Scripture shows here that God values love shown to strangers. Many believers show love to workers for the Lord whom they know and admire, while they have a reserved attitude toward brothers whom they have never heard of, whom they do not know. If we discover that attitude with ourselves we are to confess and judge it.

V6. Beside the testimony that was given to the truth of Gaius (verse 3), also a testimony to his love can be given. "Your truth" (verse 3) and "your love" indicate that Gaius is balanced in living out his faith. It is a good thing to have the truth *in us*, but it is a better thing if the truth *manifests itself* in our life. We must not only keep the truth, but the truth must also keep us. We often fail in one of both sides. We either stand resolutely behind the truth, but are tough, without love, or we only talk about love, while we fail in maintaining the truth.

Gaius has welcomed the strangers in love and truth and has helped them on their way (cf. Tit 3:13). These strangers in their turn have testified to it. There is reciprocity in it. Hospitality causes a testimony. The brethren who were helped by Gaius testified before their local church to his effort for their sake. In their report of their journey they also told about how they were received by Gaius and how he assisted them in going forward (cf. Acts 14:27). They have testified in the meeting to God's work which they have observed at other places and the service that was done to them by other believers. It must have been a joy for those brethren to tell about the love of Gaius, who loved in deed and in truth (1Jn 3:18).

With the words "you will do well" John exhorts him to continue with this good work of assisting travelling brothers. In that way Paul exhorts the Philippians to add to the good that they already did (Phil 2:1-2; cf. 1Thes 4:9-10). Gaius must have needed this exhortation too, because he was facing resistance from Diotrephes. Let this also be an exhortation for you if you are facing people who are trying to stop you from helping those who testify to the Lord.

"Send them on their way" means that he had to provide them with everything they needed to continue their service. When they departed from his

place, after they enjoyed his hospitality, he must give them some money and goods for the journey. Gaius had to do that “in a manner worthy of God”. That excludes on the one hand dishonest motives and wrong intentions and on the other hand the Name of God becomes visible and is being glorified in his act, for he acts in the Name of God (Phil 4:19).

The Lord does not assist His servants with wages or a salary or a guaranteed income. They can trust in Him, Who is faithful. Whoever trusts in Him will be able to testify that he did never lack anything (Lk 22:35). The servant of Christ must be supported by the saints (1Cor 9:1-18; Gal 6:6), but not with a secure income (Phil 4:11-12). They are in the service of the *Lord* and He determines where His servants go and how long they are to stay somewhere. People are not allowed to determine that, although believers of course are allowed to give some advice (cf. Acts 16:9-10), when they for instance hear about a certain spiritual need. When the servant goes, he will do that after he had received clarity from the Lord that it is alright.

There is another thing that is attached to this ‘manner worthy of God’. Wherever this expression appears in the New Testament it has to do with the character of the letter (1Thes 2:12; Col 1:10; Eph 4:1; Phil 1:27; Rom 16:2). That also is the case here. The main point in the letters of John is the eternal life, that is the Lord Jesus, Who also is the true God (1Jn 5:20). Therefore when John exhorts Gaius to continue to assist others in a ‘manner worthy of God’, it means a manner that is in accordance with God Who is light and love.

That excludes that we would praise servants by only looking at them for what we love about them and therefore look at them only from the perspective of love. It also excludes that we reject servants by only looking at them for what we do not like about them and therefore only from the perspective of the light. Worthy of God means that we approach servants and judge their service in accordance with light and love. Of course we are allowed to encourage or admonish servants, but the balance is important. Briefly said ‘worthy of God’ means that the life of God in you and me toward the servant manifests itself in a worthy manner.

V7. The reason for appreciating the act of Gaius and the exhortation for him to continue with it is that these strangers went out “for the sake of the Name”. You can say that in ‘the Name’ is contained everything that the

Son of God is. John does not need to declare to Gaius what he means. It is totally clear. It is *only* about that Name.

In this letter the name of the Lord Jesus or of the Father does not appear at all. There is no need to mention Their names, for it is totally clear to both John and Gaius that it is only about the Father and the Son. When you talk with someone about a person who is precious to both you and the other one, you do not mention his name all the time, because in everything you say, you and the other person know who it is about.

The Name is the one and only Name that should matter to you and me. It must not be the name of a church or one or another person (cf. 1Cor 1:10-13). The Name is the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Because of Him these travelling brothers have abandoned their profession to heed His call, as John himself also did formerly (Mk 1:19-20). They were not sent by or in the name of men. The church has no authority to choose, consecrate or send out servants of the Lord. Only the Lord Jesus has that right. The church will surely acknowledge those with joy who are so called and sent by Him (Acts 14:27).

Those who went out for His Name's sake are not dependent on those to whom they are sent out. The Lord finances His own work. Fundraising is not in accordance with what we find here. We must never give the impression that money plays a role in the preaching or that it is about financial profit. That will cloud the preaching or even destroy it. At the same time it is important to realize that you have an obligation toward preachers who go out in trust in the living God and who tell their needs to no one else than Him alone.

The preachers about whom John writes here do not accept anything from those who belong to the Gentiles. They leave it to God to see to it that they are received by those to whom the truth is dear to their heart. The truth is and still is the only letter of credence among the Christians and also the only means through which the apostle can protect the believers.

Now read 3 John 1:5-7 again.

Reflection: What do you pay attention to with those who say to preach the truth and how do you help them who preach God's truth?

### 3Jn 1:8-15 | Diotrephes, Demetrius and the Friends

*8 Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth. 9 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. 10 For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire [to do so] and puts [them] out of the church. 11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. 12 Demetrius has received a [good] testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true. 13 I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write [them] to you with pen and ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. 15 Peace [be] to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.*

V8. When John has told Gaius what he does well, he involves himself in the exhortation by speaking of “we”. He, John, ought, as much as any other believer, to receive those who went out for the Name. In this way he shows that he not only tells other people to do something, but he himself does it too. He gives the good example. That is the best way to encourage one another in practical love. This exhortation forms an enormous contrast with the previous letter, in which you were told that the least involvement in the advancement of false teaching causes you to have fellowship with evil works.

By supporting believers who preach God’s Word, in a practical way you become ‘a fellow worker with the truth’. In that way each person, including you, has an own place and function in the advancement of the truth. This is how the Philippians became fellow workers of the gospel through the gift that they sent to the apostle (Phil 1:5; 4:15). They probably were no evangelists, but they cooperated with that work, for without their support the work could not be continued. He who works and he who supports receive the same reward from the Lord (Mt 10:41).

V9. Gaius needs this encouragement because there is some Diotrephes in the church. Because the church is responsible for what happens in its midst, John “wrote something to the church”. That letter in which he writes

about receiving those who preach the truth is not written to Diotrephes, although he wanted to be the head of the church. The letter to which John refers Gaius has not been preserved for us.

Diotrephes is someone “wishes to become great” among them (Mt 20:26), but does not do that the way the Lord tells. Loving to be first or the greatest is an evil that hides in us all. The Lord indicates with the example of the foot washing how He is and how He wants us, who call Him Master and Lord, to be (Jn 13:1-20).

Diotrephes loves to be first. He acts out of partiality and his own glory and thus completely opposite to the mind of the Lord Jesus (Phil 2:3-4). He even goes that far that he does not accept the apostles in what they say. According to the first letter it is a proof that he is not from God, for he who is from God, hears the apostles (1Jn 4:6). This person Diotrephes loves to be first in influence and authority and therefore he puts himself above the believers. There is no reason to assume that he in a way adheres to anti-Christian doctrines. The important thing for him is himself.

It is interesting to see that there are person in the Bible with names that indicate a ranking. There is mention of ‘brother Quartus’, that is ‘fourth’ (Rom 16:23), of ‘Tertius’, that is ‘third’ (Rom 16:22) and of ‘Secundus’, that is ‘second’ (Acts 20:4). However, one with the name ‘Primus’, that is ‘first’, cannot be found. That name belongs only to the Lord Jesus, for He is the One Who in everything has the first place (Col 1:18). Diotrephes moderates this place to himself. He “loves to be first”.

The contrast between Gaius and Diotrephes is great. Gaius walks in truth and love, loves the brethren and he even serves strangers. Diotrephes walks in pride, loves himself and hates servants who bring God’s truth. Both of them are in the same church. How often this situation has already repeated itself in the history of Christianity!

V10. John informs Gaius about some things concerning Diotrephes. He says that Diotrephes will experience the power of the apostle. John is not grandstanding. He will act with apostolic authority. He does not moderate to put things in order by a command. Everything that John does is draw-

ing the attention to the truth, even when a woman is concerned, as in his second letter.

He will confront Diotrephes with “his deeds” that are in contrast with the truth. The whole issue about whether or not receiving preachers is only determined by the teaching they bring. Do they not bring the truth? Then do not greet them. Do they bring the truth? Then receive them, in spite of all Diotrephesses in the world.

Besides the fact that Diotrephes does evil deeds, he also talks nonsense. His “wicked words” are senseless, they have no foundation at all. They are expressed in a wicked mind and are evil of content.

He does not use only words. Out of his practices it seems that he is an evil man. He does not want to have anything to do with true servants, for he sees them as a threat for his own position. Therefore he refuses to accept their message and in that way also their Sender. He rejects them. He regards himself highly and despises others. He is like the one who begins to beat his fellow slaves (Mt 24:49). The man may probably have had a good start, but later he became an enemy of God’s work and therefore of Christ. He cannot stand to see another person get more honor than he himself. This is what happened to king Saul too (1Sam 18:6-9).

As a real sect leader he and he alone determines that no one is allowed to receive the true servant of God. Diotrephes seems to have taken in such a dominant position, that he independently throws everyone out of the church who does not agree to his policy and is disobedient to his commandment not to receive the brethren. To be thrown out of the church means to be refused access to the local church, for no one can remove another from the body of Christ.

Diotrephes has declared himself a dictator who sustains his power by intimidating the members of the church. What do they have to do with strange and probably less intelligent brethren? He is there anyway?

However, if someone brings the truth, we are to receive him. It is even very important that we listen to different brothers and to hear the Word from them. Each brother is limited and one-sided. The church is not served if

it always has to listen or wants to listen to one and the same person only. There are to be possibilities for exercising different gifts.

V11. After portraying the situation with regard to Diotrephes and the total lack of love with Diotrephes, it must have been alleviating for the suffering that Gaius had to endure, that John again addresses him with 'beloved'. John appeals to him not to imitate "what is evil", but in contrast with that to follow "what is good" (1Pet 2:21). We are to overcome evil with good (Rom 12:21). What is evil is presented in Diotrephes in the previous verses, what is good is presented in Demetrius in the following verse.

In the second part of verse 11 you hear again the absolute language of John. Although we have to do with a poor travelling brother, the point is if he "does good", if that is his characteristic, then it means that he has new life and he is of God. The same goes for doing evil. "The one who does evil" and walks in an evil way has no fellowship with God, although he has a preeminent place in the church or if he claims that to himself, like Diotrephes.

V12. John draws Gaius' attention to Demetrius. Demetrius seems to be one of the travelling brethren. He may well be the person who came to bring the testimony to John concerning Gaius and the church. He also proclaims the truth. He has a good testimony, not only from the believers, but also from those who are outside (1Tim 3:7). The word "everyone" may refer to both believers and unbelievers (cf. 1Thes 1:8). He has two kinds of witnesses: all people who know him, and the truth. The truth is as it were a person.

The fruit of his service testifies that he has brought the truth. His life is a continual expression of the truth. If someone looked at Demetrius and then at the truth, he saw that what Demetrius did met with what the truth prescribes. Also John testifies to him, as an emphasis of the previous testimonies. He presumes that Gaius will accept his testimony as truthful and not reject as untrue or insignificant.

V13-14. As he did in the second letter John concludes this writing with a personal note. He does not want only to write him, but he hopes to meet Gaius soon and then speak with him further. Speaking with one another is the best way to have fellowship. Whatever means we may use to have

contact, like paper, telephone, e-mail etcetera, it is not a true substitute for face to face contact. It is sad if in a local church the disagreements are being dealt with through letters by email and not by a face to face conversation.

V15. His wish to Gaius “peace [be] to you” is extra necessary in this church where Diotrephes is active and where there must have been great discontent. Nevertheless it is still possible to have personal peace in the heart in such a situation (Jn 14:27; 20:19,26). This does not mean that there is indifference with regard to a person like Diotrephes, but a trust in God that He at His time – here by the coming of John – will make an end to that situation.

John calls the brethren here “friends”. This is how the Lord has called His disciples (Jn 15:13-15; cf. Jn 11:11; Acts 27:3). It expresses an intimate relationship and affection. In German, the word for hospitality is ‘Gastfreundschaft’, which literally means ‘guest friendship’. Hospitality makes of brothers friends. Friendship relationships are formed.

There are friends with John and there are friends with Gaius. Those friends do not form an impersonal group, but there is a special bond with each of them. You know friends “by name”. That expression only appears once more in John 10, where you read that the Lord Jesus calls His own sheep “by name” (Jn 10:3). In this you see John obviously is a good imitator of the good Shepherd.

While John has ended his second letter with a family greeting, he ends this third letter with a friend’s greeting.

Now read 3 John 1:8-15 again.

Reflection: Which characteristics does Diotrephes have and which does Demetrius have?



## Other Publications

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