



3 John

A Verse-By-Verse Commentary

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THE BOOK OF 3 JOHN; AN INTRODUCTION.

The book of 3 John is the 64th book of the Bible, and it is comprised of 1 chapter of 14 verses. A verse-per-day evaluation of 3 John will take two weeks to complete.

The authenticity was disputed by some early church figures, such as Origen and Eusebius, but it was declared authentic by others, such as Cyril of Jerusalem and Jerome. The council of Nicaea denied its authenticity. However, the council of Hippo, and both councils of Carthage declared it as authentic.

John is the Apostle John. He is held to be the author of the Gospel of John; 1, 2, and 3 John; and the book of Revelation. He is highlighted in the gospels as being one of an inner circle who most closely associated with Jesus. This also included Peter and John's brother, James. In the gospel which bears his name, he refers to himself as the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (for example, see John 13:23).

Like the books of 1 & 2 John, no writer is specifically identified as being the author of 3 John. Rather, (like 2 John) only the title, "The Elder," is given in the first verse. However, similarities in writing style, as well as the brevity of the letter, give a strong hint that he is, in fact, the same author of both epistles.

The letter is addressed to "the beloved Gaius." John will say of him, "whom I love in the truth." John will mention "truth" six times, and that his testimony is "true" one time as well. Like his other letters, the subject of the truth of the Person and work of Jesus Christ is at the forefront of his thoughts.

Despite being "the Apostle of Love," John has no time for heretics or self-promoters, and clearly identifies the consequences of such views, directly naming one miscreant within the congregation.

The dating of the letter is reasonably assumed to be around the same time as for that of 2 John – from the mid-80s to the mid-90s.

The main theme of 3 John is "Emphasizing the demonstration of truth or error in the believer's life." Thus, the main purpose of the epistle is "To commend, encourage, and

instruct his good friend Gaius.” A secondary, contrasting, theme concerns the severe error of a person in the church named Diotrephes who should not be emulated. Of special note concerning 3 John is that it is the only book of the New Testament to not directly state the name “Jesus.” The word “God” is used three times, and the church is mentioned explicitly (three times) and implicitly throughout the epistle. The only certain reference to Jesus is found in verse -7 where it refers to “the Name.”

It is thus a clue that the letter has been sent in a time of persecution. It may then provide an explanation for the term, “the elect lady,” in 2 John which seems likely to be referring to the church. John was careful to state things in a way that would protect the readers if the letter was acquired by someone who was hostile to the church and to the name of Jesus Christ.

The main presentation of Christ in the epistle is “Jesus Christ, the Way.”

A short review of the book includes the following –

Author – The Apostle John.

Date – Mid 80s to mid 90s.

Theme – Emphasizes the demonstration of truth or error in the believer’s life.

Purpose – To commend, encourage, and instruct his good friend Gaius.

Presentation of Christ – The Way.

A limited outline of the book would be –

The Book of 3 John – Walking in the Truth

Book Superstructure

Truth – the walk of truth.

Book Structure

Personal letter.

Book Outline

Walking in the truth; rejecting what is evil.

Life application: We hope that you will spend the next 14 days of your life learning the book of 3 John, one verse at a time. From there, we hope you will apply its truths to

your life, molding yourself more each day into being a faithful and wholehearted follower of Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

Lord God, how wonderful it is to see Your hand on display throughout the books of the Bible. In each, we can learn more about You, about Your desire for our right living, and how we can be pleasing to You by living in accord with that. And so, help us to have wisdom and discernment, and to pursue You and Your will all the days of our lives. Amen.

The Elder,

To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: 3 John -1

As in 2 John, John begins his letter with “The Elder.” Because of his reputation, age, and status, this was all that was necessary to identify himself to his readers. This is a personal letter and is being written “To the beloved Gaius.”

Gaius was a very common name at the time, coming from the Roman name Caius. And so, he can't be linked with any other Gaius – either mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament or from archaeological discoveries. The name is found twice in Acts, once in Romans, and once in 1 Corinthians. Of this particular Gaius, we know he was beloved of John.

Of his addressee, John next says, “whom I love in truth.” The translation is correct. Some translations say, “in the truth.” There is no article before “truth,” showing that it is a state of being, rather than a love because of a particular issue. John's love extends beyond one point and is an all-encompassing fraternal love which is grounded in truth.

John will use the term “truth” six times in this short letter. He will also use the adjective form “true” once as well. His stress on this word is to show the contrast between Gaius and those like him, and on another person whom John will single out for his evil ways.

Life application: As we go through this short letter, we are going to get a good idea of the workings of the church at this early stage in Christianity and about the problems they faced even then.

Some of these problems are still being faced today. One of the problems is discontent among those within the body leading towards animosity. We can tell this even from this first verse. John uses an emphatic “I” in this verse, implying that there were those who were at enmity with Gaius.

John was stressing, in essence, that “even though others don’t love you, I (stated boldly) do.” And why was there this bond of love? Because of walking in truth, meaning the doctrine of Jesus Christ when properly taught and accepted. John loved those who received the truth. The implication is that he had no love for those who didn’t or those who taught it falsely.

Let us take the Bible in its proper context when dealing with such issues as Christian love.

Each day, Lord, we look with anticipation at the coming wisdom when we pick up your word to read it again. We cherish the treasures of insight You have placed there. May we properly handle Your word so that You will be glorified, and so that we will be found truthful in our lives and doctrine. What more could a soul desire than this! Amen.

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. 3 John -2

John, addressing “the beloved Gaius” of the previous verse, calls him “Beloved.” As the adjective is singular, there is no question that the letter is written to him alone, even if it is now included for our instruction in the Bible. To Gaius, he next says, “I pray that you may prosper in all things.” The KJV incorrectly renders it as “above all things.” Neither the word, nor the context, could imply “above.” Rather, the Greek word *peri* signifies “concerning.”

The Greek word translated as “prosper” signifies a journey on a particular road. Thus, it figuratively is intended to be used where someone truly prospers. If one is on the wrong path, then there will be a waste of time, energy, and so on. But to be on the right path things will continue as they were intended and budgeted for. While on this path of prospering, John then says, “and be in health.”

Some have deduced that because of these words, Gaius must have been sick. That may be reading too much into John's words. It is the most common thing to wish continued health on someone who is healthy, or for strong health for someone when we don't even know what their current health situation is. John is simply combining his desire for Gaius' physical health with his spiritual health. As he says, "just as your soul prospers."

John, as can be evidenced by the contents of the coming verse, was fully aware of the sound spiritual health of Gaius. In this, John was – in essence – pronouncing a blessing upon Gaius for a physically healthy walk in this life; he was certainly spiritually healthy.

Life application: John, will use the same term, beloved, at the beginning of each major point, stating it again in verses 5 and 11. His prayer points to temporal things and indicates that it is completely acceptable to pray for temporal blessings.

As we saw, John is praying for a successful journey in all the things of life. However, this is not a call to a prosperity gospel where we can "claim" these things. That is a twisted way of looking at both the word "pray," and at the rest of Scripture. Instead, a prayer is a petition of request, not a demand.

The same is true for his prayer of health. It, again, isn't a pronouncement of, or claim for, health by the touch of a faith healer. It is a prayer of petition.

For someone to stand on a stage or on a TV show and claim healing in the name of Jesus is both unbiblical and unwise. It is unbiblical because the Bible doesn't teach it. And it is unwise because when God, in His sovereignty, decides to not heal someone, then that person's faith or the faith of others can be damaged. It is a crime against the Lord to demand that which is at His prerogative alone.

Another point is that the word used for "be in health" is sometimes used in a metaphorical sense by Paul when speaking of sound doctrine. But this isn't the case here. It is speaking of Gaius' physical health.

Finally, we saw that there was nothing wrong with Gaius' spiritual condition. John is simply praying that Gaius will be blessed in health and in the temporal things of life, just as he is in his spiritual life. Again, this is a classic verse for deducing that we can't expect

these things simply because we are obedient to the Lord. Instead, we can pray for them and the Lord will respond according to His wisdom and our needs.

The prosperity gospel and the health gospel are both revealed as false teachings from this one verse. Instead, the Christian is to pray for, but never expect or demand, such things.

Lord, at times, we may have fallen prey to the false teachings of the prosperity and health gospels. We may have claimed and expected things which we should have only prayed for. In this, we have overstepped what is right and not allowed room for Your sovereign choices concerning our lives. May we accept whatever You give us as a blessing – be it wealth or poverty, health or ailment. To Your glory alone! Amen.

For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in the truth. 3 John -3

John has just stated the words, “as your soul prospers.” How did he know this? He now explains it with the words of verse 3. He begins with, “For I rejoiced greatly.” Here, like in 2 John 1:4, he uses the word *lian*. It signifies “exceedingly” by taking a thought and elevating it to a higher level. John is truly overjoyed, as he next says, “when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you.”

The translation is lacking the force of John’s words. Both “came” and “testified” are present participles. It rightly says, “*of the* brethren coming and testifying of the truth in you.” The visits were ongoing, and the testimony was continuously faithful. Whenever someone went to visit Gaius, and that was not infrequently (as the verbs indicate), they always came back with a good word about him.

It is a positive mark upon Gaius which John is literally elated to share with him, and thus it explains his rejoicing exceedingly. He was abundantly delighted that his beloved Gaius was holding fast to the truth, and that it resided in him. With this understood, John next says, “just as you walk in the truth.”

In this statement, the “you” is emphatic – “just as YOU in truth are walking.” John has certainly said this to show the contrast between Gaius and those who fail to walk in truth. As will be seen, he is setting a border between the walk of Gaius and that of

Diotrephes who will be seen in verse 9. Also, the translation of these words is sloppy. John first says, “testified of the truth,” but then he says, “just as you walk in truth.” There is no article before the second use of “truth.”

Thus, John is saying that the truth of the gospel resides in Gaius and, that because of this, he walks in a general state of truth in all he does. The truth of the gospel actively residing in a person dictates the nature of the person’s walk.

Life application: In this, John’s third epistle, he speaks of walking in the truth. He has done this in both of his other epistles as well. In his first letter, he did so in 1 John 1:6. In his second letter, he did so in 2 John 1:4 –

“I rejoiced greatly that I have found *some* of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father.”

The idea has progressively moved up towards the beginning of each letter – verse 6, then 4, then 3. It is as if the Bible is saying that the truth is of such paramount importance that it needs to be highlighted at the earliest possible moment as time unfolds.

Maybe it is telling us that as time passes people will need to be more on guard than ever as to what is and what isn’t truthful. Based on the tense of the statement, John hadn’t merely heard about Gaius’ walk on this one occasion, but repeatedly. Gaius, therefore, was a person who continuously demonstrated the Christian life in all he did.

For a moment, let us pretend that we are going to be mentioned to the Apostle John. What type of report about us will he receive as he ministers to his own church in Ephesus? Will the traveling brethren come and testify of the truth in us? Or have we been swayed away from the purity of the gospel that we first received?

Will they find that our walk is in truth, or will they find fault in how we walk and conduct our Christian lives? Will the vote be unanimous, or will the more mature believers be able to discern faults in our doctrine? Will they find good in some areas, but fault in others?

These questions and their answers about us are important because Jesus knows even better than these traveling visitors and their reports. What Christ Jesus sees He files away for the time when we will stand before Him at the judgment seat. Each of us is to be evaluated in order that we will receive rewards or suffer loss. May we be found with the truth in us, and may we be found always walking in truth!

Jesus, we know that we are ultimately accountable to You. We know that You embody truth and that we are to emulate You in this. Therefore, reveal to us the surety of our doctrine, correct our deficiencies, and guide us into all truth so that we may be pleasing and acceptable vessels, prepared for Your glorious use now and for all of the ages to come. Amen.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. 3 John -4

The Greek of the previous verse showed where the articles should rightly be placed. It said, “For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in truth.” There was an article before the first instance of truth, but not one before the second. John now says, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” In this, manuscripts vary. Some say, “in truth,” while others say, “in the truth.” It would be improbable that John said one and then another. Therefore, it is likely that he again says, “walk in truth.” The verse will be evaluated as such.

He begins with, “I have no greater joy.” There is an emphasis on the word “greater,” as it begins the verse in the Greek. It should be kept in that order to highlight this emphasis—

“Greater joy than these, I do not have.”

John is placing the joy he will next explain as the highest joy he could possess while in this life. And that joy is “to hear that my children walk in truth.” The verb is actually a present participle, and it should be translated that way. Thus, it would say, “that my children are walking in truth.” It is a right-now, active process.

It is one thing to hear that your children walk in truth, which could mean from time to time, and it is another thing to know that they are walking in truth, which means right at this moment. The verbs are carefully selected to show what is truly pleasing to John

concerning them. In this, he calls them “my children.” This probably shows that he is speaking of those he personally led to Christ. If so, then Gaius would be reckoned among them. The thought then mirrors what Paul said to those at Corinth –

“I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*. ¹⁵ For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. ¹⁶ Therefore I urge you, imitate me.” 1 Corinthians 4:14-16

There and elsewhere, a spiritual father/child relationship is recognized by Paul concerning those he had personally evangelized. In this, a father wants what is best for his children, and he will rejoice along with them when they are living properly. This is what John is now expressing to Gaius as his greatest joy. To be walking in the truth means that he is living in the sphere of what he had first been introduced to, without straying from the path of sound doctrine found in Christ. John is well-pleased with this situation in his beloved Gaius and any others who also faithfully walked.

Life application: John was commissioned as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He walked with the Lord, learned from Him, saw His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, saw Him hailed as “the Son of David” on Palm Sunday, and watched Him crucified a few days later. He was given personal charge of Jesus’ mother as He was dying on the cross.

After the sadness of the burial came the glorious memory of the resurrection. He stood on the Mount of Olives as Jesus ascended to the right hand of God. All of these things he personally beheld and participated in. Therefore, when someone heard John’s words and accepted Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior, John certainly rejoiced. But he had no greater joy than that those converts continued to walk faithfully in the truth of the gospel.

This encompasses the entire life experience for each person. In other words, the Great Commission was fulfilled in that person’s life. This was not only to “make disciples” and “baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” but also to “teach them to observe all things.” This is what brought John that great joy – that the gospel message would be continued on through them and not die out or be distorted.

John, being old and unsure of the timing of the Lord's plan, could feel satisfied that what was given to him was safely passed on to others. And the stream of faithful transmission has been carried on through the ages, even until today. Despite the tricks of the devil and the deceit of deceivers, the truth is both available and flourishing in the world. Hallelujah!

Yes, Lord! Hallelujah and Amen! To know that Your gospel message has been safely protected and transmitted throughout the ages is a blessing to the people of the world. We know that we have a sure and firm foundation in the pages of the Bible and also from the mouths of those who properly and tenderly pass it on to others. Amen.

Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers,
3 John -5

John now moves from comments about his own personal happiness concerning Gaius to a commendation and exhortation of his actions. He begins this by saying once again, "Beloved." It is the third of four times that he uses the term in this short letter, stressing the truly loving feeling that John held for Gaius.

John next says, "you do faithfully whatever you do." The Greek is an adjective, not an adverb, and so it more rightly says, "you do a faithful *thing*, whatever you do." The product of his labors results in that which is appropriate within the boundaries of the faith. And that product is the result of what he had been doing "for the brethren and for strangers."

There are some differences in manuscripts here which alter the reading a bit, but the sense of the words is that Gaius was being a faithful servant towards those around him, both toward the brethren within the congregation, and also to any strangers who had come along as well. He was always ready to extend himself for others in a most charitable manner.

It should be noted that in this verse, the two uses of "you do" were translated from two different words. As said, he is faithfully accomplishing the tasks, but the second word shows that he is diligently, even unceasingly laboring for these people. Together, these words sum up the entire scope of his faithful and welcoming ministry. To show a

distinction between the two, it would be appropriate to say, “you do faithfully whatever you have worked at.”

Life application: Gaius was working in this manner for people he knew and for those he didn't know. The “strangers” are more than likely traveling evangelists or missionaries, just like we have even today. Gaius was apparently opening his home to them and giving them all the assistance they needed so that they could save their money for places which weren't as accommodating.

Just like today, if we travel, we will find that hotels and restaurants cost money. But if there are people willing to take us in during our travels, the bed is always more comfortable – even if it is a lumpy mattress. The food is always better – even if it is simple and not so tasty. And, and the friendship is always exceptional in comparison to a place we check in to where everyone is a stranger. A hospitable person or family is always the preferred option. This is a lesson for all of us.

If we have room and the ability to open our doors to those passing through, we should do so. The world has never been a safe place, but we can demonstrate faithfulness in opening our doors and trusting that we are doing a service that will long be remembered. When done in the name of Jesus, we truly are blessing the soul of another.

Thank You, Lord, for those who are willing to open their doors to us as we travel the highways and byways of life. May You bless them in all ways for their faithful and kind service to those they often don't even know. And thank You for putting this on their hearts as we know all good blessings truly come from You. Amen.

...who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, 3 John -6

John just said to Gaius that he does faithfully the things he does for the brethren and the strangers. He now explains how he knows this by adding on the words, “who have borne witness of your love.”

Word had gotten back to John, maybe even by direct testimony from those Gaius had taken care of, that he indeed was faithfully doing the things he was called to do. He

tended to the needs of those who came, and he demonstrated his love “before the church.”

John’s words here do not mean that Gaius was a person such as Jesus referred to in Matthew 6 –

¹“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in Heaven.

²Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ³But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.” Matthew 6:1-4

Rather, Gaius simply did what he did without any fanfare and was noted as such. This is the idea that Paul spoke of in 1 Timothy 5 –

“Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding *them* to judgment, but those of some *men* follow later. ²⁵Likewise, the good works *of some* are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.” -1 Timothy 5:24, 25

When one does good to others, what he does may be done quietly and without any trumpets blasting, but the things he does cannot go unnoticed. Such is the case with Gaius. From this note of acceptance concerning the deeds of Gaius, John then says, “*If* you send them forward on their journey.”

The Greek verb is in the aorist tense, as if an already-accomplished fact. Therefore, it better reads, “Having sent forward.” John is noting what Gaius has done, and he is acknowledging that it is the appropriate and godly thing that he has done. The deed done without fanfare is a deed which has been properly done and has met the approval of the aged apostle. This is because it was “worthy of God.”

Again, the Greek is closer to “worthily of God.” It is an adverb and a noun combination. The action itself is highlighted because it was done in a manner looking to please God.

The whole clause precisely reads “having sent forward worthily of God.” With this in mind, John closes the verse with, “you will do well.”

It is in the future tense, showing that when such actions are taken, it is the appropriate thing that will have been done. The order of the entire clause hinges on this future tense, and the word “you” actually opens the clause. The whole thought reads, “You will do well, having sent forward worthily of God.”

The whole thought is one which acknowledges Gaius’ love, something acknowledged by the church, and John’s prompting to further demonstrate that love by taking the concrete steps noted here to send forth these people in a manner which is becoming of God. The next verse will explain why this should be.

Life application: The word “love” in this verse is *agape*. In this case, it conveys more than just a feeling, but rather includes his actions as well. To continue demonstrating this love, John notes that his hospitality should also include giving them provisions for their continued journey.

The somewhat unusual construction of John’s words, saying, “you do well,” is believed to be an idiom of the time which basically meant “please.” To understand this, one can simply reword the sentence – “Please, send these brethren forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God.”

The parallel most commonly found in churches today would be that of missionaries looking for financial assistance as they travel from church to church before departing for their mission field. We, as individuals or a church body, should welcome these people into our homes, feed and care for them, and then provide for them not only with financial assistance for their continued journey, but also a promise of support (if they meet the church requirements) as they live in their mission assignment.

A majority of these people have a true heart for the Lord. They are dedicating their lives to the continued spread of the gospel. Because of this, they should be received, tended to, and sent out in a manner worthy of God. Let us remember this as we set our personal and congregational budgets in the years ahead.

Lord Jesus, help us to be responsible people with the money You have provided to us. A fancy latte can be \$5 or more. If we have one every day, that adds up to a lot of money. Is this the best we can do with that money when we have missionaries in our churches that are not fully funded? Help us to use what You have given us wisely. Is a fancy coffee of more value than their winning of souls to Christ? Help our priorities to be right, O God. Amen.

...because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.

3 John -7

To get the whole sense of John's words, the context of the entire thought should be considered –

“Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, ⁶ who have borne witness of your love before the church. *If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, ⁷ because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.*” 3 John 1:5-7

John explains why it is good to send these missionaries forward on their journey in a manner that would be worthy of God. It is “because they went forth for His name's sake.” It is a rather unfortunate translation, following along after the archaic KJV and not correcting their translation. The Greek reads, “for the sake of the Name.”

The force of the statement is pretty much ruined in the translation. As noted in the introduction to the book of 3 John, this is the only book in the New Testament where the name “Jesus” is not used. Instead, John says, “the Name.” It could be that by stating this, he was keeping the recipient from persecution if the letter was obtained by a person hostile to the faith.

For whatever reason, to say the simple words “the Name” is to identify Christ with the Lord of the Old Testament. Just as any Jewish believer would understand the title to refer to Jehovah, so any believer in Christ would understand this to refer to the Incarnate Lord, Jesus Christ. Thus, it is a direct reference to the fact that Jesus is God, as “God” is the nearest antecedent in verse 6.

It is the same thought reflected elsewhere in the New Testament, such as –

“They, therefore, left the Sanhedrin and went their way, rejoicing that they had been deemed worthy to suffer disgrace on behalf of the NAME.” Acts 5:41
(Weymouth)

These missionaries didn’t just go forward in the name of “God.” Rather, they went forward bearing the Name of Jesus Christ. And, it is in that Name that they made their proclamation to others. In this, John then finishes with, “taking nothing from the Gentiles.”

The word translated as “taking” signifies “accepting.” They would not accept help from those they ministered to, meaning “the Gentiles.” The word translated as “Gentiles” is *ethnikos*. It is an adjective used only in Matthew (three times) and in this verse. It especially refers to a non-Israelite, and thus a pagan.

The missionaries had taken the message out into the pagan world, doing exactly as Jesus commanded in Matthew 28 –

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.’ Amen.” Matthew 28:18-20

The message went out from the Jewish believers to the Gentiles. From there, both Jew and Gentile continued to spread the message further. The words of John here clearly demonstrate that the teaching of hyperdispensationalism – which says there are two gospels, one to the Jew and one to the Gentile – is a false and heretical teaching. John makes no distinction between the gospel that was first brought to the church he is addressing and to the gospel that went forth to the nations from them. There is one church that is made up of both Jew and Gentile, and that one church proclaims one gospel to all people.

Life application: It is one thing to help people out that are passing through the area where you live who simply need a hand. Maybe there is a flat tire, or maybe they are on

their way to visit an ailing relative and are facing financial trouble getting there. This would be a completely different issue to John than when someone is going forth for the sake of the Name of God, and specifically the Name of Jesus Christ. Such people are worthy of being sent out in a fitting and respectable manner because their duties are the most important in all of human existence.

To this day, missionaries generally receive all of their support from other Christians so as not to impose any burden on those they are ministering to. Because of this, the message of the gospel will simply never go forward without the prayer, financial, and logistical support of other believers.

These past three verses together form a sound and logical reason for supporting mission causes and ensuring that missionaries receive all the support necessary to accomplish their tasks to the glory of God. Let us remember this as we give to the mission budget in our churches.

Yes, Heavenly Father! May our hearts be geared towards the care of our faithful missionaries as they go forth and spread the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ to an unbelieving world! Even if our financial ability is limited, our prayer ability is not. And so, Lord, give us the desire to keep these faithful servants in prayer, along with any financial help we can provide. To Your honor and glory we pray. Amen.

We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth. 3 John -8

John just said that the people he has been speaking about went forth “taking nothing from the Gentiles.” He now contrasts that thought by saying, “We therefore ought to receive such.” The word “we” is emphatic. Because these people are not receiving anything from the Gentiles, it is incumbent upon those in the church to ensure they are taken care of – completely and properly. They are to be welcomed and received in a way that tends to them without them needing to be personally put out in any way.

John then gives the reason for this, saying, “that we may become fellow workers for the truth.” The sense is obvious. In receiving and tending to these missionaries, they will not be spending their own money and resources. Thus, by tending to them, those who do so actually become participants with them in their ministries.

John is making a logical point based on the last few verses. We “ought,” or are “bound to,” receive such people. These visiting missionaries and evangelists are carrying out God’s will in furthering the gospel, and are doing it without being a burden on those they minister to. Therefore, it should be obvious that if we receive such people, we will be an active part of what they are doing.

Life application: Concerning missions work, there is an old saying – “Either go with your person or go with your purse.” Not everyone can set aside their life to head out into the mission field, nor would that be realistic. Instead, there are those who are called to missions, and there are those who support missions. In both instances, the people are filling different parts of the necessary roles for accomplishing the task. People who conduct the actual mission work are no more important, but they are worthy of the respect and honor of those who send them. This is the same as a pastor. He is merely fulfilling a different role than others, but he is still entitled to the respect of the position.

When receiving missionaries, pastors, or others, we are to receive them as equals – without elevating them in their person. And yet at the same time, we are to acknowledge their particular position. Using wisdom in supporting missionaries is important too. From time to time, missionaries need to be evaluated to ensure they are actually accomplishing the duties they set out to do. If they aren’t, then they should be recalled, and all support needs to be withdrawn.

A mission field for the sake of a mission field, without any mission work, is as pointless as mowing a lawn without any grass. Take all things into consideration, and be sure to receive the faithful missionaries as workers for the gospel of Jesus.

Lord God, help us to be attentive to the missionaries we send forth – taking care of their needs, receiving them with honor when they visit, and keeping them in prayer for success as they labor in the fields that they have been called to. May we never fail to be attentive to caring for them as they faithfully conduct their duties in furthering the gospel. All to Your honor, O Lord! Amen.

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. 3 John -9

John begins this verse with, "I wrote to the church." Some manuscripts add in the word "something" into the verse, "I wrote something to the church." However, other manuscripts simply say, "I wrote to the church."

Either way, John had written a letter to the church which no longer survives. That missing letter, however, prompted John to write this new one. One more possibility is that of the rendering by the Latin Vulgate, which says, "I would have written to the church."

In other words, John has written this letter to Gaius instead of the church because of the miscreant he next will mention. John knew that he would have either destroyed John's letter, or spoken against it, thus ending any possible help for the missionaries.

In analyzing these various possibilities, Albert Barnes sums up his thoughts, saying, "It seems to me, therefore, that the fair interpretation of this passage is, that these brethren had gone forth on some former occasion, commended by John to the church, and had been rejected by the influence of Diotrephes, and that now he commends them to Gaius, by whom they had been formerly entertained, and asks him to renew his hospitality to them."

Assuming another letter was, in fact, written, we can see that in having this new letter, different information, needed for the believers to see and understand God's intent for the church, has been recorded. Therefore, nothing is lost, and the Bible is as God had determined it to be.

Regardless which scenario is correct concerning the letter, John next says, "but Diotrephes." The name Diotrephes comes from the alternate name of Zeus and the word trepho, meaning "to nourish." Therefore, the name means "Nourished by Zeus," or "Cherished by Zeus." Of this person, nothing good is said by John. Rather, his first thought about him is that it is he "who loves to have the preeminence among them."

The term "who loves to have the preeminence" is from the word *philoproteuon*. This is the only time it is used in Scripture. The word is not commenting on Diotrephes' doctrine, but it is rather speaking of his ego leading to self-promotion.

The idea here is that Diotrephes acted like an overlord. Anything he didn't like, he would work against it. If there was any threat to his totalitarian attitude, he would quash it. He wanted to be first in all things, and so accepting the recommendation in a letter from John (who was an apostle) would be contrary to his supposed authority. As John says in finishing the verse, Diotrephes "does not receive us."

Imagine a denomination with a hierarchy – bishops, diocese, individual churches, etc. One could think of a church within a diocese where the pastor of the church died. One of the deacons (who was locally appointed by that pastor) decided to take control of the church. When a letter is sent by the presiding bishop, he simply says to the congregation, "This guy wants us to care for HIS missionaries, paying their way and housing them. We won't comply!"

The fact is that he simply wants to be in control and so he convinces the congregation that what is happening is not the way it should be, even though it has always been the set standard for the denomination. When the letter is rejected, the bishop must now take further action. This is the scenario being played out as described to us by John.

Life application: An easy way to grasp the attitude of Diotrephes is to think of him starting his own church and calling it Diotrephes' Ministries. To make a real-life comparison, turn on the TV, go to a Christian channel, and see how many ministries are named for the main person.

This, in and of itself isn't an indication of self-promotion, but the aura around the ministry is. When the highlight of the ministry is on the person, then regardless of sound doctrine, it is a ministry of self-promotion, not the glorification of Christ Jesus. These people ignore the words of Colossians 1:18 –

"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."

As you listen to pastors, radio or TV personalities, or read websites, be careful to look for self-promotion and then flee in the opposite direction. Why spend your time and effort learning from a bag of wind who seeks self-glorification? Instead, make sure that it is Jesus (and the word which tells us of Him) who is being exalted in the ministries you listen to and support.

Heavenly Father, help us to be wise and discerning in how we evaluate Christian ministries. Is their focus on Jesus? Or, is their focus on how we can benefit from them (prosperity gospel), or how they can benefit from us (the greedy gospel). Please guide us to know which are good ministries and which are bad. Give us discernment in this, and keep us away from supporting the wrong ones instead of those which bring glory to You. Amen.

Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, *putting* them out of the church. 3 John -10

We just read about Diotrephes and his highhanded takeover of the church. Because of his attitude, John now says, “Therefore.” Because of what was happening, corrective action was needed. A letter would not suffice, and so he says, “If I come.” Though it is in the subjunctive mood, it appears that it is certain in his mind that he will come. In verse 14, he says, “but I hope to see you shortly.” The intent, unless he is unable to make it, is that he will come to rescue the church from Diotrephes.

John next says, “I will call to mind his deeds which he does.” As the previous verse makes it seem likely that he has already sent a letter which was ignored by Diotrephes, the only remedy left is to openly call him out for his misdeeds. John then defines them by first stating, “prating against us with malicious words.”

The word translated as “malicious” literally means “evil,” but “malicious” is sufficient to convey the appropriate meaning because it deals with his intended influence over others concerning those he is targeting. His intent is to malign others, thus gaining influence over the congregation.

In order to do this, John uses a word, translated as “prating,” which is only found here in Scripture, *phluareó*. It is derived from *phlyō*, meaning “to boil” or “bubble over.” Thus, the words of Diotephes are well placed, probably quite eloquent, and yet – like a bubble – the are empty. Diotrephes is a man of self-promotion, false accusation, and used his tongue to acquire the position of authority he desired. But there is more. John continues by saying, “And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren.”

This is probably referring to the visiting missionaries already noted by John. But it may mean any brother who showed up at the church to share in the fellowship. In order to maintain his heavy hand on those he had sway over, he would not welcome anyone else who could perceive his wicked ways and say, “This isn’t right.” He is the David Koresh or Jim Jones of the early church, ruling over those who had no understanding of his true intents. This is perfectly certain because John next says, “and forbids those who wish to.”

Those in the congregation who understood Christian compassion and the need to welcome strangers were forbidden to do so. They knew that what was happening was amiss, and so they probably came forward to say, “This just isn’t right. We need to welcome these fellow Christians.” Instead of taking the admonition to heart and welcoming them, he would turn his evil ways on those who would so dare to challenge him, “*putting* them out of the church.”

This is exactly what an authoritarian ruler will do. He will simply cut off the source of perceived trouble. In this, he will then have an even tighter control over those who remained. Eventually, those in the church who remain will be completely under his control. It is the classic design of cult leaders to act in this manner.

Life application: Unfortunately, even though these words seem almost impossible to believe, they occurred as early as John’s day, and they still occur in churches all around the world. This person, Diotrephes, was an arrogant and abusive person with no heart for anyone who would dare disagree with him. John says, “if I come.” However, as noted, the “if” certainly means “when.” When he does, he will make sure to get control of the situation. It was his determined purpose to set things straight and highlight the perverse nature of Diotrephes for everyone to see.

Diotrephes’ “prating” is comparable to vinegar bubbling over when mixed with baking soda. He was the epitome of the “perverse man” so often mentioned in Proverbs – “the perverse man sows strife” (Proverbs 16:28). His perverse nature went beyond mere words though. He wasn’t only content to be a backbiter, but he was an active control freak as well – not receiving true believers and even putting people out of the church who wanted to receive them. In Romans, Paul warns believers to not think too highly of themselves –

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” Romans 12:3

We are admonished to not think of ourselves “more highly than” we ought. Diotrophes never learned this lesson and so his life and actions testify against him, even to this day. If our deeds, our words, and our hearts were open for all to see, what would others find out about us that we would be ashamed of? Think it through as you deal with those you fellowship with.

Lord, there are certainly times when we act in ways that must be displeasing to You. We can look back on our day and think of how we could have handled things differently. Give us wisdom so that our hearts will be right in all of our dealings with others. May our lives be faithful and wholesome in our service to others and to Your glory. Amen.

Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. 3 John -11

John now begins a new thought, as indicated by the word, “Beloved.” This is the fourth and final time he uses this word in the letter. As with each instance, it is referring to the main addressee of the letter, Gaius. John has just referred to Diotrophes, noting his disgraceful conduct towards those he interacts with. Understanding this context, John now says, “do not imitate what is evil.”

The word *mimeomai*, translated as “imitate,” is seen only four times. This is its last occurrence. It is the root of our modern-day word “mimic.” Thus, the translation as “imitate” is well-founded. Gaius (and also we who apply John’s wisdom to our lives) is encouraged to not imitate what is evil. This implies that what Diotrophes was doing is, in fact, evil. The word translated as “evil,” however, is not the same as the previous verse. This word is a more universal word signifying morally bad. One can think of rot in wood which eats away at the tree.

Therefore, rather than imitating such conduct, John next says, “but what is good.” In this, Gaius needs to look no further than the example of Christ. Diotrophes had rejected that. Instead of being vibrant and healthy, his actions were rotten and in a state of decay.

John next says, “He who does good is of God.” The idea here is that the good a person does shows that he is out of, or from, God. His actions demonstrate the character, and the source of, who he is. Jesus referred to this in Luke 20 –

“For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴ For every tree is known by its own fruit. For *men* do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

Understanding this, John then finishes with, “but he who does evil has not seen God.” John’s words are to be taken in a general sense. There are people who do things which are “good,” which may be even more admirable than that of Christians. And there are Christians who do things which are not so good. They may be worse than those who are not Christians. What John is conveying is a state of being similar to that found in 1 John 3 –

“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. ⁸ He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.” 1 John 3:7-9

A person who is in Christ has moved from the authority of the devil to the authority of Christ. His actions are reckoned in an overall state. Without being dogmatic on the matter, it appears that John believes Diotrephes had never truly believed in Christ. His actions are contrary to what a true believer would do. However, he does not question his salvation. He simply makes the observation that what Diotrephes is doing reflects the character of someone who has not seen God (meaning believed in what God has done in Christ).

Thus, when he comes, John indicates that he will deal with the matter. It will probably be an action similar to what Paul exhorted the Corinthians to take in 1 Corinthians 5:13. By putting him out of the congregation.

Life application: One may question, “Why would John say the words of this verse to Gaius if he had been acting in a Christian and responsible manner so far?” The answer is that just as a stone wears down to a pebble in a river by the continued slow grinding of the water and turbulence, we are equally susceptible to wearing down in our Christian conduct.

Bad company and bad examples will always bring down those around them unless they are diligent in maintaining their good behavior. This is abundantly evident in the political landscape of America. As people practicing perversion, and others with less than moral behavior, move into positions of power, those around them tend to degenerate into like-mindedness. The exceptions are belittled for their morality and defense of godliness. Eventually, only the most resolute and determined souls maintain their strong morals – usually at the expense of any true influence. This then is what John is warning against.

When he says “does good,” he is using a term which describes moral and spiritual goodness, just as mentioned in the example of those in politics above. The Greek word translated as “does evil” refers to something which lacks the necessary qualities that it should otherwise possess – like a lemon in a car lot. This was Diotrephes – the lemon on the lot, inferior and unworthy of any true value in the kingdom of God. We know this because John says that he who acts this way has not seen God in any heartfelt way which would qualify him for glorification.

Glorious and Almighty Heavenly Father – the world is a difficult place filled with perversion, wickedness, and unrighteousness. It is so very easy to become overwhelmed by the ungodly living around us. Please be our Shield and our Defender against the fiery darts which are constantly thrown at us. Keep us wholesome and healthy in our walk with Jesus. Amen.

Demetrius has a *good* testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true. 3 John -12

John has just finished speaking about the corrupt character of Diotrephes. Now, he contrasts that to Demetrius. Nothing more is known about either of these men than is given right here in 3 John. The name Demetrius comes from Déméter, a pagan goddess

of agriculture. There is another Demetrius mentioned in Acts 19:24 and 19:38, but that is unlikely the same individual now being referred to.

Of this person, John says, “Demetrius has a *good* testimony.” It is in the perfect tense. The witness concerning Demetrius has been given, and that same witness continues on until now. He is a good guy. This witness, John says, is “from all.” It is universally recognized that Demetrius is a man of good character.

It is speculated that Demetrius is the one who is bearing the letter to Gaius. Thus, John is including his name now so that Gaius is aware of this and will then be fully confident in him. A second option is that Demetrius was a member of the church which Diotrephes was in, and John is now contrasting the two men, showing that there is still a good element who can be trusted and relied upon.

Either way, after the sad state of affairs has arisen concerning Diotrephes, John probably wants Gaius to be able to know he can fully trust in Demetrius. With that in mind, he continues with, “and from the truth itself.”

The words indicate the strongest confidence in Demetrius. To have a good testimony from all people is not always an indicator that a person is truly an upright soul. Jesus said as much to the disciples in Luke 6 –

“Woe to you when all men speak well of you,
For so did their fathers to the false prophets.” Luke 6:26

John would certainly have remembered these words and felt it necessary to confirm that not only was Demetrius recognized by man as an upright soul, but that he was so in accord with the recognized truth of God. Thus, he could be described using Paul’s words of Romans 2 where he said, “whose praise is not from men but from God” (Romans 2:29).

All men can praise a person, but unless that person’s testimony is in accord with the truth itself, it really doesn’t matter. With this positive note concerning Demetrius, John finishes the thought with, “And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.”

John here speaks of himself, and of those with him, as sufficient witnesses to the character of Demetrius, and of the truth itself, so that Gaius should have absolutely no qualms about trusting in him and putting his confidence in him. The words of John here would bring to Gaius' memory what John had written in the gospel which bears his name –

“And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.” John 19:35

“This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.” John 21:24

By stating what he has now, and in the manner in which he has stated it, John is saying that just as truthful as the witness of the gospel record itself is, the witness by him and his associates concerning Demetrius equally truthful.

Life application: Diotrefes of the previous verses is “evil” and is not to be imitated; Demetrius is “good” and is worthy of imitation. In fact, John points out three ways in which Demetrius makes this true –

- 1) He has a good personal testimony from everyone who comes in contact with him.
- 2) The truth itself (the constant theme of John's writings) testifies to his conduct and character.
- 3) John and those he is associated with bear witness to Demetrius' character.

John uses the perfect tense for the first two instances. This means that the action is complete. It points to everything in the past associated with those statements, even into the future. In the third instance, John's testimony is valid because Gaius himself bears witness to it.

The question for each of us based on this verse then is, “How do I measure up against such witness and testimony?”

Lord, may our conduct and Christian witness be of such a high caliber that we will be approved by those who come in contact with us. May we be on the side of truth at all

times, and may those who know us personally speak well of us. By meeting these tests, we know that we will also bring glory to You. May it be so. Amen.

I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink;

3 John -13

John now writes a thought that closely mirrors one found in the closing of his previous epistle –

“Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink.”

-2 John -12

In this letter, however, it is written in the imperfect tense. It essentially means, “I was having many things to write you when I started...” John’s mind was full of thoughts about the situation, about the direction he hoped for the church, about how to handle Diotrefes, and etc. There was a lot to discuss. However, like his previous letter, he determined that he wouldn’t merely right it out. Instead, he says, “but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink.”

Like the translation from 2 John, the way it is translated here makes the thought appear confused – “I was having a bunch of stuff to write to you, but I don’t want to do so with paper and ink.” How else would he write it out then?

A more precise way of translating it would be, “I had many things to write, but I purposed not with paper and ink.” It shows that despite having the desire to write, he decided that putting his words to paper and ink was not the best means of conveying what he desired to say. John’s words are not confused. Instead, they show he carefully thought through the matter and made a determined purpose to hold off on writing.

There could be several reasons for this. Maybe his words would be taken wrong. People read notes and get easily offended by what is said. If John is too brief, he may be perceived as uncaring or dismissive. If he is too wordy, the content may be ignored because such a long response is too tedious to assimilate. And so on. For whatever reason, the many things that John had to convey would be better off not conveyed “with pen and ink.”

One can see the difference between 2 John and 3 John here –

with paper and ink – 2 John

with pen and ink – 3 John

Here, John replaces *chartés*, or “paper,” with *kalamos*, or “pen.” The word signifies a reed. It can be a small reed, such as is used for holding ink. In this, it is obvious that the reed is a pen. At other times, it can be inferred that it is a thin reed which is easily destroyed by even slight forces, such as a papyrus reed. This would be what is probably described by Jesus concerning John the Baptist –

“When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?’” Luke 7:24

It can also describe a hardier reed used to make a rod used for whipping (Matthew 27:30), or for lifting something up (Mark 15:36), or even as a measuring rod (Revelation 11:1). John’s change from “paper” to “pen” demonstrates that 3 John is not simply a forged copy from the writing and style of 2 John. Any forger would have stuck with the original idea. However, John would naturally write about whatever was most directly in front of him to take up his notice.

In the previous letter, he may have had either a big piece of paper and decided it was too much to write all his thoughts down, or he may have only had a small piece and thought, “I don’t want to start on another piece of paper lest I inevitably fill that up with things that should be spoken in person.”

In this letter, John was probably looking at the pen in the ink well and thinking something like, “This arthritis is killing me. I have a lot to say, but the pen will be the end of me. And what I have to say is more properly conveyed in person.”

Obviously, we can’t know the thoughts in John’s head, but whatever they were, the change provides us with a note of authenticity which would otherwise be lacking.

Life application: This verse is very similar to that of 2 John -12 and is therefore probably something that he often did; start a letter and decide to end it early and wait to talk

about what was on his mind in person. Maybe he wearied of the task mentally or from bad eyesight, or maybe he just needed to vent about Diotrephes a little. Whatever the reason, he started out with a lot on his mind and ended before it was all on the paper.

Fortunately for us, regardless of what else he had on his mind, the Lord found this letter exactly right to be included in His wonderful gift to us. The Bible contains the hopes and aspirations of psalm writers, the frustrations of the prophets, the joy of Solomon and a bride, the exacting details of the priests and chroniclers of Israel's history, and so very much more for us to think on and study. It ultimately points to Jesus Christ and our relationship with Him. In turn, this leads to our relationships with others who are also called by His name as well as those opposed to His message.

This short little letter has given us a great deal of information to think about in this respect, and if it were lacking from the Bible, we would be less able to handle the important issues he brings up. God's word is perfect in all it contains and teaches, and we should feel blessed that John took the time to pick up "pen and ink" and write his brief thoughts.

One other thing to note is that many times the apostles had scribes to write their words as they dictated, but in the case of 2 John and 3 John, it is more than likely that they were written by his own hand. If he had a scribe, the letter would probably have included all of his thoughts. But then, it wouldn't have been exactly what the Lord planned for His word. As you can see, even the actions of John were somehow inspired by the wisdom of God.

Lord God, it is so very wonderful to peer into the thoughts of the writers of the Bible and see the issues which filled their lives and how they are not unlike ours today. It shows us the human condition remains unchanged. The personal touches we see in their letters remind us that they were people just like all the others who have come and gone over the ages – each fulfilling his time and then being called home to You. May we also be used by You to Your honor and glory. Amen.

...but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name. 3 John -14

The beginning thought of this verse closely parallels what was said in 2 John -12 where John wrote, “but I hope to come to you and speak face to face.” Here, he begins the general thought with, “but I hope to see you shortly.” It is an adverb signifying “immediately.” John chose to not put in writing what he purposed to speak out in person. In this, he continues with, “and we shall speak face to face.”

As in 2 John, the Greek literally reads, “mouth to mouth.” As Paul uses the term, “face to face,” in 1 Corinthians 13:12, John’s words here should be translated as he says them, thus avoiding the confusion of having two separate thoughts translated in the same way. The conversation would be completely private and personal, hence the term “mouth to mouth.” Certainly, John would go into more depth about the issues raised in this letter as he indicated in verse 10 – “I will call to mind his deeds which he does.” Diotrephes would get his comeuppance at the arrival of John.

From there, John next says, “Peace to you.” This is the normal Jewish greeting which John now conveys in the Greek. It signifies more than just quiet, but a state of full calm, blessing, lacking nothing, and so on. It is a petition for completeness in a person. The greeting is especially well-chosen because biblical “peace” is exactly what was needed for Gaius and the church he met at.

John next adds on, “Our friends greet you.” Actually, the Greek reads, “The friends greet you.” The word “our” had been fully expressed in the Greek in John 11:11. Here it is not. There is a group who were friends in the faith, even if not friends in the flesh, and they sent their greeting on to Gaius as well. From there, John closes out the epistle with, “Greet the friends by name.”

Here, John uses a phrase found only one other time in the Bible, *kat’ onoma*, or “by name.” Its other use is found in John 10:3 –

“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”

John was expressing that each person was to be greeted individually, recognizing them apart from all others. In this, it was understood by Gaius who was being referred to, but John withholds the names from the letter itself. It is another good indication that John is

being careful to protect the identity of those in the church so that they would not later be harmed by those who had evil intent for the body of believers.

Life application: Here, we have arrived at the end of this tender and beautiful composition by the beloved apostle.

This final verse begins with a “hope” to see Gaius shortly. The particular intent of the word “hope” isn’t one of uncertainty, but rather it leads room for God’s sovereignty in the matter. Such is what James spoke of in the fourth chapter of his letter – “Instead you *ought* to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that’” (James 4:15).

One final note should be considered. When 2 John and 3 John are set side by side, we see a fuller intent being conveyed. 2 John warns of entertaining false teachers whereas 3 John reminds us to entertain those who faithfully carry out the gospel. Take time today to read these two short letters from this perspective and you will understand more fully these important issues.

Lord God, how wonderful it is to read and study the epistles of the New Testament. In them, we can come to understand the wonderful things Christ Jesus has done, and how to conduct our own affairs within the church. Thank You for including these marvelous treasures in Your word. Certainly, they help us to properly direct our conduct in the face of heresy as well as dealing with interpersonal matters that arise. Help us to be wise and to study them often, to Your glory! Amen.