

CHAPTER 4

3 JOHN

Authorship and date

[See under Introduction to the Johannine Epistles]

Addressee

“To the beloved Gaius”

3 men named Gaius elsewhere in NT:

Gaius of Corinth, Paul’s host (1 Cor 1:14; Rom 16:23)

Gaius of Macedonia, Paul’s companion in Ephesus (Acts 19:29)

Gaius of Derbe, Paul’s companion for offering (Acts 20:4; a late tradition equates him with Gaius in 3 John)

Gaius the most common name in Roman empire

Romans had three names, with one of them being one of 18 acceptable pronomans.
“Gaius” is one of those 18.

Unlikely to be one of Paul’s companions (30+ year gap)

Gaius probably a well-respected and loved local church leader; nothing else known of him

Outline of 3 John

1. Introduction, vv. 1-2

ὕγιαίνειν *hugiainein*, be in good health; related to “hygiene”

Spiritual health and prosperity most important

2. Body of the letter, vv. 3-12

In writing to Gaius, John desires him to remain faithful to the apostles’ teaching and to remain in fellowship with himself. To do so Gaius must choose not to follow the ways of the schismatic leaders, especially Diotrephes.

a. Personal commendation, vv. 3-6a

vv. 3-4, John very happy (as in 2 John 4)

Occasion (genitive absolute): “brethren having come and having borne witness of you”

v. 4, This is what makes John happiest—his children walking in the truth

vv. 5-6a, Particular cause for commendation

Gaius’ Christian hospitality, especially to Christian strangers (traveling preachers)

Hospitality for traveling preachers and laymen an issue in the early church; discussed at some length in *Didache*, ch. 11-13 (dated in first half of second century; *ANF* 7:380-81)

b. Request for continuing help to strangers, vv. 6b-8

v. 6b, Participle shows condition, “if you send them forth worthily of God”

v. 7, Sacrifice of preachers

“For the sake of the Name”

ἔθνικός *ethnikos*, not ἔθνος *ethnos*; pagans, not Gentiles; newer usage

v. 8, Cause to help them

“That we might be sharers of work in the truth”; same principle as negatively expressed

in 2 John 11

c. Evil works of Diotrephes, vv. 9-10

v. 9, The unread letter

“I wrote something to the church”

“Something,” τι *ti*, included (UBS {B}), tends to make writing of lesser importance

Probably not 2 John (opposes heresy); probably a lost letter

Rejected by Diotrephes, “the one loving to be first”

v. 10, Additional offenses, and John’s action

- Slandering John and fellow workers with evil words
- Not receiving the traveling brothers
- Forbidding others to receive them
- Casting those who do out of the church

—A church tyrant!

John’s action: 3rd class condition: “if I come”

“I will remember his works which he is doing”

ὑπομνήσκω *hupomimnesko*, call to mind

d. Importance of a good example, v. 11

“Imitate” the right type of person

e. Good report of Demetrius, v. 12

Perhaps one in the church who tried to help the travelers, perhaps crossed swords with Diotrephes; also suggested he could be John’s messenger to the church

Four witnesses support him:

“Is witnessed by all”
“And by the truth itself”
“And we bear witness”
“And you know that our witness is true”

3. Conclusion, upcoming visit, vv. 13-15

v. 13, Preference to see and talk more than to write (as in 2 John 12)

v. 14, Plan to visit them soon

“I hope,” ἐλπίζω *elpizo*

Makes condition in v. 10 more certain

v. 15, Final greetings