

THE THIRD LETTER OF JOHN

How to and how not to express love

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From the beginning of this letter to the end there is a tone of heartfelt concern, friendship and love.

The letter is

- an encouragement to minister faithfully in the name of the Lord.
- a warning against seeking one's own prominence in ministry.

2 John is a general encouragement to live in accordance with the truth and demonstrate love to God and others. 3 John teaches the reader through encouragement and warning how to demonstrate this love in practical ways

John the Elder

The letter is written by someone identifying himself as the elder.

There is no need to question that the elder is John the Apostle as evidenced by the book's style, subject matter and vocabulary.

In the letter, something of John's ministry of discipleship, encouragement, shepherding and teaching to those around him is evidenced.

- John loved Gaius in the truth (3 John 1).
- Prays that Gaius will prosper in all things, inwardly and in health (3 John 2).
- John greatly rejoiced and was thrilled when he heard when brethren came and told him of how Gaius was doing in walking in truth (3 John 3).
- John commended and encouraged Gaius for his faithfulness to God's truth (3 John 1:3-4).
- John had no greater joy than to hear that his children, those he disciples walk in truth (3 John 4).
- John's desire was to come to those who Gaius fellowshiped with and confront Diotrophes with the error of his ways (3 John 10).
- John ministered with ink and pen, that is in writing and face to face (3 John 13-14).

Gaius

The letter is written to Gaius, who is beloved by God and loved by the elder in truth (3 John 1).

Gaius had a faithful ministry of showing hospitality and service to those who laboured in the Lord's name, no matter whether he knew them or not (3 John 5).

Gaius demonstrated charity and love (3 John 6) in providing for those who went forth in the name of the Lord.

The Travelling Brethren

Some travelling Brethren brought John news of how Gaius was getting on (3 John 2)

Other Brethren went forth on journeys, in his names sake (Jesus name) they went forth to spread the gospel, taking no provisions (3 John 5-6).

Such brethren should be received and given support in the churches (3 John 7) in order that we may be fellow helpers and workers in the truth (3 John 8).

Demetrius

John commends the ministry of Demetrius who was

- a man of highest esteem in the eyes of John and his associates (3 John 12).
- a man of good reputation who was worthy of receiving the believer's unreserved recommendation.

The Mutual Friends

The mutual friends of Gaius and John, demonstrate their commitment to following the influence of their faithful leaders, in extending their greetings to one another (3 John 13).

Diotrephes

John warns against following the example of Diotrephes who

- demonstrated a desire to have a prominent place in the church (3 John 1:9a), he loved to be up front.
- refused to welcome and extend hospitality to John (3 John 1:9b), and rejected other missionaries (3 John 1:10b).
- slandered, told lies and deceit about those who ministered in the Lord's name (3 John 1:10a).
- hindered anyone who showed hospitality to the travelling missionaries (3 John 10c).
- expelled others from the church who did not follow him and do what he says (3 John 1:10c).

However, John loved him sufficiently to want to visit him and discipline him personally (3 John 1:10a). John was willing to even go as far as calling him out and drawing attention to him by exposing his actions, presumably in the assembly.

Summary

In short, this letter is an encouragement to treat those who are fellow labourers in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as family.