

Session 2:

3 John...Back then...a letter in lieu of an email.

3 John 1-2 *“The elder, to my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth. ² Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.”*

John’s letter here is the perfect example of a typical letter at that time.

- ✓ The greeting
- ✓ Then prayer for good health
- ✓ The body of the letter with its news
- ✓ Final greetings.

John writes to a friend called Gaius. This was the most common name in the world of the New Testament. It was the “Jim, Bob, or Bill” of that day.

In the New Testament there were three (3) men with the name of Gaius.

1. **Gaius, the Macedonian**, who along with Aristarchus, was with Paul at the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:29)
2. **Gaius of Derbe**, who was the delegate of his church to convey the collection for the poor to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4)
3. **Gaius of Corinth** who had been Paul’s host, and who was such a hospitable man that he could be called the host of the whole church (Romans 16:23)...and who was one of the very few people whom Paul personally had baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14)...

We don’t know if one of the three were the same Gaius to whom John wrote this epistle. However, this Gaius stands before us as a man with an open house and an open heart.

“Dear Friend” or “Beloved” is used two times to describe Gaius in the first 2 verses of this epistle.

The word in Greek is “agapetos” (used at least 10 times in the 3 epistles).

Although the letters are letters of warning and rebuke, their accent is the accent of deep love for the families of the church (the brothers and sisters). Even when John rebukes, he never speaks with irritation.

Note: John, in verse two, shows us the comprehensive care of the good and devoted pastor.

John is interested both in the physical and the spiritual health of Gaius.

John was like Jesus: He never forgot that people have bodies as well as souls and that they matter, too.

Verse 4, John tells us that the teacher’s greatest joy is to see pupils walking in the truth.

The truth is what makes people think and act like God.

“The truth is not simply something to be intellectually assimilated; it is the knowledge which fills the mind and the charity which clothes life.”

3 John 3-8, *"It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you. ⁶ They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God. ⁷ It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. ⁸ We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth."*

The main reason for writing.

A group of traveling missionaries is on its way to the church of which Gaius is a member. John urges him to receive them, to give them every support and to send them on their way in a truly Christian manner.

In the ancient world, hospitality was a sacred duty.

- ✓ *Strangers were under the protection of Zeus Xenios (god of strangers)*
- ✓ *Inns were notoriously unsatisfactory.*
- ✓ *Greeks had an instinctive dislike of taking money in return for hospitality. Therefore, the profession of innkeeper was looked down upon (much like a tax collector).
Innkeepers had a reputation for being greedy (Plato compared them to pirates who hold their guests to ransom before they allow them to escape.)
Inns were often dirty and infested with fleas and other insects.*
- ✓ *The ancient world had a system of "guest-friendships" whereby families in different parts of the country undertook to give each other's members hospitality when the occasion arose.*
- ✓ *This connection between families lasted throughout the generations.*
- ✓ *The strangers brought some identification (a token) which identified them to their hosts as one that can be trusted.*

With this in mind, why would you think that Joseph and Mary would have to revert to an Inn in which to bed down at night when they went to Bethlehem to be taxed?

I think this gives us a picture of what the world thought about Mary and Joseph at that time!

I want you to think back as to how Mary and Joseph, as well as Jesus' brothers and sisters felt about Jesus. What do you see here....reading between the lines?

If the Gentile world accepted the obligation of hospitality, it was only to be expected that the Christians would take it even more seriously.

Why do we know that?

- *"Be hospitable to one another without complaining." (1 Peter 4:9)*
- *"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers. For by doing so, some have entertained angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2)*
- *A widow is to be honored if she has "shown hospitality." (1 Timothy 5:10).*
- *Paul requests the Romans to 'extend hospitality.' (Romans 12:13)*
- *A bishop must be hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2)*
- *Titus is told to be 'hospitable' (Titus 1:8)*

In the early Church, the Christian home was the place of the open door and the loving welcome. Today....pray that our hearts would be right....and the stranger's heart to be pure.

This passage tells us about the wandering missionaries who gave up home and comfort to carry the Word of God to other parts.

- v. 7, John says that they have gone out for the sake of the Name and they take no assistance from non-Christians (we think maybe that they were not on the list of “trusted strangers” and were not given tokens).
- John states that it is their (our duty as Christians) to show ourselves “fellow workers in the truth (v. 8).

One translation states, “We are bound to support men to prove ourselves allies of the truth.”

Good thought: Many are not called to be missionaries...but where it is impossible to go because of routine duty of life and living, their money, their prayers, and their practical support can go.

Not everyone can be, so to speak, on the front line; but, by supporting those who are there, people can make themselves allies of the truth (Allies of the Truth At Home). Not an obligation, but a privilege. Not a duty, but a delight!

3 John 9-15, “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us.

¹⁰ So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, spreading malicious nonsense about us. Not satisfied with that, he even refuses to welcome other believers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church. ¹¹ Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.

¹² Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone—and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true. ¹³ I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. ¹⁴ I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace to you. The friends here send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name.”

Why this letter was written: Introduction to two of the main characters in the story.

- **Diotrephes—representative of the local congregation (He might be a very strong-minded elder).**
 - ✓ *He will not accept the authority of John, the apostle....nor receive the traveling missionaries (the prophets or evangelists).*
 - ✓ *He is so determined to see that the congregation manages its own affairs that he will even expel those who are still prepared to accept the authority of John and to receive the wandering preachers.*
 - ✓ *He has a very strong personality...and an aggressive member of the congregation.*
- **Demetrius—probably the leader of the wandering preachers and the actual bearer of the letter to Gaius.**
 - ✓ ***John goes out of his way to give Gaius a reference as to character and ability.***
 - ✓ ***Not an uncommon name. Not sure:***
 - *Demetrius, the silversmith of Ephesus...and the leader of the opposition to Paul (Acts 19:21). It may be that after the encounter and the act against Paul, he became a Christian. This would be a reason that there was some opposition still held against him.*

- *Demas (a shortened form of Demetrius), who had once been one of Paul's fellow workers but who had forsaken him because he loved 'this present world' (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:10).*

(It may be that Demas came back to the faith and that his desertion of Paul was always held against him.)

Diotrephes might have been right to question; But....his fault was....He lacked charity.

To John, without charity (Christian love for the brother) one cannot claim the Christian right of privilege.

John states that what you don't understand in writing, you will understand in face to face conversation. The "Peace to you" might well be read as a challenge...along with a sweet end to the letter!