

The Apostle John is writing to his friend Gaius in order to commend and encourage him for the hospitality he has shown to the missionaries that have come his way. From this epistle we learn that helping missionaries and other workers in the gospel ministry allow us to take part in the work that they do.

¹ The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

Like in 2 John, John refers to himself as “the elder,” a term that speaks of his age as well as his leadership as an apostle. He is writing to a man named Gaius, of which we know nothing apart from the evidence in this letter. Gaius was a common name and from what John says about him, this Gaius was obviously a Christian man. This fact was likely the basis of John’s love and friendship with him.

² Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

John speaks of his desire for the material and physical welfare of Gaius. We see John’s confidence in Gaius’ spiritual well-being because John says that his desire for Gaius is that his prosperity and health would match the prosperity of his soul. John is expressing his love for his friend.

³ For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

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

“For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified” - It pleased John greatly when he heard testimony of Gaius’ walk with the Lord. These brethren saw the evidence of Christ working in Gaius’ heart and John recognized it as well when they brought him news.

“of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth” - The genuineness of Gaius’ salvation was evident in the way he lived his life in accordance with the truth of the gospel. No doubt the evidences that John wrote about in 1 John were manifesting themselves in the life of Gaius. He was not giving mere lip-service to his salvation but his lifestyle bore out the truth.

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” - Because John includes Gaius among those he refers to as “my children” it’s probable that either John led Gaius to the Lord or else he considered himself to be Gaius’ spiritual mentor. As any loving father, John was pleased to hear that Gaius was living faithful to the Lord as the evidence of his salvation.

⁵ Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; ⁶ Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

“Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers” - John commends Gaius for his faithful hospitality he had shown toward the fellow Christians that he knew (“the brethren”) and to those he didn’t (“strangers”).

“Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church” - Those that Gaius had helped had testified of his love when they came to the church where John was. These testimonials are apparently how John heard about how Gaius walked in the truth (v. 3).

“whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well” - John is encouraging Gaius by reminding him that he is doing a good thing whenever he shows hospitality to other Christians and sends them on their journey in Christian love.

⁷ Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. ⁸ We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

“Because that for his name's sake they went forth” - Gaius had done well because the people that Gaius had helped had gone out in the name of Jesus Christ to spread the gospel. God would bless him for his efforts.

“taking nothing of the Gentiles” - Gentiles were anyone who was not a Jew. These Christian Jews had no need to receive help from Gentiles (that is, non-believers), to whom they apparently were ministering.

“We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers [fellow worker] to the truth” - It is a Christian duty to show hospitality to such missionaries, and by helping them we become fellow workers with them in spreading the truth of the gospel. Jesus spoke of the reward of receiving those that belong to Him: **Matt. 10:40-41** (speaking to His disciples) ⁴⁰ *He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.* ⁴¹ *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.*” Anyone who receives a prophet or a righteous man for the sake of them being a prophet or a righteous man will receive a similar reward as the prophet or righteous man will receive.

Contrast this to **2 John 10-11** (¹⁰ *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: ¹¹ For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*”) where showing hospitality to those who do not teach the truth about Christ makes one a partaker of their evil deeds. God holds us responsible for who we choose to help.

⁹ I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

John now points out an example of someone who does not show hospitality toward gospel workers. Gaius had done well; this man Diotrephes did not. We do not know the occasion or the subject, but John had written to the church at some point in the past, only to have his messengers who carried the letter rejected by Diotrephes. The only thing we know about Diotrephes is that he had taken the leadership of this local congregation and that he loved being the one in control. He apparently would not allow John’s messengers to address the church nor the church to hear John’s letter read.

¹⁰ Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

“Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth” - John was apparently planning a possible visit to Gaius and the church, at which time he would hold Diotrophes accountable for his behavior.

“prating [talking nonsense; make false accusations] against us with malicious words” - Diotrophes was making accusations against John and the brethren that were obviously false and was using vicious language against them. He did not want anyone challenging his authority.

“and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would” - Diotrophes was not content to merely falsely accuse and insult John and the brethren, but he would not show any form of hospitality to them nor allow anyone in the church to do so. The man was paranoid about anyone challenging his leadership.

“and casteth them out of the church” - Anyone discovered showing hospitality to any of John’s associates was immediately cast out of the church.

¹¹ Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good” - John is advising Gaius not to follow Diotrophes’ evil example.

“He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God” - John seems to be assessing the spiritual condition of Diotrophes using the “you will know them by their fruits” method, which John goes into in more depth throughout the epistle of 1 John. Diotrophes’ behavior did not seem to be showing evidence that he knew God.

¹² Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

“Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself” - In accordance with his advice in v. 11 to follow “that which is good,” John gives Gaius an example of good that was worthy to be emulated. In stark contrast to Diotrophes is the example of Demetrius who had a good reputation among the people as well as “the truth itself” (his life showed the evidence that he knew Christ).

“yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true” - John apparently was witness to the fact that Demetrius was a good man who knew Christ. John appeals to Gaius’ confidence in him to verify the genuineness of Demetrius’ reputation.

¹³ I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: ¹⁴ But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

“I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee” - The abundance of things he wanted to say to Gaius coupled with his anticipation of seeing him soon caused John to decide to not write them at this time.

“But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face” - John planned to visit Gaius in person soon and would discuss the things he wanted to say at that time.

“Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.” - Standard greetings and salutations at the end of a letter.