

## 3 JOHN

### 3 JOHN — CHRISTIAN CHARACTER: GOOD AND BAD EXAMPLES

Gaius is a name frequently alluded to by Paul, but whether this were the same individual as any of those is problematical. In any event he seems to have been a convert of John (v. 4). Another form of the name is Caius and this was a very common name indeed.

What distinction in spiritual things is ascribed to Gaius (v. 2)? His soul was prospering even if his bodily health and his business were not, but the apostle is interested in other things as well. The Christian should be careful of his health, and it is compatible with a deep spiritual life that he should have a successful business.

As to the Christian character of Gaius, three particulars are named:

- (1) he possessed the truth (v. 3);
- (2) he walked in the truth, i.e., his life and conduct measured up to the light he had received from God (vv. 3-4); and
- (3) as walking in the truth he was "careful to maintain good works," especially in the distribution of his means (vv. 5-6). It is noticeable that his "faithfulness" in this regard is mentioned. It was not a spasmodic thing on his part, but a steady flow of grace through him. His breadth of disposition is also mentioned since his giving was not limited to those he knew but extended to those he did not know (v. 5). Some recipients of his bounty are referred to in verse 6, and a journey mentioned toward the expense of which he was contributing (v. 6). All this is very realistic, and brings the life of the church in the first century "up to date" as we sometimes say.

One or two facts are given concerning the recipients of Gaius' gifts equally honoring to them (v. 7). Look at the motive of their journey, "His Name's sake," and at the spirit actuating them "taking nothing of the Gentiles," i.e., the heathen. Whatever the journey was, they might have been assisted in it

pecuniarily by those who were not actuated by a love for his name, but their conscience would not permit them to receive such aid. How valuable this example. And what a close relationship it bears to the teaching of the second epistle about fellowshiping with heretics. How should such loyal and self-denying workers as these be treated in the church, and why (v. 8)?

### THE WORLDLY CHARACTER OF DIOTREPHESES

Here we have another type of the professing Christian in the worldly character of Diotrephes (vv. 9-11)

What seems to have been his besetting sin (v. 9)? How does this experience of John recall Paul's experiences in the churches of Corinth, Galatia, and Thessalonica? In what manner did John intend to deal with him (v. 10)? Does this recall anything similar in apostolic authority on Paul's part? How does verse 10 reveal the worldliness and insincerity of Diotrephes? What an awfully overbearing, autocratic, unholy man he must have been! How did he get into the church?

What advice is given Gaius (v. 11)? How does this testify to the relation between faith and works? What opposite kind of example is set before him (v. 12)? How many kinds of witnesses testify to the Christian character of Demetrius? One can not help wondering if this were the Demetrius of ~~Acts~~ Acts 19. Such trophies of grace are by no mean unusual, Paul was such an one. Note the similarities in the conclusions of this epistle and the one previously considered (vv. 13-14), suggesting that they may have been penned at the same time.

The *Scofield Bible* has an interesting note here, saying

historically, this letter marks the beginning of that clerical assumption over the churches in which the primitive church order disappeared. It also reveals the believers' resource in such a day. John addresses this letter not to the church, but to a faithful man in the church for the comfort of those who were standing fast in the primitive simplicity. Second John conditions the personal walk of a Christian in a day of apostasy; and ~~3~~ 3 John the personal responsibility in such a day of the believer as a member of the local church.

**QUESTIONS**

- 1.** Analyze the Christian character of Gaius.
- 2.** What two features marked his faithfulness?
- 3.** Tell something of the character of the two other men named.
- 4.** What epoch does this epistle mark?
- 5.** Distinguish between second and third John.