



“Fellowship in the Work of the Truth”

3 John 1-8

Theme: Spiritual vitality relies upon the grace of God keeping us committed to the truth.

Introduction: In the ancient world, travelers were dependent upon the good graces of hospitable people – a particular feature inherent among believers – cp. 1 Timothy 3:2. Peter had added that such hospitality ought to be without complaint – 1 Peter 4:9. Jesus Himself expected that his servants would be granted hospitality – Luke 10:4-7. What is to be distinct among believers is that hospitality be granted not merely out of social or cultural obligation, but out of love – cp. Romans 12:9-13

- **Gaius – demonstrated sacrificial love**
- **Diotrephes – denied sacrificial love**
- **Demetrius – deserved sacrificial love**

I. The Disposition for Fellowship – *1:1*

A. THE BASIS FOR THE AFFECTION

1. John introduces himself once again in this letter as “*The elder ...*” – a reference to his spiritual authority as the only surviving Apostle of Christ Jesus, a veteran of decades of ministry in the Name of Christ.
2. Addressing himself to someone “*... whom I love in truth*” – a reference to the sphere in which his relationship with other believers exist.
3. Believers are obligated to love everyone – doing good to all men – cp. *Galatians 6:10*
4. Yet there is a special intense affection for those characterized by their love for Christ Jesus – *1 John 3:23*
5. Being in the Truth and loving one another is inseparably linked

The Epistle of 3 John

– cp. 2 John 1-2.

B. THE BREADTH OF THE AFFECTION

1. Notice, that the recipient of this epistle is named “... *the beloved Gaius*”
2. Not much is known about “*Gaius*” since it is a very common name among the Romans.
3. He is obviously a prominent member of his local church – a man who John had personally led to Christ – cp. v. 4
4. He is described as “*beloved*” [ἀγαπητός] - showing that “*Gaius*” knows a reputation that endears him to the entire church.
 - a) He would be “*beloved*” by John personally – 1 Corinthians 10:14
 - b) He would be “*beloved*” by the Christian community – Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 1:7; 2 Peter 3:15
 - c) He would be “*beloved*” by the Lord Himself – Romans 1:7
5. As believers remain faithful to the Lord Himself and to His Word, the affection that they enjoy is not only mutual, but divine – endearing each to the other and all in the sight of God – cp. 1 John 1:5-7.

II. The Delight in Fellowship – 1:2-4

A. IT PROSPERS SPIRITUAL HEALTH – v. 2

1. “*Gaius*” is commended by the Apostle John with a reference to how he prays for “*Gaius*” – “*Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.*”
2. To “*prosper*” [εὐοδώ] lit. refers to “be led along on a good road” – but metaphorically describes having things “work out” or succeed.

The Epistle of 3 John

3. He desires that Gaius would know life at ease – free from difficulty and a “walk” that is challenging.
4. It is special to be able to say to someone that we pray that their physical health would know the same kind of prosperity that their *“soul”* prospers
5. In this way, we see that *“Gaius”* was a growing Christian who was walking worthy of his calling in Christ – cp. *Colossians 1:10*.
6. Part of the explanation for his spiritual growth was the way that he was conducting himself in serving the Lord through fellowship with other saints.

B. IT PROMPTS CONSISTENT OBEDIENCE – v. 3

1. When those who had received the favor and ministry of *“Gaius”* came to John, they reported about his obedience to the command to love one another.
2. *“For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth”* – a reference to his service to them.
3. When a person is *“walking in truth”* – their interaction with other believers causes a tribute to the grace known in the truth.
4. He had clearly shown love and hospitality to these “brethren” as they came through Gaius’ home and were able to share with John the benefits they had known at his hand.

C. IT PRODUCES GROWTH IN OTHERS – v. 4

1. John clearly rejoices in hearing of the growth, love, and hospitality that *“Gaius”* had displayed and declares: *“I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”*

The Epistle of 3 John

2. Although this is commonly quoted in reference to believing parents rejoicing that their kids are believers, it is specifically referring to how John rejoiced that one of his “spiritual offspring” was displaying the genuineness of his conversion.
3. The greatest grief to believers is to see those who have professed Christ who depart from the truth – demonstrating that their profession was in vain – cp. [1 John 2:19](#)
4. His faith was demonstrated as genuine as he continued to walk in good works – cp. [Ephesians 2:10](#).

III. The Duty of Fellowship – 1:5-8

A. THE DUTY OF SERVING ONE ANOTHER – vv. 5-6a

1. Gaius’ generous hospitality had caused others to rejoice in the work of God’s Spirit in his life – *“Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers”*
2. His faithfulness of God was seen, not just in extending himself for the benefit of those who are serving the Lord around him, but the fact that he was so gracious to *“strangers” [ξένος]* - as particularly powerful.
3. The term “hospitality” [φιλοξενία] literally means “love of strangers” – [Hebrews 13:2](#).
4. His exemplary love caused those who had received his ministry to them to give testimony in front of the church where John was worshiping – *“... and they have testified to your love before the church.”*

B. THE DUTY OF SUPPORTING OTHER SERVANTS – vv. 6b-8

1. John commends Gaius for his ministry and then encourages him to continue to display this kind of love – *“You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.”*

The Epistle of 3 John

2. John then provides three reasons that this ought to become typical for believers everywhere:

- a) **Promotion of the Gospel** - *“For they went out for the sake of the Name”* – they were doing what they did to promote the cause of Christ.
- b) **Passion for the Gospel** - *“... accepting nothing from the Gentiles”* – they were being faithful to the Lord and not indebting themselves to unbelievers but trusting God alone to provide for them.
- c) **Partnership in the Gospel** - *“Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth”* – We are able to partner with those who proclaim Christ by helping to support them in their work – cp. [2 John 10-11](#).

3. There are those who took advantage of the benevolence of others, - cp. [2 Corinthians 2:17](#); [Titus 1:11](#) - but genuine servants of Christ ought to be supported by those who desire the promotion of the Gospel in order to reach the unbeliever in partnership with the saints.