

# 3 John

---

**AUTHOR:** John

**TIME WRITTEN:** Probably about A.D. 90 from Ephesus

**POSITION IN THE BIBLE:**

- 64th Book in the Bible
- 25th book in the New Testament
- 20th of 21 epistle books
- 66 have preceded it. 2 to follow it.

**CHAPTERS:** 1

**VERSES:** 14

**WORDS:** 299

**KEY WORD:** Enjoy Fellowship with Brethren

**KEY PASSAGE:**

**3 John 11** - "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God."

## OBSERVATIONS ABOUT 3 JOHN

1. John has much to say about fellowship.
  - a. In 1 John, the apostle discusses fellowship with God.
  - b. In 2 John he forbids fellowship with false teachers.
  - c. In 3 John he encourages fellowship with other Christians.
2. Following his expression of Christian love for Gaius, John assures him of his prayers for his health and voices his joy over Gaius's persistent walk in truth and for the manner in which he shows hospitality and support for missionaries who have come to the congregation where he is a member.
  - a. The phrase "send them forward on their journey" means to provide help for the missionaries' endeavors. Included in this help can be:
    1. Food.
    2. Money.
    3. Arrangements for workers.
    4. The means of travel.
  - b. By supporting these men who are ministering for Christ, Gaius has become a fellow worker of the truth.
3. But not everyone in the church feels the same way.
  - a. Diotrephes' heart is one hundred and eighty degrees removed from Gaius' heart.
  - b. He is no longer living in love.
  - c. Pride has taken precedence in his life.
  - d. He has refused a letter John has written for the church, fearing that his authority might be superseded by that of the apostle.
  - e. He has accused John of evil words and refused to accept missionaries.
  - f. He forbids others to do so and even expels them from the church if they disobey him.
4. John uses the negative example of Diotrephes to encourage Gaius to continue his hospitality.
5. Demetrius has a good record of faithfulness and may even be one of those turned away by Diotrephes.
  - a. Demetrius is widely known for his good character and his loyalty to the truth.

- b. Here he is well commended by John and stands as a positive example for Gaius.
- 6. Background of 3 John.
  - a. The parallels between 2 and 3 John suggest that these epistles were written at about the same time (A.D. 90) and from Ephesus.
  - b. John evidently commissioned a number of traveling teachers to spread the gospel and to solidify the Asian churches, and these teachers were supported by Christians who rejected them into their homes.
  - c. 3 John, probably delivered by Demetrius, was occasioned by the report of some of these emissaries (called “brethren” in this letter), who returned to the apostle and informed him of the hospitality of Gaius and the hostility of Diotrephes.
    - 1. The arrogant Diotrephes seized the reins of an Asian congregation and vaunted himself as its preeminent authority.
    - 2. He maligned John’s authority and rejected the teachers sent out by John.
    - 3. He expelled those in the church who wanted to receive them.
  - d. Gaius.
    - 1. Gaius was a common name in the Roman Empire, and three other men by that name are mentioned in the New Testament.
      - a. Gaius, one of Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia. Acts 19:29
      - b. Gaius of Derbe. Acts 20:4
      - c. Gaius, Paul’s host in Corinth, one of the new Christians Paul had baptized in Corinth. Romans 16:23; 1 Corinthians 1:14
    - 2. The Gaius of 3 John evidently lived in Asia.
- 7. In verse 9 John alludes to a previous letter that Diotrephes had spurned.
  - a. This may have been 1 or 2 John.
  - b. But it is more likely a letter that has been lost or perhaps destroyed by Diotrephes.
- 8. Unlike 1 and 2 John, 3 John makes no mention of the name of Jesus Christ.
  - a. However, an indirect reference is made in **verse 7** - “They went forth for His name’s sake.”
- 9. Enjoying fellowship with the brethren.
  - a. The basic theme of this letter is to enjoy and continue to have fellowship (hospitality) with fellow Christians, especially full-time Christian workers.
  - b. This is contrasted between the truth and servanthood of Gaius and the error and selfishness of Diotrephes.
  - c. Moving through 3 John, five specific purposes can be discerned from its contents.
    - 1. To commend Gaius for his adherence to the truth and his hospitality to the emissaries sent out by John. verses 1-6
    - 2. To encourage Gaius to continue the support of these brethren. verses 6-8
    - 3. To rebuke Diotrephes for his pride and misconduct. verses 9-11
    - 4. To provide a recommendation for Demetrius. v. 12
    - 5. To inform Gaius of John’s intention to visit and straighten out the difficulties. verses 10, 13-14

## SUMMARY OF 3 JOHN

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. 3 John is the shortest book in the Bible, but it is very personal and vivid.

1. It offers a stark contrast between two men who respond in opposite ways to the itinerant teachers who have been sent out by the apostle.
    - a. The faithful Gaius respond with generosity and hospitality.
    - b. The faithless Diotrephes responds with arrogance and opposition.
  2. Thus, John writes this letter to:
    - a. Commend Gaius for walking in the truth. verses 1-8
    - b. Condemn Diotrephes for walking in error. verses 9-14
- B. There are two major sections in the book:
1. Commendation of Gaius. (verses 1-8)
  2. Condemnation of Diotrephes. (verses 9-14)

### **COMMENDATION OF GAIUS. (verses 1-8)**

- A. The “Elder” writes to one of his beloved “children” whose godly behavior has given the apostles great joy. verses 1-4
1. The “brethren,” upon returning to John, have informed him of Gaius’s faithfulness, love, and generosity in their behalf.
  2. The apostle acknowledges these actions and urges Gaius to continue supporting traveling teachers and missionaries who go out “for His (Jesus’) sake.” verses 5-8

### **CONDEMNATION OF DIOTREPHESES. (verses 9-14)**

- A. The epistle suddenly shifts to a negative note as John describes a man whose actions are diametrically opposed to those of Gaius. verses 9-11
1. Diotrephes boldly rejects John’s apostolic authority and refuses to receive the itinerant teachers sent out by the apostle.
  2. Diotrephes evidently has been orthodox in his doctrine, but his evil actions indicate a blindness to God in his practice.
- B. By contrast, John gives his full recommendation to Demetrius, another emissary and probably the bearer of this letter to Gaius. v. 12
- C. John expresses his hope of a personal visit in the closing remarks (verses 13-14), as he does in 2 John.