

3 John 1:1-8 – The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore, we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

Introduction:

This is a personal letter that was well distributed throughout the churches in the 1st and 2nd centuries. The content is not deeply theological, but it does teach us about God in that it teaches us what is commendable. Gaius is highly praised; we should learn why and hold him as an example of good behavior.

Observations:

John desires that Gaius does well. Although we will have some questions from verse 2, the primary observation is not complicated.

John received word that Gaius was walking in truth.

John's is exceedingly happy when his children walk in truth.

From 2 John, we know that the use of the term *his children* indicates that God had used John to bring Gaius to the knowledge of the truth.

Showing love and hospitality to other believers (especially those outside of the local assembly) is very admirable.

Those who Gaius supported and welcomed are workers on behalf of God and Jesus Christ (the Name).

Gaius is encouraged to give them a proper send-off.

Helping those who work for God makes the supporter a fellow worker with the truth.

Questions:

What precisely does John desire for Gaius, especially considering the use of the word *prosper*?

What does it mean to “walk in truth?”

Should we welcome strangers into our homes?

What is “the Name?”

Who are the Gentiles?

Does supporting believers who work on behalf of God make us fellow workers?

How does Gaius support workers?

Answers:

What precisely does John desire for Gaius, especially considering the use of the word *prosper*? The literal translation of verse 2a is “Beloved, I desire you to be successful in your journey and be sound in all things”

The word translated *prayer* is “εὐχομαι *euchomai*.” This is the root word for prayer (*proseuchomai*), but this is understood as a desire (Acts 27:29; Romans 9:3).

Prosper is “εὐδοόω *euodoo* (pronounced - *you ah dah oh*).” It is a compound of “good” and “road” and can be literal (Romans 1:10) or figurative as in business (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Good health is “ὑγιαίνω *hugiainō*” and means to have sound health, figuratively, to have an uncorrupted doctrinal truth (Luke 5:31, 7:10; 1 Timothy 1:10; Titus 1:13).

So, does John apostolically bless Gaius to be rich?

A wish to be well like this one is not uncommon in private letters in ancient Greek. Furthermore, the text does not lend to any type of promise to Gaius. The word “εὐχομαι *euchomai*” does not lend to a godly vow or recompense in this life.

Even as your soul prospers – John is recognizing that Gaius has built up a reward in the next life and he is simply desiring that Gaius is not in want in this life.

What does it mean to *walk in truth*? “περιπατέω *peripateō*” indicates a lifestyle. Gaius has a lifestyle that is consistent with or functions using the truth. His life is consistent with the Gospel and the values that God has set.

In this context, Gaius recognizes the importance of those who are traveling to teach and spread the message of the truth. Gaius does not hold back physical needs from them; rather, he welcomes them with open arms. This is not exclusive, but it does demonstrate the Gaius’ worldview. This is easily compared to the worldview of Diotrefes, who does not know the truth or acts in a manner that is contrary to the truth (3 John 10b). 2 John 4 and 1 John 2:9-11 also speak to this being an attribute that God, through John, is communicating to His readership.

Should we welcome strangers into our homes? Gaius is welcoming the brethren and the strangers. The word for *strangers* is “ξένος *xenos*.” This word is used to denote what is strange or foreign.

The word is an adjective and matches the declension of *brethren*. Some try to take this as a separate entity, but the commendation of taking in strangers relates back to the fact that they are the brethren. How does Gaius know they are brethren? This implies that even if they are strangers to Gaius, their arrival is not unexpected, and their identity has been confirmed.

Many times, a believer would travel with a letter so that he could be identified, or letters would have been sent out previously so that people will know that a fellow worker was coming.

What is “the Name?” There are a lot of questions about this, although I do not think it comes with much controversy. Is this about Jesus, God, or the Great Name (Exodus 33:18-20, 34:5-8)?

1 Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 2:9-10; 1 John 3:23; 1 John 5:13 – These all make the “name” reference very clear—that this is referring to Jesus Christ. But this is the only time “the Name” is used as a euphemism. One other unique euphemism is “the Way” (Acts 9:2, 19:9, 24:22).

Who are the Gentiles? Does this mean they're unbelievers or not Jews?

The phrase itself implies that these were men committed to the fact that they would not be supported by the Gentiles. This is in contrast to the fact they would be committed to the Name and Gaius (a Greek name) who helped them along their way. So, this phrase spells out that they did not desire to stay with Gentiles.

The term Gentiles is used by most authors to differentiate between Jew and Gentile, but Paul also uses it as a designation of moral turpitude (Ephesians 4:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:5).

Since Gaius is most likely a Gentile, that conclusion is that this is a designation for a non-believing Gentile.

Does supporting believers who work on behalf of God make us fellow workers?

This is clear in this text, “Therefore, we ought to receive/support such men so that (*hina*) we would become (*ginomai*) fellow workers with the truth.”

We saw this teaching clearly in Philippians 1:5, 4:15.

How does Gaius support workers?

Send them on their way – “Προπέμπω *propempe*” can have a meaning to escort, accompany, or travel along with; but this also means to assist by providing food, funds for travel, or a means of travel (Romans 15:24; 1 Corinthians 16:6). Gaius' hospitality extended beyond the time of their visit and included provisions for their needs as they went to their next destination.

Conclusion:

The main thrust of this book is fourfold: To walk in truth, love others, avoid evil, and imitate what is good.

This lesson demonstrates what John praised Gaius for in the first two.

To walk in truth is to have a life that is consistent with the reality of the Gospel and the value system set forth by God. This is demonstrated particularly in Gaius's life.

Gaius demonstrating loving others when he sacrificed and took risks to provide for fellow believers, especially those not known to him. Gaius provided for them while there were with him and he also gave them provisions for their next trip.

This is not simply giving handouts to those who are traveling, but provisions for those who were working on behalf of the Name, that is Jesus Christ and His gospel, and needed food and shelter.

This situation may be foreign to us, but what we can always evaluate and meet the needs of believers so that they can function on behalf of Jesus Christ. What we should always be willing to do is to provide food, clothing, and shelter to believers in need.

In our culture, what people may need more is time and service. We must also not neglect those needs.