

# To the Beloved Gaius

by Bob Bruton

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*The sermon explores the character of Gaius as a model believer and contrasts him with Diotrephes, emphasizing the importance of truth, love, and support for ministry.*

**Duration:** 18:16

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2 Corinthians 2:13, 2 Corinthians 10:18, 2 John 1:4, 3 John 1:7-8, 3 John 1:12

**Topics:** "Gaius"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Third John and highlights several important lessons. The preacher emphasizes the importance of promoting fellowship and not denying it. He also discusses the need to live out the truth and not just talk about it. The preacher mentions that prosperity is not inherently evil if it is used for the Lord's work. Additionally, he emphasizes the significance of follow-up in evangelism and the necessity of faithfulness for those who wish to teach the word of God. The sermon concludes by mentioning the recognition and reward that awaits those who serve the Lord faithfully.

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## Transcript

If you have your Bible, turn with me, please, to the third epistle of John, and we'll read it together. But while you're turning, I'll share with you a few of the thoughts I concluded when previously studying about this epistle. The author of this epistle is the same author of 2 John.

Without controversy, it is John the Apostle, the disciple whom Jesus loved. The date of this epistle seems to be very near the time that 2 John was written, A.D. 90, or a bit later. Least we know that it appears to have been written near the end of John's life.

The place where this epistle was written is not known for sure, but all evidence seems to point to Ephesus, as does John's second epistle. The general subject is concerning love and truth. Someone has said that 2 John speaks of the firmness of love and truth, and 3 John speaks of the tenderness of love and truth.

To me, this is quite sufficient. Now let's read this epistle together, shall we? I wrote unto the church, but diatrophies, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, received us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, fratting against us with malicious words, and not content therewith.

Neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbideth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. 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.

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. I have many things to write, but will not with ink and pen write unto thee.

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. Now let us get to the task of examining each verse in this epistle, and see what it may have for our very own personal lives, shall we? Verse 1 says, The Elder unto the well-beloved Gaius. The word Elder here could refer to the fact that John was now retired, and near the end of his life.

Or it could refer to his position at the time. Or it could refer to both, we don't know for sure. But he goes on to say, Unto the well-beloved Gaius.

Now you'll notice that he says, Well-beloved. Gaius was loved much by John the Apostle. Have you ever wondered what your supposed friends really think of you? If our friends had the task of writing a letter to some others, and had to describe what they really thought of us, would they state that we were well-beloved friends? Or would they describe us as being short of temper, not dependable, selfish, or just plain lazy? God help us to live our lives before others in such a way as to earn their commendation of well-beloved.

Another interesting line of thought is this person, Gaius. While he may not always be the same person throughout the New Testament, a study of this name would reveal some wonderful suggestions for all Christians to follow. Once there was a wife who constantly boasted of her husband as being the model husband, until someone told her that a model was a small imitation of the real thing.

But seriously speaking, I too feel that a study of the name of Gaius in the New Testament would reveal some very interesting suggestions to those who would like to be known as an example Christian. For instance, in our epistle here we can discover that Gaius was a believer, according to verse 4. He apparently was a spiritual child of John the Apostle. Dear friend, the most important thing in this life is to become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work there upon Calvary's cross.

To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is to be born again, according to John chapter 3, verses 1 through 16. If one has not been born again when he terminates this life, the scriptures declare that he not only shall never enter the kingdom of heaven, but also he'll never even see it. Another interesting thing about this Gaius in our epistle is that according to verse 3, he walked in truth.

Every Christian should walk in truth. Jesus Christ said in John chapter 14 and verse 15, If ye love me, keep my commandments. The Christian doesn't keep his commandments in order to be saved, but he seeks to keep his commandments because he is saved and loves the Lord Jesus Christ and wishes to please Him.

As we mentioned in our study of 2 John together, the greatest thing that the believer can do for his Lord is to obey Him. Verse 2 of our epistle tells us that Gaius prospered spiritually. Thy soul prospereth, John said.

In other words, Gaius was a spiritual believer, not a carnal one. Are you and I, dear friends, spiritual believers? Galatians chapter 5 and verse 25 says, If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit. And

then in verse 5, we learn a fourth thing about our friend Gaius.

He was a faithful brother. John says, In verse 6, Gaius also walked in love. The brethren had borne witness to John and the church of Gaius' charity or love.

Are we known as Christians who walk in love? 1 John chapter 4 and verse 21 says, 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 14 tells us that a Gaius was baptized by the Apostle Paul. While baptism is not an ingredient of salvation, it definitely is an act of obedience to the command of Christ. Dear Christian, have you been baptized since you've received Christ as your personal Savior? If you haven't, then you should be.

Acts chapter 20 and verse 4 suggest that Gaius associated with earnest Christians, such as Paul the Apostle. Dear friends, could our status with Christ be determined by our associates? You know, the Scriptures do say in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 14, What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness? The answer is an obvious none. A careful study of Acts chapter 20 verses 4 through 7 would indicate that Gaius was one who put a great importance on the breaking of bread.

For we could pretty reasonably assume that he was one who gathered with Paul the Apostle and the others at Troas to break bread. Dear friend, just between you and I, I personally believe that the Scriptures teach that Christians should gather often with other Christians to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread. The Scriptures teach us that early disciples celebrated the Lord's Supper daily.

They simply went house to house among the saints. See Acts chapter 2 and verse 46. But by the time we get to Acts chapter 20, it seems that centrally located buildings were used some, and the Christians had begun meeting at least once a week for this occasion.

A nice thing about this Gaius was that he also suffered persecution for the cause of Christ. Do we? You know, the Bible says in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 12, All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. And then a final thought on Gaius is found in Romans chapter 16 and verse 23.

We learn there that Gaius was Paul's host. That is, Paul lived for a while in Gaius' home. This tells us that Gaius was hospitable.

Interestingly enough, one of the major qualifications of New Testament elders is that they be given to hospitality. The same quality is applied to all Christians in Romans chapter 12 and verse 13 and 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 9. But for now, we must get back to our study of 3 John. Notice that at the end of verse 1, John says, Whom I love in the truth.

Another version says, Whom I love truly. Verse 2 continues by saying, Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. Yes, John prayed for Gaius' prosperity.

The scriptures seem to infer that Gaius may have already been well to do, but John wishes for more prosperity. Why? Because Gaius was one of God's stewards. It seems to be scripturally permissible to make a lot of money if we use it wisely and for God's glory.

See 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 17, 18 and 19. Also, this verse seems to deflate the teachings of those faith healers who often say that all sickness is due to sin. Gaius was spiritually well, but undoubtedly not completely well physically.

I think that the prosperity in this verse seems to refer primarily to a physical prosperity. Verses 3 and 4 seem to be very similar to 2 John chapter 1 and verse 4. Gaius didn't just believe in mind, but he walked in truth. It seems that John, as well as Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 13, believed that Christian doctrine overshadows the burden for the lost.

In verse 5, we learn that faithfulness characterized Gaius. If you'll meditate upon 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 1, you'll discover that faithfulness is the outstanding requirement of those who wish to be Bible teachers or trustees of God's secrets, as one translator puts it. Faithfulness to what you know brings more light.

The brethren in verse 5 seems to refer to those who served the Lord in a full-time occupational way in Gaius' area. The strangers seem to be other full-time servants of the Lord who lived elsewhere but had traveled through Gaius' city. One of the largest problems confronting the full-time occupational servant of the Lord today is that when he's out of sight, he's also out of mind among those who should be exercised to support him in prayer and in a financial way.

Verse 6 is an example of 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 18, which says, For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth. When we serve the Lord, we don't have to blow our own horns. God will see to it that others shall recognize our efforts.

Verse 7 goes on to say, Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. Yes, it is scriptural for God to call some to lay down their secular occupations and go forth for the sake of all that Christianity stands for, taking no money from the non-Christians to whom they preach. In one sense, all believers should be full-time servants, but in another very real sense, God does call some to devote all of their time directly to spiritual matters.

Verse 8 teaches that to receive and help those full-time workers on their way is to be a fellow helper to the truth. Notice here that your help doesn't stop with just the servant, but it goes all the way back to the basic truth. If you're still wondering how you can serve the Lord, just decide to start supporting your servants.

At the judgment seat of Christ, you'll automatically receive a crown entitled Fellow Helper to the Truth if your motives were right. In verses 9 through 11, we shall consider three verses that may be labeled the Blamed Diotrefes. In verses 1 through 8, we consider the Beloved Gaius, and in verse 12, the Blessed Demetrius.

Verses 13 and 14 are more or less a conclusion to the epistle. In verse 9, John says that he had written to the church where Gaius and Diotrefes were in fellowship, apparently. But Diotrefes did not recognize John to be what he was.

Incidentally, the name Diotrefes means Zeus nursed, a pagan name. If and when he was saved, he didn't change his pagan name to a Christian name like others did, and this indicates that Diotrefes was of a proud sort and apparently was a very carnal Christian in the church. As we continue, we learn that Diotrefes also wanted to have the first place.

The church seems to have an overabundant supply of this kind today, doesn't it? Verse 10 continues, Wherefore, if I come, John was uncertain about his coming. This could have been due to his old age or to the fact that Diotrefes had caused some opposition. But majority-wise, he still planned to come.

He continues, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, which were, number one, trotting against us with malicious words, which was a lot of empty talk, and number two, and not content therewith, which tells us that he didn't stop just at words, and number three, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, which is classified as evil in verse 11, and number four, forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. This tells us that Diotrephes was very headstrong, and was willing to pay any kind of price to have his own way. Verse 11 denounces Diotrephes as evil, and concludes that all who doeth evil hath not seen God.

The thing that strikes me is this, the church was being influenced, it seems, by one who was either lost or a very carnal Christian at best. My, how this should warn us to stick to the book. Even the best leaders can go off course from time to time.

Let us not receive and recognize people as spiritual leaders merely upon their leadership ability, or personality, or wealth, or appearance. The acid test is, do they teach the book? Now, in verse 12, the subject changes. Demetrius hath good report of all men, it says.

It seems that Demetrius was the one who took the letter from John to Gaius. If we look closer at that verse, we'll see a very wonderful truth, I think. The word men is an italics.

This means that it isn't in the oldest manuscripts. It could be read, Demetrius hath good report of all, and of the truth itself. In other words, everyone, men and women, gave Demetrius a good report.

The statement, and of the truth itself, tells us that the truth, not Demetrius, was the standard. Thus, Demetrius stood approved by the Word of God itself. That is, he lived his life within the framework of the Word of God.

Could it be said of us that we lived our lives within the borders of the Word of God? In verses 13 and 14, we learn that John had more to say, but the face-to-face visit which he had planned would be better. John and Gaius apparently were dear friends, and each longed to see the other. And we might apply this to ourselves by asking, do we promote fellowship, or do we deny it? I see that our time is nearly up, so as we come to the end of this study of 3 John, may the Holy Spirit of God strengthen us and remind us to realize the following facts.

Number one, let us live out the truth, not just talk a good game. Number two, prosperity isn't in itself evil if it's used for the Lord. Number three, all sickness isn't due to sin in the life.

Number four, follow-up is highly important in any genuine evangelism. Number five, faithfulness is an absolute must if you wish to be a teacher of the Word of God. And number six, to help those who serve the Lord in a full-time occupational way is to be a helper to the truth.

Shall we pray? Again, our Father, we pray that whatever has been of ourselves shall be speedily banished from our minds, but whatever has been of Thyself shall remain in our hearts and bear fruit for all eternity. These things we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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