# **Introduction to 3 John**

ESV translation Grammatical diagram Outline (structure) Textual variants Vocabulary Historical background Grammar notes Christian doctrines Commentary Assignments

# **3 John ESV translation**

## Greeting

<sup>1</sup> The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

# Blessing

<sup>2</sup> Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. <sup>3</sup> For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. <sup>4</sup> I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

## MISSIONARIES

<sup>5</sup> Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, <sup>6</sup> who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. <sup>7</sup> For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup> Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

<sup>9</sup> I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. <sup>10</sup> So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

#### Leaders

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God. <sup>12</sup> Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

## Closing

<sup>13</sup> I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. <sup>14</sup> I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

<sup>15</sup> Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name.

# **Grammatical Diagram**

1

the elder < to the beloved Gaius

whom

I | love in truth

2

Beloved

[1] | pray > thou prosperest and be in good health

as thy soul | prospereth

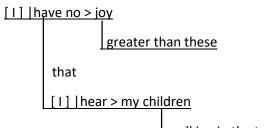
# 3 for

[1] | rejoice greatly

brethren | coming and testifying > to thy truth

as thou | walkest in truth

4



walking in the truth

# 5

Beloved

[thou] | doest > faithful

that [thou] |worketh > this for these brothers, strangers who | have testified > your love

<u>| nave testified > your love</u>

before the assembly

6

7

for

[they] | went out

behalf of the Name

taking nothing from the pagans

8 therefore

we | ought > support > such ones that [we] | become | co-workers to truth

9

[I] | wrote > something < to the assembly
but</pre>

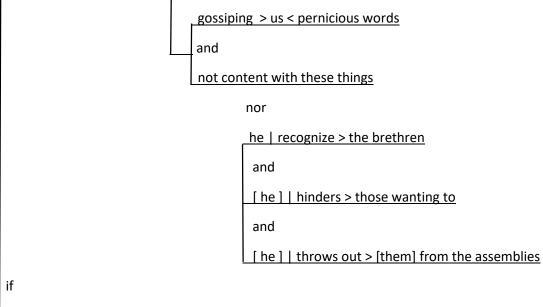
Diotrephes | does not recognize > us

who exalts himself over them

# 10

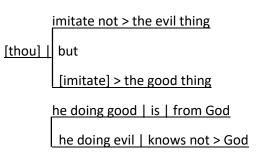
because of this

[I] | shall remember > the works he does

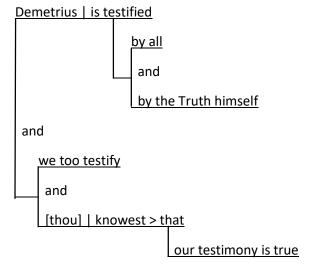


[I] | come

# 11 beloved



# 





## **Outline of 3 John**

Main Sections begin with 'Beloved'.

## I. GREETING

1. John's authority

2. John's love for Gaius

# II. BLESSING 2-4

1. Prayer for health and prosperity 2

2. Joy because Gaius and local Christians live by the Truth 3-4

## III. MISSIONARIES 5-10

1. Exhortation to support itinerate Christian missionaries 5-8

2. Warning about Diotrephes who opposes other Christian workers 9-10

## IV. LEADERS 11-12

1. Imitate godly leaders 11

2. Demetrius is a godly leader 12

## V. CLOSING 13-14

1. Hope to see Gaius soon

2. Mutual greetings

# **Textual Variants in 3 John**

4 One ancient manuscript mistook "joy" (*charas*) for "grace" (*charis*).

6 Another ancient manuscript miswrote, "you will send them, by doing well" in place of "you will do well, by sending them".

8 A scribe tried to correct an ancient manuscript by modifying "support" (*upolambanein*) to read, "receive" (*apolambanein*).

9 One ancient manuscript misspelled "have written" (*egrapsa*) as "having written" (*egrapsas*), and two others altered "written something" (... *ti*) to "would have written" (*an* ...).

**10** Another ancient manuscript altered "against us" to read, "towards us", and "who want to (do so)" to read, "who welcome (them)".

12 Some manuscripts replaced "the truth" with "the church" or with "the church and the truth". "The Truth" is the original.

15 One ancient manuscript replaces "friends" with "brethren".

# SPECIAL VOCABULARY

# 1. Elder (Presbyter)

- **1.** Israelite community leaders, Deut. 19.12
- 2. Aged gentlemen, John 8.9
- 3. Officials in Jewish synagogues, Mark 15.1
- 4. Hellenistic (Greek) magistrates
- 5. Christian church leaders, Acts 15.4
- 6. Divine beings in heaven, Rev. 4.4

# 2. Truth

John employs the term "truth" in three main ways:

- 1. Truthfulness (3)
- 2. True teaching from Jesus Christ (4)
- 3. Title for Jesus Christ, the Truth (8, 12).

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:7

# Background to 3 John

The Christian movement was in its third generation, and there were now more Gentile (pagan) Christians than Jewish Christians.

Itinerate missionary evangelists were carrying the Good News of Jesus to the provinces and towns of the Roman Empire, forming new churches led by local men.

**Diotrephes**, a leader in a provincial church, refused to allow church members to support itinerant evangelists, and would throw out of the church members who did so.

**Demetrius** and other evangelists went to Ephesus to explain the situation to their "mother" church.

John penned this letter (3 John) to Gaius, a wealthy Christian who would support worthy evangelists. John likely sent Demetrius with this letter to Gaius, who would trust him and provide support to the itinerate evangelists.

## **Grammar Notes on 3 John**

**5** "in all your efforts" (ESV). Greek: "what ever you-might-work" (*ho ean ergaséi*). Gaius had not yet done anything for these particular chaps, yet John expected that he soon would do something practical.

8 "fellow workers for the truth" (ESV). The Greek noun with prefix *syn* ('with') followed by "the truth" in an grammatical 'instrumental case' can mean, "fellow workers with the Truth" (Jesus Christ).

#### **Christian Doctrines in 3 John**

#### Apostles

John was one of the 12 whom Jesus appointed to continue his work in the world, promising to send them the Spirit of truth. "You know that our testimony is true" (12)

#### God

For John, there is but One True God, who does good and rewards good (6, 11).

#### Truth

John rejoices in truth (3), works for truth (8), writes truth (9, 13) and testifies about the truth (12). Christians are only to speak truth in religion, in politics, in business and in daily life.

#### Love

The main mark of true Christians remains the practical love that they show one to another (1, 5).

#### Church

Christians call themselves "brethren" (5). They form communities that they call *church*, a word that means "gathering" or "assembly" (6, 9).

#### **Missionaries**

Christian churches support itinerate evangelists who receive no support from pagans (6, 7, 8, 10).

# **COMMENTARY ON 3 JOHN**

<sup>1</sup> The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

# The Elder = the Apostle John who was also an overseer of the churches in Ephesus, Asia Minor. See lexicon note 1

<sup>2</sup> Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.

# When an apostle prays for others' health, they get well!

<sup>3</sup> For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.

# These were itinerating (travelling) evangelists who came to John for his approval to raise support from Gaius for their ministry work. See lexicon note 2

<sup>4</sup>I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

# Gaius was a man of means who remained loyal to Jesus, obeying his commandments.

<sup>5</sup> Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, <sup>6</sup> who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.

# John urges Gaius to undertake personally to support these particular itinerate evangelists, whom he did not know. See grammar note 5

<sup>7</sup> For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup> Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

# When you support evangelists and church-planting missionaries, you become a coworker with Jesus who is the Truth. grammar note 8

<sup>9</sup> I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. <sup>10</sup> So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

# When a church will not support evangelists, then individuals may do so, even at the risk of being shunned.

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

John appeals to Gaius not to follow the example of disobedient church leaders, but to do what he knows is good, helpful and honourable.

<sup>12</sup> Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

# Demetrius will share with the other evangelists the support that Gaius will donate to them.

<sup>13</sup> I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. <sup>14</sup> I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

# God gives to generous givers opportunities to grow in knowledge, grace and goy.

<sup>15</sup> Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name.

"Friends", in this connection, include fellow Christians who participate in evangelism, in church planting and in supporting others.

# ASSIGNMENTS

# Home Work

Read through 3 John once a day this week, in different translations (See biblehub.com)

Jot down notes and queries that you want to discuss in our bible-study group.

# **Think About**

A. Is it legitimate to seek missionary support from churches?

B. Is it legitimate for individuals and families to support missionaries whom their church does not support?

C. How can we vet missionaries before we accept to support them?

# **Pastoral Work**

Meet with your coach, or with those whom you coach, and talk together about Christians who show leadership ability.

Plan together ways in which current leaders will share opportunities with new leaders, to serve in tiny churches or out-reach teams. Pray for each one by name.