

## Notes on the Greek New Testament Week 235 – 2 & 3 John

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### Day 1171: Introduction to John's Second and Third Epistles

For introduction to 2 and 3 John see also the introductory notes on 1 John which address some issues common to all three letters.

#### The Place of 2 and 3 John in the NT Canon

Eusebius reckoned the second and third epistles of John among 'the controverted books' in the same rank as the epistles of James, Jude and 2 Peter. He says that they are 'well known and recognised by most'. However, they were not contained in the Peshitto Syriac Version nor are they accepted by the Syriac church.

Westcott considers that these letters probably had a limited circulation.

#### The form of 2 and 3 John

Smalley writes, "2 and 3 John are the shortest letters in the NT, shorter even than Philemon and Jude, which also consist of one chapter. Both Johannine letters are of roughly equal length, containing 245 and 219 words respectively."

Marshall comments, "Unlike 1 John, 2 and 3 John fall into the category of personal letters. Each of them is the length of an ordinary private letter of the time which could be written on a standard-sized piece of papyrus (about 25 cm. by 20 cm.), and each of them has the typical 'form' of a letter with a more or less stereotyped introduction and conclusion."

#### Relationship with 1 John

Smalley writes, "In terms of subject matter 2 John is closer than 3 John to 1 John. The theological ideas of 2 John resemble those of 1 John very closely; so that, for example, the four conditions set out in 1 John for walking in the light and living as God's children are echoed in 2 John (renunciation of sin, cf. vv 10–11; obedience to the love command, cf. vv 5–6; rejection of worldliness, cf. v 7; maintenance of the faith, cf. vv 1–2, 4, 9). Only in vv 10–11 is a new theme introduced."

Marshall comments, "2 John appears to have been written to the same Christian community as 1 John but at an earlier date (since the false teachers evidently still had access to the church in 2 John, but had seceded from it in 1 John 2:19), or else it was written to a different church." On the other hand, Dodd points out, the ideas set out briefly in 2 John need the prior and fuller exposition which they receive in 1 John if they are to be properly understood. Smalley concludes, "A theory which thus understands 2 John as part of a community history, beginning in the Fourth Gospel and ending in 3 John, is not only logical. It also accords with the early history of the Johannine letters, in which the order 1–2–3 never seems to have been in any real doubt."

#### Situation Addressed in these Letters

Marshall writes, "Although 2 John is apparently written to an individual, the 'chosen lady' (2 Jn. 1), it is probable that it is in fact a way of personifying a community. By contrast 3 John is written to a specific person, Gaius, and it deals with ecclesiastical rather than theological problems. Its background appears to lie in the growth of a new type of church organisation. At first the various churches were to a considerable extent under the guidance and leadership of apostles and evangelists (like Paul, Timothy, and Titus) who travelled from place to place and maintained a general supervision over the churches placed under their care. In this type of situation the role and authority of the local leaders whom they appointed was correspondingly restricted. But as time passed and the churches increased in number, a new

situation began to arise. The apostles and their colleagues were growing old, or had actually died. There was no universal system of succession, and it was natural that local churches should begin to develop a more powerful leadership of their own. At the same time there was a tendency toward the concentration of leadership. In the early days church leaders constituted a group of elders or of bishops and deacons. Now this 'team ministry' was giving way to the idea of one man as the bishop who occupied a position of leadership over the other church officials. It looks as though Diotrephes was trying to encourage this process in his own church – naturally with himself as the appointed leader. He was seeking autonomy for his own church by trying to get rid of the influence of John and John's emissaries, and he was claiming authority for himself within the church. It does not necessarily follow that Diotrephes had already become the authorised leader in his own church, but simply that he was desirous of this position. We have not yet reached the stage of development reflected in the Epistles of Ignatius, where each local church has its own bishop, elders and deacons."

### Authorship

Westcott writes that "there is nothing in the use of the title ὁ πρεσβύτερος, 'the elder' by the writer of the Epistles inconsistent with belief that he was the Apostle John." Furthermore, "Internal evidence amply confirms the general tenor of external authority. The second Epistle bears the closest resemblance in language and thought to the first. The third epistle has the closest affinity to the second, though from its subject it is less like the first in general form. Nevertheless it offers many striking parallels to constructions and language of St John: v.3 ἐν ἀληθεία; 4 μείζοτεραν τουτων... ἵνα...; 6, 12 μαρτυρεῖν τινι; 11 ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν... οὐχ ἑώρακεν τὸν θεόν; 12 οἶδας ὅτι ἡ μαρτ. ἡ. ἀληθῆς ἐστίν."

Marshall, however, writes, "More probably we should think of the elder as holding a position analogous to that of Timothy or Titus, as portrayed in the Pastoral Epistles, men charged to maintain oversight over a group of churches." Marshall follows von Campenhausen in suggesting that 'the elder,' in opposing Diotrephes, was relying on the force and authority of 'the truth' (i.e. the Gospel proclaimed by the apostles and handed on to the church) rather than relying on any formal or institutional authority he possessed over the churches.

### Referenced Works

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Stott, John R.W.	<i>Epistles of John</i> , Tyndale Commentary, IVF, London, 1964
Westcott, B.F	<i>The Epistles of St John</i> , MacMillan & Co, Cambridge & London, 1886

### Day 1172: 2 John 1-7

#### Verse 1

Ο πρεσβύτερος ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῆς, οὓς ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καὶ οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἐγνωκότες τὴν ἀλήθειαν,

πρεσβύτερος, α, ον elder, old man/woman

A title which "while is describes official position, suggested also a fatherly relation." Westcott.

Smalley comments, "When he calls himself 'the presbyter' ... the writer could be indicating that he was a venerated old man in the community, or (more likely) that he was an 'elder' in a local church. But the authority which he assumes over his readers (in both 2 and 3 John, as in 1 John), and the intimate knowledge of the addressees which he presupposes, suggests that he was 'more than a local pastor' (G. W. Barker...). The influence which he seems to have exercised implies that his position was similar to that of a modern 'bishop' or 'superintendent' ... and that he had responsibility for the (Johannine) churches in his area (of Ephesus)."

ἐκλεκτος, η, ον chosen  
κυρία, ας f lady

Various suggestions have been made concerning the phrase ἐκλεκτῆ κυρία

- i) The letter is addressed to a lady named Electa;
- ii) The letter is addressed to a Christian woman named Kyria;
- iii) Both are proper names, the letter is addressed to Electa Kyria;
- iv) It is addressed to a particular church, the church being referred to as a chosen lady, a bride of Christ, and the church members being referred to as her children. No other example is known of such a form of address.

Westcott says that the problem is insoluble, "But the general tenor of the letter favours the opinion that it was sent to a community and not to one believer." Cf. v.13.

Marshall suggests that it is "a metaphorical way of saying 'the church and its members'." Smalley concludes, "The Johannine community as a whole seems to have included several house churches (in Ephesus). The recipients of 2 John belonged to the same group as that for which 1 John was written (cf. v 7; and 1 John 2:18–19). But they formed a distinct unit on their own; and evidently the addressee of 3 John was the leader of another such unit."

τεκνον, ου n child  
ἀγαπαω love  
ἀληθεια, ας f truth

"The writer, at the very outset, places himself over against the heretics, who have no love for the truth (cf. vv 10–11; also 3 John 4)... The presbyter is saying that he loves his readers in a way that accords with the truth of the Christian gospel." Smalley.

μονος, η, ον adj only, alone  
ἐγνωκότες Verb, perf act ptc, m nom pl  
γινωσκω

Marshall adds, "The fact that the elder is writing to a church rather than an individual family is confirmed by his further assertion that his love is shared by all who know the truth."

### Verse 2

διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μένουσαν ἐν ἡμῖν,  
καὶ μεθ' ἡμῶν ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

μενω remain, stay, abide

Marshall comments, "The truth is something which has come to stay in members of the church, and it exercises an inner dynamic on them to love."

ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s εἶμι  
αἰων, αἰωνος m age, world order,  
eternity

Cf. 1 Jn 2:17.

### Verse 3

ἔσται μεθ' ἡμῶν χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη παρὰ  
θεοῦ πατρός, καὶ παρὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ  
τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρός, ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ  
ἀγάπῃ.

Marshall comments, "After naming the writer and recipients, the customary opening of a Greek letter included some form of greeting. Just as the former element was often developed to indicate the Christian status of the persons involved, so too the greeting took on a Christian form. We can trace this new type of greeting especially in the letters of Paul, and it may be that he was largely responsible for developing it."

ἔσται the blessing is also a promise – a word of assurance.

χαρις, ιτος f grace  
ἐλεος, ους n mercy, compassion  
εἰρηνη, ης f peace

Cf. 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2. "The succession 'grace, mercy, peace' marks the order from the first motion of God to the final satisfaction of man... In regard to the divine action 'grace' points to the absolute freedom of God's love in relation to man's helplessness to win it; and 'mercy' to His tenderness towards man's misery." Westcott.

παρα preposition with gen from

Before Ἰησοῦ, supported by good representatives of the Alexandrian and Western text-types (including A B 81 1739 Vg cop<sup>sa</sup>), a number of witnesses (such as א K L P most minuscules syr<sup>hcl</sup> cop<sup>bo</sup> arm) have κυρίου. Since copyists are likely to have added rather than deleted a title of Jesus, the shorter text is to be preferred. So Metzger.

The expression Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς is unique. "The present title emphasizes the special relationship of Jesus to the Father (and not only to the believer), which is characteristic of the theology of the Johannine letters as a whole." Smalley.

ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ prepare the way for the central theme of the letter in vv. 4-11, which is concerned with living in truth and love.

#### Verse 4

Ἐχάρην λίαν ὅτι εὑρηκα ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς ἐντολὴν ἐλάβομεν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς.

"Ancient letters, like their modern counterparts, often began with an expression of joy on the part of the writer for good news concerning his readers." Marshall.

ἐχάρην Verb, 2nd aor pass dep indic, 1 s  
χαιρῶ rejoice, be glad  
λίαν adv exceedingly, greatly  
εὑρηκα Verb, perf act indic, 1 s εὕρισκω  
find, discover

"The words appear to refer to an experience of the writer in some other place than that to which the 'Lady' belonged." Westcott.  
ἐκ τῶν τέκνων "may carry the implication that other members of the church were not living as they should [so Smalley]... But ... it is more likely that the elder is thinking of the personal contact which he has had with some members of the church. Presumably they had visited him, and were now returning home with this letter of greeting." Marshall.

περιπατεῶ walk, walk about, live

Cf. 1 John 1:6; also 2:6, 11; 3 John 3-4. The present participle stresses habitual commitment.

ἐντολὴ, ἡς f command, order, instruction  
ἐλάβομεν Verb, aor act indic, 1 pl  
λαμβάνω

Smalley comments, "The presbyter ascribes the 'command' (to live in truth and love) to the Father, rather than directly to Jesus (cf. John 13:34; 15:12, 17), because he is the ultimate source of the message declared by Jesus (John 7:16-17) and his disciples (1 John 1:5)."

#### Verse 5

καὶ νῦν ἐρωτῶ σε, κυρία, οὐχ ὡς ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφων σοι ἀλλὰ ἦν εἵχομεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους.

ἐρωτῶ ask, request

The force is 'I plead with you...'

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

σε, κυρία John addresses the church as a whole.

καινός, ἡ, ον new

γράφω write

εἵχομεν Verb, imperf act indic, 1 pl ἔχω

ἀρχῆς, ἡς f beginning

Cf. 1 Jn 2:7-8; Jn 13:34.

ἀλλήλων, οἰς, οὖς one another

"His request is personal and urgent, especially since the schismatic heretics in his own congregation, who lacked both truth and love, are no doubt still in view... The elder asks his readers to practice something with which all three persons of the Trinity are concerned. For love comes from the Father (1 John 4:7), it is manifested by the Son (3:16), and it is made available by the life-giving Spirit (4:13-16)." Smalley.

**Verse 6**

καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, ἵνα περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ· αὕτη ἡ ἐντολή ἐστίν, καθὼς ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατήτε.

"The complete identification of the life of love with the fulfilment of all the commandments of God is characteristic of St John: 1 John 5:2,3." Westcott. Cf. also Romans 13:8-10 of which Marshall writes, "If Paul's point is to show that all the commands issue out of love and can be regarded as expressions of love, the elder's point is to show that love must issue in various detailed types of action in accordance with God's commandments.... The relevance of the elder's point is obvious in the modern situation where we are sometimes told: 'All you need is love.' Such advice is meaningless if the nature of love is not defined and unfolded. Love expresses itself in following the divine guidelines. At the same time, merely to keep the commands out of a sense of duty or constraint or fear of punishment is not true love. Love means obedience from the heart and true concern for the good of others."

Smalley comments, "The injunction to live in obedience to the demand for love (and truth), as a basic spiritual requirement from the Christian believer, would have been entirely appropriate to a community like John's which was disintegrating in the face of heresies within and secessionist attacks from outside." So v. 7.

**Verse 7**

ὅτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι ἐξηλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἱ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος.

πλανος, ον deceitful; ὁ π. deceiver

One who leads astray

ἐξηλθον Westcott suggests that this indicates a particular crisis when a number of people left the church to take up their own anti-Christian mission. Smalley comments, "This announcement marks a decisive stage in the break-up of John's community, and indicates that a particular brand of heresy was gaining the upper hand."

Marshall comments, "There were no doubt various small groups of people calling themselves Christians at the time, and there were no denominational organisations gathering them all together. It would be quite possible for 'Christians' who held different views of the faith from their colleagues to set up their own groups. Consequently, when travelling preachers came around it may have been difficult to know whether they shared the same understanding of the faith... Here the elder proposes a clear test by which the church to which he is writing may test the orthodoxy of any suspect preachers."

ὁμολογεω confess, declare  
σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body,  
human nature

"The thought centres upon the present perfection of the Lord's Manhood which is still, and is to be manifested, and not upon the past fact of His coming, 1 John 4:2 (ἐληλυθοντα): 1 John 5:6 (ὁ ἐλθων)." Westcott.

Marshall comments, "The present continuous tense used is surprising when compared with 1 John 4:2: 'Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.' We might have expected a simple past tense, 'Jesus Christ came in the flesh' (cf. 1 Jn 5:6), as a confession of the historical reality of the incarnation in a point of past time. It seems unlikely, therefore, that the false teachers simply denied the reality of the incarnation. The use of the present and perfect tenses becomes significant if the point is that Jesus Christ has come *and still existed* 'in the flesh.' We know that some Gnostic thinkers taught that a heavenly power (the Christ) came upon Jesus at his baptism in the form of the Spirit, but that it departed from him again before the crucifixion, so that there was no lasting union of the divine Christ with the human Jesus, and hence no real, lasting incarnation. The elder's formulation of the orthodox faith in Jesus Christ seems to be designed to exclude such interpretations of the person of Jesus. For him it was axiomatic that there had been a true incarnation, that the Word had become flesh and remained flesh. It is a point that receives much stress in 1 John (2:18-27; 4:1-6; 5:5-8)."

ἀντίχριστος, ον m Antichrist (of one who claims to be Christ or is opposed to Christ)

Cf. 1 Jn 2:18. "He means that such a person is the deceiver *par excellence*, since his denial cuts at the very root of Christian belief. Indeed, he has made himself the opponent of Jesus." Marshall.

"On the basis of the situation described in this verse, the presbyter proceeds to a double exhortation: do not be deceived, he says (vv 8, 9); and do not encourage deceivers (vv 10, 11)." Smalley.

### Day 1173: 2 John 8-13

#### Verse 8

βλέπετε ἑαυτοὺς, ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσητε ἃ εἰργασάμεθα ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβητε.

βλεπω see, look, beware of  
 ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/herself, itself  
 ἀπολέσητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl  
 ἀπολλυμι destroy, kill, lose  
 εἰργασάμεθα Verb, aor midd dep indic, 1 pl  
 ἐργαζομαι work

There are number of variants that seek to harmonise ἀπολέσητε ... εἰργασάμεθα either by making both first person plural or both second person plural. The reading given above is well supported.

εἰργασάμεθα refers to the preaching and pastoral ministry of the elder and others.

μισθος, ου m pay, wages, reward  
 πληρης, ες full, complete  
 ἀπολάβητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl  
 ἀπολαμβάνω receive back

"The Christian life leads in the end to a reward, and failure to persevere in the truth (and in right conduct) can lead to loss of what God has promised to his people." Marshall. Smalley adds, "It is quite possible that the heretical 'deceivers' were using the presbyter's very phrases for their own purposes... They too might have urged their disciples not to 'lose' what had been accomplished; and those with gnostic inclinations may well have encouraged their followers to aim at the perfection (the 'reward in full') which was reserved for the elect. Against such deception the elder exhorts his readers to maintain the gospel faith of Jesus, and to live the complete life of truth and love (v 4)."

#### Verse 9

πᾶς ὁ προάγων καὶ μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδασκίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει· ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ διδασκίᾳ, οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει.

προαγω go before or ahead of

Marshall comments on προάγων, "Perhaps this is a sarcastic reference to the way in which these false teachers themselves proudly claimed to be offering 'advanced' teaching; the elder claims that they have 'advanced' beyond the boundaries of true Christian belief." He continues by warning against any contemporary teaching which goes beyond the definitive Scriptural revelation. The demand is to 'remain' in the received teaching.

διδασκη, ης f teaching

The Textus Receptus, following K L P cop<sup>bo</sup> eth, et al., adds τοῦ χριστοῦ after τῇ διδασκίᾳ, while some versions and patristic witnesses (including syr<sup>ph</sup> Lucifer) have διδασκίᾳ αὐτοῦ. These are secondary attempts to relate this clause to the preceding one, which has ἐν τῇ διδασκίᾳ τοῦ χριστοῦ. The shorter reading (so xA B Ψ Vg syrhc1 cop<sup>sa</sup>, et al.) is well supported and to be preferred.

Westcott thinks that the sense is 'the doctrine which Christ brought in his own person' rather than 'the doctrine concerning Christ.' Marshall, however, comments, "The 'teaching of Christ' is the tradition about Christ taught by the elder himself and handed down by authoritative tradition in the church."

θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει Smalley comments, "The so-called 'advanced' person not only loses his 'reward' (v 8); he also loses God himself. See 1 John 2:23 ('no one who disowns the Son possesses the Father'). To 'have' (ἔχει), or 'possess,' God denotes the experience of an intimate relationship and fellowship with him."

οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει. Marshall writes, "It is impossible to separate the Father from the Son in Christian experience: you cannot have fellowship with the one without having it with the other. But, if so, it also follows positively that those who accept the teaching have spiritual fellowship with both the Father and the Son."

#### Verse 10

εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ταύτην τὴν διδασκίαν οὐ φέρει, μὴ λαμβάνετε αὐτὸν εἰς οἰκίαν καὶ χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε·

John is speaking not of the casual visit of a stranger but a visit by "self-appointed, itinerant teachers and preachers of heresy. These people, presumably, had seceded from the Johannine community; and they were now seeking to win over further adherents to their false views." Smalley.

φερω bring, carry, bear

οἰκια, ας f house, home

Smalley comments, "The 'house' (οἰκίαν) to which access by the heretics is to be denied may refer to the dwelling of an individual member of the Johannine church. But more probably it denotes the 'house' in which one section of that community met for worship (a 'house church'). So Stott, 214. For such 'house' meetings in the NT see Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phlm 2. John is not therefore forbidding private hospitality, but rather an official welcome into the congregation, with the widespread opportunities which would then be available for the heretics to promote their cause."

χαίρω rejoice, be glad; imperat (and infin) used as a greeting

### Verse 11

ὁ λέγων γὰρ αὐτῷ χαίρειν κοινωνεῖ τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς.

Smalley comments, "This v belongs with v 10, and must be interpreted in the light of what the elder has just said. In v 10 he has spoken of the need to resist the peddlers of doctrinal error who, in their travels, seek a platform from which to spread their false ideas about the person of Jesus."

κοινωνεω share, take part  
πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

Marshall comments, "To welcome them was to express solidarity with them; even if one professed to reject their views, hospitality was a way of sharing in their work, and those who helped them in this way were in danger of coming under the same condemnation as the false teachers themselves."

### Verse 12

Πολλὰ ἔχων ὑμῖν γράφειν οὐκ ἐβουλήθην διὰ χάρτου καὶ μέλανος, ἀλλὰ ἐλπίζω γενέσθαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσαι, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν πεπληρωμένη ᾖ.

Cf. 3 Jn 13-15.

ἐβουλήθην Verb, aor pass dep indic, 1 s  
βουλομαι want, desire, wish

"The aorist regards the letter as complete: the decision is made." Westcott. An 'epistolatory' aorist.

χαρτης, ου m paper, papyrus  
μελας, αινα, αν gen ανος, αινης, ανος  
black; το μ. ink

ἐλπίζω hope  
στομα, τος n mouth

I.e. 'face to face'

λαλεω speak, talk

χαρα, ας f joy  
πεπληρωμένη Verb, perf pass ptc, f nom s  
πληρωω fill, make full

The reading ἡμῶν ( ⚭K L P Ψ syr<sup>phcl</sup>, et al.) is well supported, and accords with John's habit of identifying himself with his readers, especially when speaking of the gospel blessings which they share (as in 1 John 1:4). The variant ὑμῶν is also well attested (A B 33 81 1739 Vg cop<sup>bo</sup>); but it probably results from scribal assimilation to the second persons earlier in the sentence.

ἦ Verb, pres subj, 3s εἶμι

### Verse 13

Ἀσπάζεται σε τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀδελφῆς σου τῆς ἐκλεκτῆς.

ἀσπάζομαι greet  
σε Pronoun, acc s ου  
τεκνον, ου n child  
ἀδελφη, ης f sister  
ἐκλεκτος, η, ον chosen

Tends to support the corporate view adopted in v.1. "Finally, the elder conveys greetings to the church from its sister church with which he himself was associated." Marshall. Contrast the greetings in 3 John. Smalley adds, "The fact that the writer of 2 John speaks with an air of authority to a congregation other than his own possibly suggests that he had general responsibility for all the Johannine churches in his area."

As with the ending of 1 John, so here, many MSS add ἀμήν. There are also a number of other secondary expansions.

### Day 1174: 3 John 1-8

#### Verse 1

Ὁ πρεσβύτερος Γαῖω τῷ ἀγαπητῷ, ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.

πρεσβυτερος, α, ον see 2 John 1

"The name 'Gaius' (Caius) occurs Acts 19:29 (a 'Macedonian'); 20:4 ('of Derbe'); 1 Cor 1:14 (a Corinthian). There is nothing to identify this Gaius with any one of these." Westcott.

ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved

Cf. 2 Jn 1. The phrase ἐν ἀληθείᾳ probably means 'in the truth'. "In other words, the presbyter is claiming that he is a fellow-believer with Gaius in the truth of God which has been made known by Jesus... The truth, moreover, is the essential sphere of reality in which mutual love (vv 1-2) exists." Smalley.

**Verse 2**

Ἀγαπητέ, περὶ πάντων εὐχομαί σε  
εὐδοοῦσθαι καὶ ὑγιαίνειν, καθὼς  
εὐδοοῦται σου ἡ ψυχὴ.

Westcott says that *περὶ παντων* is to be understood as 'in all things' rather than 'above all things'.

εὐχομαί pray, wish, long  
σε Pronoun, acc s ου  
εὐδοοῦσθαι Verb, pres pass infin  
εὐδοομαι have things go well (for oneself)

Cf. 1 Cor 16:2; Rom 1:10.

ὑγιαίνω be sound, be in good health  
ψυχῆ, ἡς f self, inmost being, 'soul'

Here the sense is 'soul' as opposed to body. "The conclusion of v 2 expresses the elder's hope that the spiritual progress of Gaius will be matched by his physical health and well-being." Smalley.

**Verse 3**

ἐχάρην γὰρ λίαν ἐρχομένων ἀδελφῶν καὶ  
μαρτυρούντων σου τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς σὺ  
ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατεῖς.

ἐχάρην see 2 John 4

Several witnesses omit *γὰρ*, probably because later copyists could not see any clear connection between this verse and the previous. The verse, however, supplies the reason for the elder's confidence of Gaius' spiritual progress.

λίαν see 2 John 4

ἐρχομένων suggests more than one occasion. Smalley comments, "The word 'brothers' (also in vv 5 and 10) may contain technical overtones, and refer to Christian (ministerial) workers... However, ἀδελφός ('brother') is normally used by NT writers in the context of Christian believers in general (e.g. 1 Thess 1:4; 2:1, 14, 17). Thus John is probably speaking of itinerant members of the Johannine community who acted as missionaries. It is not impossible that they were members of the presbyter's own congregation, who had visited the church to which Gaius belonged, in view of its problems (vv 9–11), to plead for love and truth (see also v 7). While their information about Diotrephes would necessarily be unpleasant, they would have come back to the presbyter with an encouragingly positive report on the character of Gaius... In the case of Gaius, adherence to the truth of Christ was practically expressed in terms of loving hospitality (vv 5–6)."

μαρτυρεῶ bear witness, testify

"They witnessed to your truth, even how you walk in the truth' The present tense suggests continuous action.

"The emphatic pronoun (σου) suggests a contrast with others as (for example) Diotrephes." Westcott.

περιπατεῶ walk, live

**Verse 4**

μειζοτέραν τούτων οὐκ ἔχω χαράν, ἵνα  
ἀκούω τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ  
περιπατοῦντα.

μειζων, ον and μειζοτερος, α, ον greater  
χαρά, ας f see 2 Jn 12

Westcott prefers the reading *χαριν* (B etc.) saying that it means 'I have no greater token of the divine favour than this ...' Metzger writes, "Although the reading *χάριν* may seem to be intrinsically superior ... the Committee considered it to be a transcriptional modification and preferred the more Johannine *χαράν*, which is strongly supported."

ἐμός, η, ον 1st pers possessive adj my,  
mine

τέκνον, ου n child

May suggest that Gaius had been converted through the elder's ministry, cf. 1 Cor 4:14; Gal 4:19; Phil 2:22.

**Verse 5**

Ἀγαπητέ, πιστὸν ποιεῖς ὃ ἐὰν ἐργάσῃ εἰς  
τοὺς ἀδελφούς καὶ τοῦτο ξένους,

πιστος, η, ον faithful, trustworthy

"The phrase is commonly interpreted: 'thou doest a faithful work,' a work which answers to thy faith... No parallel is quoted in support of such a sense of *πιστος*. The more natural rendering is rather 'thou makest sure'; that is, such an act will not be lost, will not fail of its due issue and reward (Apoc. 21:5). This sense falls in well with the context (comp.

Apoc. 14:13), and explains the use of the two verbs, *ποιεῖν*, *ἐργάζεσθαι*, which are combined also in Col. 3:23." Westcott.

This view receives little contemporary support. Marshall thinks that the phrase *πιστὸν ποιεῖς* simply means 'you are faithful'. Smalley translates it 'you are acting loyally', adding, "The natural sense is that the loyalty of Gaius to the truth was constantly (*ποιεῖς* is in the present) demonstrated in loving service... Gaius was thus seen to be in fellowship with all those who knew and lived in the truth (cf. 2 John 1), in marked contrast to the character of Diotrephes (vv 9–10)."

ὃ ἐὰν whatever

ἐργασία Verb, aor midd dep subj, 2 s  
 ἐργαζομαι work, do, perform  
 ξενος, η, ον strange, foreign; ὁ ξ.  
 stranger, foreigner

I.e. Christians previously unknown to him. Cf. Heb 13:1-2.

### Verse 6

οἱ ἐμαρτύρησάν σου τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐνώπιον  
 ἐκκλησίας, οὓς καλῶς ποιήσεις  
 προπέμψας ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ·

μαρτυρεω see v.3

ἐνώπιον prep with gen before, in the  
 presence of, in front of

ἐκκλησία, ας f congregation, church

"Those who in one particular case experienced the habitual hospitality of Gaius bore open testimony to his character in a public assembly of the church where the writer was, gathered together, as it may seem, to receive their report: comp Acts 14:26ff." Westcott.

καλῶς adv well

"Those who had before found help from Gaius now again required it for a special work. The future implies a wish which, it is assumed, will at once be fulfilled. Comp. Rom 6:14." Westcott.

προπέμψας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s  
 προπεμπω send on one's way, help  
 on one's way

Cf. Acts 21:1-3.

ἀξίως adv (from ἀξιός) worthily

"Worthily of their dedication to the service of God." Westcott. Marshall comments, "While Christian missionaries needed to beware of the temptation to make a good thing out of their work, and churches had to beware of being taken in by charlatans, it was perhaps more important to remind the churches not to treat the missionaries like beggars and so bring discredit on the name of the God to whom they were looking for their support."

### Verse 7

ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐξηλθον μηδὲν  
 λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνικῶν.

ὄνομα, τος n name

Used absolutely, cf. Acts 5:41.

μηδεις, μηδεμα, μηδεν no one, nothing  
 ἐθνικος, η, ον pagan, heathen, Gentile

They had refused to accept hospitality from those who were unconverted, i.e. those to whom they ministered (c.f. 1 Cor 9:11f.). They looked to the churches for support (cf. 2 Cor 6:1).

### Verse 8

ἡμεῖς οὖν ὀφείλομεν ὑπολαμβάνειν τοὺς  
 τοιούτους, ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ  
 ἀληθείᾳ.

ὀφείλω owe, ought, must

ὑπολαμβάνω support

τοιούτος, αυτη, ουτον correlative pronoun  
 and adjective such, of such kind

συνεργος, ου m fellow-worker

"The phrase is ambiguous. The fellowship may be either with the teachers: 'that we may be fellow-workers with them in support of the truth'; or with the truth, the substance of their teaching: 'that we may help the truth which is effective through them.'" Westcott.

Smalley prefers the latter and argues that the phrase ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ means 'so that we may prove ourselves to be fellow-workers in the cause of the truth' – ἵνα ... γινώμεθα means '(that) we may prove to be' rather than '(that) we may be', cf. John 15:8 'showing yourselves to be my disciples.'

Smalley adds, "The admonition to support Christian ministers 'in the cause of the truth' is not incompatible with a 'tentmaking ministry' (Acts 18:1-4). So Paul was ready to receive his living from the gospel (1 Cor 9:14); but he also tried not to be a 'burden to anyone' while he preached the gospel of God to them (1 Thess 2:9)."

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### Verse 9

Ἐγραψά τι τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· ἀλλ' ὁ  
 φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ  
 ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς.

A well-attested reading, supported by  $\aleph^*$  A (B) 048 1241 1739 (cop<sup>sa,bo</sup>) is ἔγραψά τι ('I wrote/I have written something'). This best explains the variants ἔγραψα ἄν ('I would have written,' as read by  $\aleph$ 33 81 Vg, et al.), which was introduced to prevent the suggestion that an apostolic letter had been lost, and ἔγραψά (omitting τι; so C K L P  $\Psi$  most minuscules, followed by TR), which indicates an attempt on the part of copyists to avoid the deprecation of apostolic authority.

ἐκκλησία, ας f see v.6

φιλοπρωτευω desire to lead or to be first

"It is of interest to compare the two sources of failure noticed in the two Epistles, προαγειν (2 John 9) and φιλοπρωτευειν, the undue claims to intellectual progress and to personal authority. There is nothing to indicate that Diotrephes held false opinions: his ambition only is blamed." Westcott.

Marshall comments, "It was a danger that had arisen in Jesus' own lifetime, and the Gospels contain warnings against love of position which were especially relevant for such a situation as this (Mt 23:5-12; cf. 24:20-28)."

ἐπιδεχομαι receive, welcome; pay attention to, recognize

By the use of ἡμας John removes the issue from the sphere of the personal.

Marshall comments, "This must mean that Diotrephes was refusing to accept whatever was said in the letter, and possibly also that when the letter came into his hands he did his best to suppress it. The letter must have contained some commendation of the travelling preachers." Marshall says that the letter may have been 2 John, but more probably has been lost. Smalley suggests that the letter was 1 John.

### Verse 10

διὰ τοῦτο, ἐὰν ἔλθω, ὑπομνήσω αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιεῖ, λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς· καὶ μὴ ἀρκούμενος ἐπὶ τούτοις οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐπιδέχεται τοὺς ἀδελφούς καὶ τοὺς βουλομένους κωλύει καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκβάλλει.

ἔλθω Verb, aor act subj, 1 s ἔρχομαι  
ὑπομνήσω Verb, fut act indic, 1 s  
ὑπομνησκω remind

The sense here is 'take up the issue...'

πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked  
φλυαρεω slander, accuse

The word means literally 'babbling' or 'talking nonsense' and is used here to emphasise the emptiness of the accusations made by Diotrephes.

ἀρκεω be enough, be sufficient; pass.  
be content, be satisfied

οὔτε not, nor, neither

ἐπιδεχομαι see v.9

βουλομαι want, desire, wish, intend, plan

κωλυω hinder, prevent, forbid

ἐκβαλλω throw out, expel, cast out

Smalley comments, "The verb ἐκβάλλει, in the present tense again (literally, 'he throws out'), need not imply formal excommunication from the Church, as this became known later. Cf. Matt 18:17; Luke 6:22; John 9:34-35; 1 Cor 5:2. On the other hand, it seems as if Diotrephes had already arrogated to himself the task of 'expulsion,' and was actually driving people out of the congregation (as he had refused to welcome the brothers) rather than merely desiring to do so."

### Verse 11

Ἀγαπητέ, μὴ μιμοῦ τὸ κακὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγαθόν. ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν· ὁ κακοποιῶν οὐχ ἔωρακεν τὸν θεόν.

ἀγαπητος, η, ον see v.1

μιμεομαι imitate, follow another's example

κακος, η, ον evil, bad, wrong

ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting

ἀγαθοποιεω do good

κακοποιεω do evil, do wrong

The implication is that Diotrephes is one such κακοποιῶν.

ὄραω see, observe

"It is likely that here, as elsewhere, St John points to men who professed to have deeper insight into truth and disparaged the importance of virtuous action." Westcott. Cf. 1 Jn 3:9; John 14:9.

### Verse 12

Δημητρίῳ μεμαρτύρηται ὑπὸ πάντων καὶ ὑπὸ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας· καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ οἶδας ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθῆς ἐστίν.

Westcott thinks it probable that Demetrius was the bearer of the letter, a suggestion which Marshall says is 'virtually certain'. Here, in contrast with Diotrephes, is an example to copy.

μεμαρτύρηται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s

μαρτυρεω bear witness, testify

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

οἶδα know

μαρτυρια, ας f testimony, witness

ἀληθης, ες true, truthful, honest, genuine

A threefold witness: *by all* – i.e. by all those who knew him, particularly the church; *by the truth* – i.e. the character of his life displayed the reality of the gospel; *by us* – i.e. by the apostle and his circle.

**Verse 13**

Πολλά εἶχον γράψαι σοι, ἀλλ' οὐ θέλω  
διὰ μέλανος καὶ καλάμου σοι γράφειν·

This verse (and the next) are similar to 2 John 12.

θέλω wish, will  
μελας, αἶνα, ἀν see 2 Jn 12  
καλάμος, οὐ m reed, pen

**Verse 14**

ἐλπίζω δὲ εὐθέως σε ἰδεῖν, καὶ στόμα  
πρὸς στόμα λαλήσομεν.

ἐλπίζω hope  
σε Pronoun, acc s ου

εὐθεως here bears the sense 'shortly', 'soon'

ἰδεῖν Verb, aor act infin ὄραω see  
στομα, τος n see 2 Jn 12

**Verse 15**

εἰρήνη σοι. ἀσπάζονται σε οἱ φίλοι.  
ἀσπάζου τοὺς φίλους κατ' ὄνομα.

εἰρήνη, ης f peace  
ἀσπαζομαι greet  
φίλος, ου m and φιλη, ης f friend  
ὄνομα, τος n name, person

Several later witnesses add at the end the  
common liturgical ἀμήν.

**Postscript**

Smalley concludes his commentary on John's letters as follows, "It has been our thesis throughout this commentary that the letters of John, together with the Fourth Gospel, record and reflect the spiritual history of the Johannine community itself... The fourth evangelist's appeal to his circle for a balanced christology met with a limited response, for heterodoxy (of more than one kind) persisted. This led to secessionist moves, as we know from 1 John, and the withdrawal from the community of some of its members (headed, perhaps, by those with a docetic understanding of the person of Jesus), as 2 John indicates. By the time 3 John was written further problems had arisen, and the initial situation had been turned on its head. For the Johannine Christians who were loyal to the Christian truth as they had received it were now being excluded from the church (v 9) by Diotrophes in association with his supporters (v 10). The views of this latter group were disturbingly independent, and called into question its basic allegiance to the gospel truth. 'Heterodoxy,' that is to say, now threatened the very survival of 'orthodoxy.' Furthermore, dangers of this theological as well as practical nature signalled the gradual disintegration of the Johannine community, and possibly heralded its final dissolution...

"Thus neither the Gospel nor the letters of John solved immediately the problems of the Johannine churches in their own day. But both contain theological, ethical and practical truths which are fundamental to the Christian position in every age: that Jesus is one with God as well as one with us; that love and righteousness are indispensable to the believer who seeks as a child of God to walk in the light; and that unity, however flexible, is a demand laid upon the whole Church at all times."