
Τρίτη Επιστολή του Ιωάννη † THE THIRD LETTER OF JOHN

INTRODUCTION

The *Third Letter of John* is an attempt to settle a dispute about jurisdiction that had arisen in one of the churches acknowledging John's authority. Of the three Johannine letters, this alone was written to an individual. The Elder writes to a respected and influential member of the (unknown) church ('Gaius', v. 1), encouraging him to continue the practice of welcoming those who follow the 'true path'.

Early church literature contains no mention of the letter, with the first reference to it appearing in the middle of the 3rd Century CE. This lack of documentation, though likely due to the extreme brevity of the epistle, caused early church writers to doubt its authenticity until the early 5th Century, when it was accepted into the canon along with the other two letters of John.

The letter is found in many of the oldest New Testament manuscripts and its text is free of major discrepancies or textual variants.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

The common language and literary style make it almost certain that the three letters of John are by the same author (most probably that of John's Gospel); internal evidence suggests that this 'third' letter was actually written first, around the end of the 1st Century CE. The location of writing is unknown but tradition places it in Ephesus.

Ιωαννου Γ' Ι

¹ Ὁ πρεσβύτερος Γαίῳ τῷ ἀγαπητῷ, ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.

² Ἀγαπητέ, περὶ πάντων εὐχομαί σε εὐδοῦσθαι καὶ ὑγιαίνειν, καθὼς εὐδοῦταί σου ἡ ψυχὴ. ³ ἐχάρην γὰρ λίαν ἐρχομένων ἀδελφῶν καὶ μαρτυρούντων σου τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς σὺ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατεῖς. ⁴ μείζοτεραν τούτων οὐκ ἔχω χαράν, ἵνα ἀκούω τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ περιπατοῦντα.

⁵ Ἀγαπητέ, πιστὸν ποιεῖς ὃ ἐὰν ἐργάση εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοῦτο ξένους, ⁶ οἱ ἐμαρτύρησάν σου τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐνώπιον ἐκκλησίας, οὓς καλῶς ποιήσεις προπέμψας ἀξίως τοῦ Θεοῦ. ⁷ ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐξῆλθον μηδὲν λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνικῶν. ⁸ ἡμεῖς οὖν ὀφείλομεν ὑπολαμβάνειν τοὺς τοιούτους, ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ.

3 JOHN 1

¹ The Elder: greetings to my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in truth.

² My dear friend, I pray everything is going happily with you and that you are as well physically as you are in your soul. ³ It was a great joy to me when some brothers came and told of your faithfulness to the truth, and how you walk in the truth.

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

⁵ Dear friend, you act loyally in helping the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. ⁶ They testify to the church of your love and you would do well to help them on their way as God would like. ⁷ They set out for the sake of the name, taking no support from the Gentiles: ⁸ So, we should support such people, so that we become co-workers for the truth.

3 JOHN 1

¹ In place of 'my dear friend' (as NJB), the NRSV has 'beloved' (as also in v. 2) and NETB has 'my dear brother'.

² The noun ψυχὴ ('soul') is used 10 times in the Gospel of John and twice in 1 John; of these, 6 of the uses in John and both in 1 John refer to a person's 'life' (as something that can be laid down). In John 10:24 & 12:27, the soul is that part of a person where emotions are experienced; one's soul is held in suspense or deeply troubled. This is, in other words, the immaterial part of a person as opposed to his physical existence.

³ The 'faithfulness to the truth' (in welcoming the brothers) contrasts with the behaviour of Diotrephes described in vv. 9-10.

⁴ In place of 'walking in', the NJB has 'living according to'.

⁵ The NRSV has 'friends' in place of 'brothers'.

⁶ In place of 'you would do well to help', the NJB has 'it would be a kindness if you could help'.

⁷ The NJB ends, "without depending on the non-believers for anything."

⁸ For this verse, the NJB has, "it is our duty to welcome people of this sort and contribute our share to their work for the truth."

⁹ Ἐγραψά τι τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· ἀλλ' ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς. ¹⁰ διὰ τοῦτο, ἐὰν ἔλθω, ὑπομνήσω αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιεῖ, λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς· καὶ μὴ ἀρκοῦμενος ἐπὶ τούτοις οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐπιδέχεται τοὺς ἀδελφούς καὶ τοὺς βουλομένους κωλύει καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκβάλλει.

¹¹ Ἀγαπητέ, μὴ μιμοῦ τὸ κακὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγαθόν. ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστίν· ὁ κακοποιῶν οὐχ ἐώρακεν τὸν Θεόν.

¹² Δημητρίῳ μεμαρτύρηται ὑπὸ πάντων καὶ ὑπὸ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας· καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ οἶδας ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθῆς ἐστίν.

¹³ Πολλὰ εἶχον γράψαι σοι, ἀλλ' οὐ θέλω διὰ μέλανος καὶ καλάμου σοι γράφειν· ¹⁴ ἐλπίζω δὲ εὐθέως σε ἰδεῖν, καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσομεν.

¹⁵ Εἰρήνη σοι. ἀσπάζονται σε οἱ φίλοι. ἀσπάξου τοὺς φίλους κατ' ὄνομα.

⁹ I wrote something to the church but Diotrefes, who likes being in charge, refuses to accept us. ¹⁰ So, if I come, I shall tell everyone how he has behaved in circulating false charges against us. As if that were not enough, he not only refuses to welcome our brothers but prevents those who want to do so and expels them from the church.

¹¹ Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good; whoever does good is from God but no one who does evil has ever seen God.

¹² Demetrius has been approved by everyone and, indeed, by Truth itself. We, too, will testify for him and you know that our testimony is true.

¹³ There were several things I had to tell you but I would rather not trust them to pen and ink. ¹⁴ However, I hope to see you soon and talk face to face.

¹⁵ Peace be with you; greetings from your friends; greet each of our friends by name.

⁹ 'Diotrefes' appears to be an influential person in a local church known to Gaius but to which Gaius himself does not belong.

¹⁰ The NRSV has 'friends' in place of 'brothers'.

¹¹ In place of 'do not imitate ... what is good' (following the NRSV), the NJB has 'never follow a bad example but keep following the good one'.

¹² The words, 'for him', are not in the Greek text but are here added for clarity.

¹³ Cf. this verse with 2Jn 12.

¹⁴ The literal translation of 'face to face' is 'mouth to mouth' (στόμα πρὸς στόμα).

¹⁵ It is possible that the 'friends' (φίλοι) are personal friends of Gaius who send their greetings but if this is the case it is surprising that their names are omitted, especially when the author instructs Gaius to greet them by name; more likely, this is an alternative to 'brothers'.