The Third Epistle of
III JOHN

Salutation

1The elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

2Dear one, I pray for you to prosper in every way and to be healthy, just as your soul prospers.[1] 3Because it gave me great joy when some brothers came and testified to the truth about you, how you are walking in Truth.[2] 4I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in Truth.

Gaius is commended

5Dear one, you are faithful in whatever you do for the brothers, and for the strangers 6who testified to your love before the church—you will do well by sending them on their way in a manner worthy of God, 7because it was for the sake of the Name[3] that they went out, accepting nothing from pagans.[4] 8We therefore ought to welcome such, so that we may work together for the Truth.[5]

Diotrephes is criticized

9I wrote to the congregation, but Diotrephes, who wants to dominate[6] the others, does not acknowledge us.[7] 10So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, slandering us with malignant words. And not satisfied with that, not only does he himself not receive the brothers, but he forbids those who want to do so, kicking them out of the congregation.[8]

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[1] This prayer challenges me. Do I really want my physical health to be a reflection of my spiritual health?

[2] There is no article with "truth" here (or in verse 4). To love someone in truth means to truly love, presumably, but to walk in truth does not mean to truly walk; a different meaning is required—the principal candidates would be God's Word and the Holy Spirit.

[3] Users of the AV and NKJV are accustomed to 'His name', which is based on some 15% of the Greek manuscripts. I take it that the 85%, including the best line of transmission, are correct in reading "the Name". Both readings refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, presumably, "the name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9), and at which every knee shall bow.

[4] The word rendered "pagans" is often translated 'nations' or 'Gentiles', but in this context the reference is not to nations, nor to non-Jews. The reference is probably to non-Christians. But what of the principle involved here? It seems clear that John is in agreement with the decision not to accept financial support from unbelievers. Would this be because of possible 'strings' attached, or is something going on in the spiritual realm? But really, who wants to tell a donor that he is a sinner?

[5] John is talking about giving hospitality, a place to stay and food to eat, but also about giving a good send off.

[6] See Matthew 23:8-10.

[7] I believe this is the main reason for this letter—since Diotrephes censored the letter that John wrote to the congregation, he now writes to an individual, to get around the censorship. Unfortunately, Diotrephes-types are still with us, and not even unusual.

[8] One wonders where he got the power or authority to be able to do this. Evidently people were letting him get away with it.

Demetrius is commended

11 Dear one, do not imitate what is bad, but what is good. He who
does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.[1] 12 Demetrius
is well spoken of by everyone—even by the truth itself. Yes, we also
speak well of him, and we know[2] that our testimony is true.

Farewell

13 I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with
pen and ink; 14 rather I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

15 Peace to you. The friends *here* greet you. Greet the friends *there*
by name.

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[1] John is good at making flat statements, which most of us find to be uncomfortable, because we would like to think there are exceptions. Don't unbelievers do good things? If a pastor does something bad, does that mean he doesn't know God? Just as all truth is from God and all lies are from Satan, all genuine good is from God and all evil is from Satan. I imagine that John would insist that anyone who has really seen God will not do evil.

[2] I follow the best line of transmission here, using the first person, albeit representing only 23% of the manuscripts. We expect the second person (61.5%; there are two further variants), and it would be almost unthinking for copyists to make the change, but on reflection the first person makes good sense. Indeed, in John 21:24 the same author uses 'we know' with reference to his testimony.