

**GEMS FROM THE ENDINGS OF THE EPISTLES**  
**Part XI: Gems From The Ending Of 3 John, Early A. D. 60s**  
**(3 John 1-14)**

**I. Introduction**

- A. The epistle of 3 John according to internal style and content was written by the Apostle John from Ephesus as was 1 John and 2 John in the early A. D. 60s (Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 434, 911).
- B. 3 John is a personal letter to a layman named Gaius, but since Gaius appears to be a man of influence in his local church, and John was writing to ask him to address a problem created by a dictatorial leader in that church, this epistle sets a great precedent on addressing serious problems created by errant leaders in a church.
- C. We thus view 3 John 1-14 for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

**II. Gems From The Ending Of 3 John, Early A. D. 60s; 3 John 1-14.**

- A. John wrote that he prayed that Gaius might have good health and welfare like he had spiritual vitality in his walk, 3 John 1-4. This is a Biblical basis for praying for the spiritual, material and health needs of believers.
- B. 3 John 5-7 offers the Biblical basis for financially supporting itinerant evangelists and/or missionaries who travel to various places to make disciples. (The words “strangers” and “brothers” (Ibid., p. 912) refer to the same people, for verse 7 combines the two nouns to treat them as referring to the same group of people.)
- C. 3 John 7-8 reveals that we believers should financially support **only** those evangelists and/or missionaries who do **not** also receive financial support from **unbelievers**. The reason for this restriction is that evangelists and/or missionaries must avoid appearing to sell the gospel to unbelievers at a price lest they misrepresent God’s grace in the gospel of salvation before the unsaved. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, fn. to 3 John 7)
- D. Also, since giving to another believer’s ministry makes the donor share in that ministry (v. 8), the donor must condone the recipient’s ministry as a spiritual co-laborer in that ministry.
- E. The heart of John’s concern in the letter appears in 3 John 9-10 – the problem of an errant church leader:
  - 1. A man named Diotrephes proudly loved to have the preeminence in the local church that Gaius attended. To insure his dominant influence even when John wrote to the church to gain a reception there, Diotrephes refused to receive John or the other apostles into the church, 3 John 9.
  - 2. This was a very foolish and dangerous thing for Diotrephes to do: Christ had given His apostles like John authority and power to exercise discipline even to the point of taking another believer’s physical life (cf. Acts 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 13:1-10).
  - 3. Accordingly, John warned that if he might more probably come to the church in the future (third class condition where *ean* appears in the protasis [“if” clause] with the verb in the subjunctive mood [*eltho*] and the verb in the apodosis [“then” clause] is in any mood [ U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 831; Dana & Mantey, A Manual Gram. of the Grk. N. T., 1957, p. 290], what signals a more probable future condition), he would remember Diotrephes’ deeds and administer apostolic discipline. (3 John 10a)
  - 4. Diotrephes’ deeds included (a) rejecting the apostles, (b) maliciously gossiping about them, (c) not receiving itinerant evangelists, (d) forbidding other believers in the church from receiving them and even (e) excommunicating those believers in the church who did receive the evangelists, 3 John 10b NIV. John did not say what he would do to Diotrephes, but he must have had apostolic discipline in mind!
  - 5. John addressed his beloved friend Gaius in 3 John 11 NIV, asserting that he should not imitate what was evil in copying Diotrephes’ actions, but to imitate what was good, the opposite of Diotrephes’ behavior.
  - 6. Apparently, traveling evangelist Demetrius was delivering this letter of 3 John to Gaius, and John implied that as Gaius had helped such evangelists before (cf. 3 John 5-7), he should do the same for Demetrius who had a good reputation according to all men, the truth and other believers, 3 John 12 (B. K. C., N. T., p. 914). John’s advice would lead Gaius to disobey Diotrephes, but John’s giving this order to Gaius gives apostolic authority for laymen to do what is Biblically right if church leaders try to lead them to do wrong!
- F. John then closed this epistle, writing that he would soon visit Gaius, and he sent his greeting, 3 John 13-14.

***Lesson:*** (1) 3 John sanctions intercessory prayer for the spiritual, material and health needs of believers, (2) it gives the basis for financially supporting evangelists and missionaries providing that their ministries do not receive financial support from unbelievers in misrepresenting God’s grace in salvation. (3) The letter also gives apostolic authority for laymen to heed the Biblical truth instead of the unbiblical views and orders of church leaders.

***Application:*** May we heed the Biblical bases for important issues provided by the Apostle John in 3 John 1-14.