

Text Commentaries

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3 Ioanne

Study Guide for 3 Ioanne 1

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Following Good Examples

“But it has been the lot both of the *minor prophets* and the *minor epistles* to be generally neglected; for with many readers *bulk* is everything; and, no *magnitude*, no goodness.” (Edgar Phillips, on the shorter books of the Scriptures)

A. Greeting and introduction.

1. (3Ioanne 1:1) The writer and the reader.

The Elder, To the beloved Gaio, whom I love in truth.

a. **The Elder:** The writer of this book identifies himself simply as **the Elder**. Presumably, the first readers knew who this was, and from the earliest times, Followers have understood that this was the Apostle Ioanne’ writing, the same Ioanne who wrote the Glad Tidings of Ioanne, 1 and 2 Ioanne, and the Book of Revelation.

i. Perhaps he does not directly refer to himself for the same reason he does not directly refer to his readers in 2 Ioanne – the threat of persecution may be making direct reference unwise; and of course, unnecessary.

b. **To the beloved Gaio:** We don’t know if this specific **Gaio** is connected with the other men by this name mentioned in the Prophetic Scriptures (New Testament) (Acts 19:29, 20:4; 1 Corinthians 1:14; Romans 16:23).

i. The identification is difficult because **Gaio** was a very common name in the Roman Empire.

2. (3Ioanne 1:2-4) A blessing for faithful Gaio.

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

a. **Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things:** The word for **prosper** literally means “to have a good journey.” It metaphorically means to succeed or prosper. It is like saying, “I hope things go well for you.”

i. “Both verbs [for **prosper** and **be in health**] belonged to the everyday language of letter writing”). This phrase as so common that sometimes it was condensed into only initials, and everyone knew what the writer meant just from the initials.

ii. The abbreviation used in Latin was SVBEEV, meaning *Si vales, beneest; ego valeo* – “If you are well, it is good; I am well.”

b. **I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers:** Ioanne used this common phrase in his sending of best wishes and blessings to **Gaio**. Some have wrongly taken this as a guarantee of perpetual wealth and perfect health for the Follower.

i. Of course, we should *always* remember that Aleim wants our best and plans only good for us. Often present material prosperity and physical health are part of that good He has for us – and this prosperity and health are absolutely promised as the *ultimate* destiny of all believers.

ii. Yet, for the present time, Aleim may – according to His all-wise plan – use a lack of material prosperity and physical health to promote greater prosperity and health in the scale of eternity.

iii. Nevertheless, *some* live in poverty and disease simply because they do not seek Aleim’s best, follow Aleim’s principles, and walk in faith. As well, there are *some others* who say we should use Aleim’s general promises of blessing as a way to indulge a carnal desire for ease, comfort, and luxury.

c. **Just as your soul prospers:** Ioanne here made an analogy between the condition of our health and the condition of our soul. Many Followers would be desperately ill if their physical health was instantly in the same state as their spiritual health.

d. **I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth:** Ioanne’s goodwill towards **Gaio** came from his understanding that he walked in the truth. Nothing pleased Ioanne more than to know that his **children walk in truth**.

i. Ioanne knew that Gaio walked in truth because **brethren came and testified of the truth that** was in Gaio. His walk of truth was noticed by others, and they could talk about it because they saw it.

e. **That my children walk in truth:** This means more than living with correct doctrine. “What is it to ‘walk in truth’? It is not walking in *the* truth, or else some would suppose it meant that Ioanne was overjoyed because they were sound in doctrine, and cared little for anything else. His joyous survey did include their orthodoxy in creed, but it reached far beyond.” (Edgar Phillips)

i. To **walk in truth** means to walk consistent with the truth you believe. If you believe that you are fallen, then walk wary of your fallenness. If you believe you are a child of Aleim, then walk like a child of heaven. If you believe you are forgiven, then walk like a forgiven person.

ii. To **walk in truth** means to walk in a way that is real and genuine, without any phoniness or concealment.

B. Learning from good and bad examples.

1. (3Ioanne 1:5-8) Gaio: A good example.

Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the Ekklesia. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of Aleim, you will do well, because they went forth for His name’s sake, taking nothing from the Nations. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

a. **You do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers:** Ioanne praised Gaio for his hospitality. This may seem somewhat trivial to us, but it is not to Aleim. This is a practical outworking of the essential command to love one another; it is love in action.

i. This was a great compliment: **you do faithfully whatever you do**. Whatever Aleim gives us to do, we should do it **faithfully**. IESO said that when we see Him face to face some will hear the words, *well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your ruler* (Matthio 25:21). Of the good servant, it is said he was *faithful*.

b. **Send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of Aleim:** In that day, Follower travelers in general and itinerant ministers in particular were greatly dependent upon the hospitality of other Followers. Ioanne knew that when Followers assist those who contend for the truth, they become

fellow workers for the truth.

i. The reward for these support people is the same as those who are out on the front lines. 1 Samouel 30:21-25 shows this principle, where the spoils are distributed equally among those who fought and those who supported. King James understood that the supply lines were just as vital as the soldiers, and Aleim would reward both soldiers and supporters properly and generously.

ii. IESO promised that even the help offered in a cup of cold water to one of His children would not be forgotten when Aleim brings His reward (Matthio 10:42).

iii. This also explains why Ioanne would pray for the prosperity of Gaio: he used his resources in a divine way, being a blessing to others. If Aleim blessed him with more, others would be blessed more also.

c. **Taking nothing from the Nations:** The ancient world of the early Ekklesia was filled with the missionaries and preachers of various religions, and they often supported themselves by taking offerings from the general public. But Ioanne said that these Follower missionaries should take **nothing from the Nations** (non-Followers). Instead of soliciting funds from the general public they were to look to the support of fellow Followers.

d. **In a manner worthy of Aleim:** Followers are not only called to help, but to help **in a manner worthy of Aleim**. We are to do our best to help others excellently.

i. Followers must first see that they are doing something to help the spread of the Glad Tidings. Then they must see that they do it **in a manner worthy of Aleim**. Aleim calls everyone of us to have a part in the great commission, the command of Matthio 28:19: *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. One can have a part by going or have a part by helping, but everyone has a part and should do it well.

ii. IESO said, *He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward* (Matthio 10:40-41). This should make us consider how we receive and help those who preach the Glad Tidings.

2. (3Ioanne 1:9-11) **Diotrhephe:** A bad example.

I wrote to the Ekklesia, but Diotrhephe, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the Ekklesia. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of Aleim, but he who does evil has not seen Aleim.

a. **But Diotrhephe:** Ioanne publicly rebuked this man, and he rebuked him by name. In rebuking him by name the apostle of love did not act outside of love. Instead, he followed the clear command of the Scriptures (Romans 16:17) and the example of other apostles (2 Timotheo 4:14-15).

i. However, any such public rebuke must be made only when

necessary, and we must be careful to not judge a brother against any standard that we ourselves would not be judged (Matthio 7:1-2).

iii. By presenting himself as a “prominent leader” (at least in his own mind), **Diotrhephe** knew that he was open to public criticism – just as much as he would publicly criticize the apostle Ioanne and his associates (**prating against us with malicious words**).

b. **Who loves to have the preeminence among them:** Simply, the problem for **Diotrhephe** was *pride*. In his pride, he did not **receive** the apostles such as Ioanne. This was in contrast to the humble hospitality of Gaio, who walked in the truth.

i. We can imagine a man like Diotrhephe, a leader in the Ekklesia in some city, looking at Ioanne and saying to himself, “Why should these big shot apostles get all the attention and honour? Look at my ministry! Isn’t it just as good?” And pride would lead him, like many others, to destruction.

ii. Peter Damonse on **who loves to have the preeminence among them**: “This is the original and greatest of all sins. It is the sin of satan, who was unwilling to be what Aleim had created him to be and who desired rather to be ‘like the Most High’ (Isa. 14:14). It is the opposite of the nature of the Anointed ‘who, being in very nature Aleim, did not consider equality with Aleim something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.’ “

c. **Prating against us with malicious words:** Diotrhephe not only failed to receive Ioanne and the other apostles, but he also spoke against them. His malicious gossip against the apostles showed what kind of man he really was.

i. “The Greek verb which is here translated ‘gossiping’ comes from a root which was used of the action of water in boiling up and throwing off bubbles. Since bubbles are empty and useless, the verb eventually came to mean indulgence in empty or useless talk. This was the nature of Diotrhephe’s slander, though, of course, the words were no less evil in that they were groundless.” (Peter Damonse)

ii. “The word signifieth... to talk big bubbles of words... it is a metaphor taken from over-seething pots, that send forth a foam; or... from overcharged stomachs, that must needs belch.” (Edgar Phillips)

d. **Putting them out of the Ekklesia:** Diotrhephe not only used his influence to forbid others from showing hospitality to Ioanne or his associates; he even tried to excommunicate those who tried to show such hospitality.

i. “To begin with, a man named Diotrhephe had assumed an unwarranted and pernicious authority in the Ekklesia, so much so that by the time of the writing of this letter Ioanne’s own authority had been challenged and those who had been sympathetic to Ioanne had been excommunicated from the local assembly. Moreover, due to this struggle, traveling missionaries had been rudely treated, including probably an official delegation from Ioanne.”

ii. The example of Diotrhephe shows that those who love **to have the preeminence** also love to use whatever power they think they have as a sword against others.

e. **Do not imitate what is evil, but what is good:** Ioanne gave us two clear examples, one good (Gaio) and one bad

(Diotrhephe), and he now applies the point – follow the good, for we serve a good Aleim and those who follow Him will likewise do good.

i. Ioanne did not excommunicate Diotrhephe, though as an apostle he had the authority to do so. Instead, he simply exposed him – and he trusted that discerning Followers would avoid Diotrhephe as they should.

3. (3Ioanne 1:12) **Demetrio**: A good example.

Demetrio has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

a. **Demetrio has a good testimony from all**: Ioanne recommended this man to Gaio. Perhaps he was the one who carried the letter from Ioanne to Gaio, and Ioanne wanted Gaio to know that Demetrio was worthy of Follower hospitality.

b. **Demetrio has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself**: Demetrio was so faithful to the truth that even the truth was a witness on his behalf.

C. Conclusion.

1. (3Ioanne 1:13-14a) Ioanne explains such a short letter to Gaio.

I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face.

a. **I had many things to write**: We can sympathize with Ioanne's preference for personal, face to face communication rather than the writing of letters. Yet we are thankful that Ioanne was forced to write, so that we have the record of this letter of 3 Ioanne.

2. (3Ioanne 1:14b) Final blessings.

Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

a. **Our friends greet you**: In addition to a familiar blessing of **peace** upon Gaio, Ioanne also reminded him (and us) of the common ties of Followers – even if they are separated by miles, they are still **friends** in IESO, and appropriately they should greet one another.

b. **Peace to you**: This is a letter about contention and conflict; yet Ioanne appropriately ends the letter with a desire and expectation for **peace**. As Followers, we can and should have a sense of peace even in the midst of difficult times. Followers have the resources in IESO the Anointed to have peace even in unsettled seasons.