

# The Last Eyewitness, XIII

*Gracious Gaius (3<sup>rd</sup> John)*

January 11, 2004

## COMPARING LETTERS

- 2<sup>ND</sup> John and 3<sup>rd</sup> John are almost identical in size.

Q: Can you guess why?

A: That's what fit on an average sheet of papyrus.

Q: Remember the code names John used in his second letter to make it safe from enemies of the faith?

- 1) The elder
- 2) The chosen lady
- 3) Her children

3<sup>rd</sup> John was apparently hand-delivered by John's trusted friend, Demetrius. So John seems to feel safe mentioning names, such as:

1. Gaius [GAY-uhs]. The gracious man this letter was written to.
2. Diotrephes [die-AUT-rih-fee-z]. The diabolical man this letter was written about.

Although both were church leaders under John's supervision, Gaius was an ally to John, and Diotrephes was an adversary.

We're only going to cover the first half of the letter today, which centers on Gaius. We'll break it into two portions:

The elder, To my dear friend Gaius [GAY-uhs], whom I love in the truth. Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. - 3 John 1-4 NIV

## THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

Let's look at John's prayer for Gaius: "I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." The New American Standard translates it this way:

Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. – 3 John 2 NAS

This prayer has been taken out of context by those who preach what's commonly referred to as the *prosperity gospel*.

This doctrine views our possessions and our health as a type of barometer that measures our faith and righteousness.

- The more we *believe* and the better we *behave*, the more material success and physical well-being we'll enjoy.
- And when health or wealth fails us, it's supposed that we either don't have enough faith or we do have a hidden sin.

I have seen some ministries that wound as many as they heal.

There's no question that blessings follow obedience; but this theology twists that truth into a formula which promises total control of the outcome to the follower.

They say if you just exhibit enough faith then God will heal.

Q: What about the blind man who exhibited no faith and was healed?

John was there. He wrote about Jesus healing him. And he also recorded the Pharisees questioning of the blind man afterwards.

[The blind man] replied, "Whether [Jesus] is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" – John 9:25 NIV

If we want results like this when we pray, maybe we should say, "Jesus, I don't know if you're a sinner or not, but ...!"

Q: What about Paul who exhibited great faith and wasn't healed?

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it [this thorn in my flesh] away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you ..." – 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 NIV

Q: How do you fit these guys into the formula?

- God uses both power and pain to bring glory to Himself

But His goal with both is the same: our knowing Him in ever increasing measure and ever deepening relationship.

Therefore, as a church, we recognize and respect:

- Miraculous healing from suffering
- And divine endurance in suffering

## AS YOUR SOUL PROSPERS

All John was doing was opening his letter with a standard greeting of his day: a wish of health and prosperity.

Then John added something very thought provoking to this salutation. John had heard that Gaius “walked the talk”:

It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. – 3 John 3 NIV

So, John said:

... I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. – 3 John 2 NAS

In other words, “I hope you prosper in every way, to the degree and to the extent that you have been prospering in your faith.”

- You walk it; you talk it; and you’re growing in it.

Q: Would you want God to answer such a prayer on your behalf?

That He’d bless your physical body, family, job, and possessions to the *degree* that your soul is prospering? For some this would be a curse, not of a blessing!

- When we get caught up in our own kingdom we neglect His

Gaius had his priorities straight. He was all about God’s Kingdom.

Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth. – 3 John 5-8 NIV

## TIME IS LOVE

Hospitality is a lost art in our individualistic society. We don't have the time. And it's produced a lot of lonely people.

But to Gaius, hospitality was a way of life. It didn't matter if they were family or "even though they are strangers" if he thought God had brought them to his door, he gave them his time.

Time is the most precious gift because we only have a set amount of it. We can make more money – but we can't make more time.

When you give someone your time, you're giving them a portion of your life that you'll never get back. Your time is your life.

And when they spoke of him, "They told the church about his love."

- The best expression of love is time

Q: Do you remember the death clock?

I showed it four years ago. It's a website ([deathclock.com](http://deathclock.com)) that asks vital information about your life and then calculates when you're going to die. Here's my death clock.

- Saturday, February 2, 2036!

This message will be about 22 minutes; so, I'm showing you love by giving you 1320 of these! [Ken: It's the other way around!]

Each day we withdraw 1440 minutes (86,400 seconds) from our life account; minus certain entitlements on most days: about 480 for sleeping; about 450 for working; about 120 for eating; and about 100 for personal care.

That leaves 290 minutes; until you adjust for incidentals, like driving, shopping, cleaning, studying, watching TV.

- We'll be held accountable for how we spend them, you know.

Q: Do you spend yours wisely, like Gaius?

Q: Who (or what) should you give more of those minutes to?

- Whenever we give our time, we're making a sacrifice.
- Sacrifice is the essence of love, as Christ modeled.