

John says he would not ask anyone to pray for such a brother. The kind of sin that is *not unto death* would be like that mentioned in Galatians 6: 1 where the brethren are told to work for the restoration of the one overtaken. *He shall ask* sounds as if John means for the brother discovering sin in another to do the praying for him, when Peter told Simon to pray for himself. That it true but it is also true that brethren can pray together on behalf of the erring one. Then if he repents the Lord will grant him *life* (forgiveness) for his sins. (See James 5: 15, 16.) The pronouns may be a little confusing the way they are used. The first *he* means the man who sees his brother sin, and the second *he* means the Lord from whom all forgiveness must come. (See Ephesians 4: 32 as to the source of forgiveness.)

Verse 17. *All unrighteousness is sin.* (See the comments at chapter 3: 4.) John makes this statement that it might not seem he is underestimating the seriousness of any sin. He wishes only to show that not all sins are as fatal as others; that there is such a sin *not unto death*.

Verse 18. See the comments at verse 1 for the meaning of *born* and *begotten*. For the verse in general see the comments on chapter 3: 9.

Verse 19. *We* means those who have been begotten of God. *Whole world lieth in wickedness.* *World* means the inhabitants of the earth as it does in chapter 2: 15. The italicized words mean the same as "all that is in the world" in chapter 2: 16, which explains why the world is said to lie in wickedness.

Verse 20. The word *know* is frequently used by inspired writers to mean a strong assurance, not that it is intended to take the place of faith. It is true that the apostle John could use the word in its technical sense concerning Christ. That is because he was with Him in person during all of his personal ministry. He also knew that Christ had given him the (inspired) understanding which he promised, for just before leaving this world Jesus told his apostles he would send the Spirit upon them which would guide them into all truth (John 16: 13). The *true God* is said in contrast with the false ones that were worshiped by many people. He also is the source of eternal life in that He gave his only begotten Son into the world for that purpose.

Verse 21. *Little children* is explained at chapter 2: 1. Even the best of disciples need to be cautioned against evils that we would not ordinarily expect them to commit. John tells his readers to *keep themselves from idols* which is one of such warnings. Paul told the brethren in Corinth to "flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10: 14).

2 John

Verse 1. John and Peter each called himself an elder. It is not merely an allusion to their age, because they both use an article before it which would make a noun out of the word. *Lady* is from the Greek word KURIA, which Thayer says means "Cyria," and then gives us the explanation, "A Christian woman to whom the second epistle of John is addressed." Robinson defines it, "Mistress, lady," and then adds an explanation much like that of Thayer. In the early days of the Gospel the church in some localities was contained in one family and had its regular assemblies in their house. This woman named Cyria and her children constituted the group to which John wrote this epistle. She is called *elect* which means a person chosen of the Lord through obedience to the Gospel. *Love in the truth* is said because John is using his favorite subject from a religious standpoint. *All they that have known the truth* indicates further that the apostle is speaking of "brotherly love."

Verse 2. *For the truth's sake* denotes that John loves this woman and her children because of their devotion to the truth. This truth *shall be with us for ever*, hence a love that is based on it will be permanent.

Verse 3. This is a form of friendly salutation which many of the writers of the New Testament used. Aside from the brotherly sentiments it expresses, the important principle is set forth that such blessings as grace, mercy and peace are to come from God and Christ if they are to be lasting.

Verse 4. *I found of thy children.* We do not have definite information as to how many of her children John had seen nor just where it was. The important thing is that in conversing with them he found them devoted to the truth for which he greatly rejoiced. This truth in which her children were walking had come by commandment from the Father, so that their lives were not moulded by their own sentiments.

Verse 5. *Lady* is the same as that used in the first verse. *Not . . . new commandment.* (See the comments at 1 John 2: 7, 8 as to why it was not a new commandment.) It pertains to the subject of love which is a precious one especially to John.

Verse 6. Love, like faith, is to be shown by works, hence this verse says that to walk after the commandments *is love*; to walk means to keep moving onward.

Verse 7. This verse corresponds with 1 John 4: 1.

Verse 8. *Look to yourselves* means for them to watch and not let the deceivers get in their evil work of leading souls astray. John had converted them to the Gospel and he did not want to have the disappointment of seeing them perverted by false teachers. That is what he means by *lose not those things which we have wrought*. He did not wish to lose the work he had accomplished in leading them to Christ. *Full reward.* No worker for Christ is to be rewarded with eternal life on the basis of his success in converting people nor on the faithfulness of his converts. But the reward consists in the joy (at the present time) of seeing them faithful. This is virtually the meaning of his statement in 3 John 4 regarding his "children."

Verse 9. This and the following verse is written in view of the warning expressed in verse 8. John is giving this group some instructions on how to detect false teachers. Of course the principles laid down are general in their application and should be observed by churches today. To *transgress* means to go beyond something, or go farther than it indicates. The particular thing that John means is expressed by the words *doctrine of Christ*. The word "to go beyond" offered above as a definition of *transgress* is confirmed by the words in this verse, namely, *abideth not in*; the man who does this *hath not God*. This is logical and consistent with other passages in the New Testament. God is to be found in His word only as far as salvation is concerned, hence if a man leaves the word it necessarily follows that he leaves God. The *doctrine of Christ* cannot be restricted to the teaching that He gives in person, for he is not on the earth now and was not when John was writing. In John 13: 20 Jesus says: "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him

that sent me." This shows that the *doctrine of Christ* includes the teaching of the apostles and all others who are inspired.

Verse 10. *This doctrine* refers to the *doctrine of Christ* in the preceding verse where it is explained. A man coming unto the disciples who does not remain true to that doctrine is to be rejected. *Not into your house.* The question is often asked whether this means our personal home or the church building. It means either where the services are being conducted. Of course in this particular instance it means the personal home because the church was contained in that place, but the same principle applies with reference to the regular church house. It should be understood this means not to receive him as a teacher. No man can be barred from coming into a church house as a spectator as long as he behaves himself, because it is a public place to which the laws of the land admit all people. And the same applies to the family home when it is used for church services. That is because all gatherings claiming to be by the church must be made public in order to be scriptural, regardless of where they are conducted. This verse requires the church to forbid all false teachers to speak to the assemblies, and if that instruction had always been observed the cause of Christ would have been preserved in many places.

Verse 11. This verse extends the remarks at the close of the preceding one. It shows that we have no right to encourage false teachers even to the degree of expressing our good wishes. If we do we are *partakers* (having fellowship) of his evil deeds and thus become his partner in heresy.

Verse 12. *Not write with paper and ink.* This does not mean that he was thinking of writing by some other method, but that he would not depend upon writing at all. There were so many needed instructions in his mind that he preferred to impart them personally. This is understandable as we know that personal conversations have many advantages.

Verse 13. *Elect* has the same meaning here as elsewhere, namely, a person chosen of the Lord through obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1: 2). I can find no dependable information as to the identity of this *sister*, but since John calls her *elect* we understand she was a faithful disciple and that she

had children also interested in the Lord. Friendly salutations were common in those times, and it was natural for these children who evidently were with John to join in friendly greetings to their mother's sister.

3 John

Verse 1. *The elder*. This term is explained at verse 1 of 2 John. There are several persons named Gaius in the New Testament. Thayer notes them in connection with certain passages, and at our verse he says the following: "An unknown Christian, to whom the third epistle of John is addressed." Robinson's Lexicon, Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Bible Dictionary all favor the same identity. He was evidently John's convert, for in verse 4 he is included in "my children." *Whom I love in the truth* is the same thing he says of the "lady" in the preceding book. It means his love for them is because of their devotion to the truth.

Verse 2. This verse is similar to many passages where the grace of God is wished for the disciples. However, in this the writer is first expressing a wish for the physical health of his convert. He is interested in his spiritual welfare, of course, but he seems to know that Gaius is in satisfactory condition in that respect, which is indicated by the words *as thy soul prospereth*.

Verse 3. Some brethren had brought a report of the conduct of Gaius which was favorable. That is the basis of his remark about his soul prospering.

Verse 4. The *joy* over the faithfulness of his convert is the kind of "reward" that he means in 2 John 8. Being one of his converts John speaks of him as being among his children. (See explanation of this subject at 1 Timothy 1: 2.)

Verse 5. *Doest faithfully* denotes that whatever Gaius did he was in earnest about it; not halfhearted. He did his good deeds for others "heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3: 23). To *brethren* and to *strangers* is in keeping with Galatians 6: 10. Paul there says for disciples to "do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith."

Verse 6. *Have borne witness* was done by the brethren mentioned in the preceding verse. They seem to have been traveling from place to place, or

some of them were, which gave them an opportunity for making the report to John referred to. Gaius assisted these travelers in some way for their journey. *After a godly sort* means it was in the name of God and because of their work for Him.

Verse 7. These traveling brethren were evidently engaged in spreading the Gospel, for the next verse speaks about being fellowhelpers to the truth. The Lord has "ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9: 14). Yet Paul refrained from such support in order that he might relieve the brethren of that pressure. The brethren of our verse did something similar, except they evidently made that concession to the people of the nations (Gentiles).

Verse 8. Because of the aforesaid sacrifice John insists that the disciples should voluntarily assist them. *Fellowhelpers to the truth*. A man may not be able to preach the Gospel, but if he supports the man who does so he becomes a partner with him in the work and will be blessed of the Lord for his contribution.

Verse 9. *I wrote unto the church* means the church of which Gaius was a member. This is indicated by some following statements in the book. John insists that he will come to the place to which he wrote the letter referred to, and at the same time trusts to see Gaius face to face. The fact that John wrote unto the church but that Diotrephes ignored the letter, indicates that the epistle was sent to this man as an elder of the congregation. That would be usual to send an official document to the officers, or at least in their care, as we read that Paul addressed his epistle to the church at Philippi to "the bishops and deacons" (Philippians 1: 1). The epistle had something to do with John's proposed visit to the church, since he declares or implies that he is going to make the journey notwithstanding the opposition of Diotrephes. This may raise a question in the mind of the reader whether it is right to visit a congregation against the authority of an elder. It is proper for an apostle to do so, for they were in the church before the elders. (See 1 Corinthians 12: 28 where "governments" stands for the eldership.) *Loveth to have the pre-eminence*. This thirst for power among the elders is what resulted in the great falling away and develop-