

3 John 1 ESV (Pg. 593) The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. **2** Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. **3** For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. **4** I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. **5** Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, **6** who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. **7** For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. **8** Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth. **9** I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. **10** So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church. **11** Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God. **12** Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true. **13** I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. **14** I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. **15** Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name.

- I. We've come to the end of one of the toughest years any of us can remember. It may not be the hardest year in history, but it is the hardest in our lives. In addition to a worldwide pandemic that brought death, despair, sickness and isolation, the global economy is in shambles. In America, we have a disputed election, resulting in a polarized populace, and our cities are crumbling with crime and racial division.
 - A. Naturally, I'd like my last message of the year to be one of hope. But can I promise you that 2021 will be an improvement over 2020? I cannot. Disease may continue. Violence may prevail in the streets. The government may continue to be riddled with corruption. What reason then have we for hope?
 1. Nonetheless, believers are called throughout scripture to rest in hope; not a hope that is mere wishful thinking, like when we say we "hope" all turns out alright. Our hope is a confident assurance in the supremacy of Christ over all circumstances, and over all people, places, things and times of our lives.
 - a) The OT prophet Zechariah calls his readers the "prisoners of *hope*". In the NT, Paul often points to 3 essential godly values: faith, love and *hope*.
 - b) The writer of Hebrews calls God's promise and oath our hope. **Hebrews 6:9 ESV** We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a *hope* that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, **20** where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. His point is that in Jesus we have confidence to stand justified before God without fear of judgement.
 2. No matter what awaits us in 2021, faith in Jesus should captivate us in hope. It should anchor us in anticipation of a better reality that awaits us either in death or at Christ's return. Hope in Jesus should compel us boldly into God's presence, to know his power and experience joyful fellowship with him.
 - II. This is the basis of John's well-wishes that begin his 3rd letter. He is writing to a friend named Gaius (about whom we know nothing). "Beloved, I pray that all may

go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.” While I can’t promise a 2021 that is better than 2020, I wish the same for all of you! I long for your soul’s highest benefit! It is my greatest desire for you.

- A. Often Christians take combative stances. They disagree disagreeably with other Christians who hold different theologies, or who struggle with different sins. They are often even unloving and unkind to those outside of Christ as well.
1. But believers in Christ should call to mind all that unites us, as opposed to the minor points on which we disagree. We should desire and pray for the welfare of all who share a “faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ”¹, as Peter says.
 2. We’ve also forgotten that the message we proclaim is the “good news”²! A message that says that God will forgive the unforgivable, based only on faith, and not on the fragility of our good works. We forget that we should “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior”³. This means to wear it before unbelievers in such a way to display its beauty. Screaming/posting insults rarely does that!
- B. By contrast, John says to his friend, “I want your outward circumstances in this life to be as prosperous as your soul already is in Christ Jesus.”
1. What a marvelous blessing! What if you truly approached every friend and enemy with whom you have contact with such a sentiment in the coming year! How attractive would that make the gospel of God appear?
 2. With that in mind, I want to use the text of 3rd John to catalog a list of all that I am praying for you to experience in the coming year.
- C. If my first hope for you is that you would adorn the gospel in you speech and loving actions in the new year, my second hope is that you would increase in your commitment to God’s Word. “For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your **truth**, as indeed you are walking in the **truth**. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the **truth**.”
1. John mentions the impact of gospel truth 3 times in 2 verses! First, he mentions that people have come to him reporting that Gaius is identified with truth (personified by it); so much so that they came testifying to *his* truth.
 - a) Are you so immersed in and connected with the Bible that people identify it as “your” truth? Or is it something outside of you, your mere religious position, and not a guiding light that is intrinsic to your identity?
 - b) This was not the case with Gaius! John pointed out that “*indeed*” he was “*walking* in the truth”. Truth wasn’t just words he mentally assented to, scripture was life-altering reality for him; changing the course of his life.
 2. For John, his embrace of truth was cause for great joy! He says he “rejoiced greatly” to hear others report about Gaius’ integrity. He even says he has “no greater joy” than to hear his children (disciples) are walking in truth.
 - a) The greatest moments for me as a pastor have been when people have the gospel light come on, when we say “By jove, I think they’ve got it!”; especially when the Holy Spirit calls them to the truth of saving grace.
 - b) The joy is indescribable when people not only believe, but walk out that belief in a life of obedience to Christ. My prayer for you is that in 2021, you will take the Bible more seriously than ever before, finding ways to

dive into it feet first, expanding both your knowledge and application.
(Consider reading the Bible through or participating in Simeon Trust.)

- D. “Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.” I hope you see the beauty of greater sacrifice for others in 2021.
1. The place where Gaius was serving was a place marked by generosity. It doesn't seem that Gaius gave an occasional donation, or was tipping God. John describes his giving as “effort”. It wasn't an impersonal check that Gaius wrote out, but what he gave was marked by his love for others.
 2. John encouraged Gaius to give to others in a “manner worthy of God”. This means a manner that would please God and a manner that brings God glory.
 - a) God HATES stinginess; not because he needs your stuff, but because it shows what you're trusting in: your money over his provision. If we really believed God to be loving and generous, nothing would keep us from giving. Grasping money is an accusation against God's goodness.
 - b) 3rd, does your giving result in praise? **Matthew 25:24b ESV** “‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, **25** so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’ **26** But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? **27** Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.’” May your faith increase, and your grip loosen on your stuff in 2021!
 3. John points out that when we support faithful ministries financially, we are actually counted as fellow workers with them, and will be regarded as such in the last day. Our gifts are a key part of reaching the world for Christ!
- E. The next thing I pray for you in 2021 is that you will discern those false teachers who present something less than the Gospel to you.
1. A person like this named Diotrophes was found to be troubling Gaius' church. “I have written something to the church, but Diotrophes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.”
 - a) Diotrophes seemed to be hell-bent on spreading slander and keeping the church from demonstrating love to others. John says that this was an active rejection of the Apostolic authority on Diotrophes part.
 - b) By rejecting the authority that Christ had installed, he was rejecting Christ's authority as well. Christ's authority is revealed to us in the scriptures. If we reject, or edit, or subject them to our opinions, we reject the authority of Jesus. We should not do that, or tolerate those who do.

2. **Romans 16:17 ESV** I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.
- F. Next, I pray that you would grow in your pursuit of personal holiness. “Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.” Hebrews 12 tells us that without holiness we have no hope of ever seeing the Lord⁴. Holiness doesn’t save us but is the evidence that we have been saved. Are you chasing after holiness to please the Lord?
1. How do you show love to others? How do you show devotion to God? What habits have you allowed to fester that you know would displease God? Have you neglected God’s Word, his Church, or the sweet fellowship of prayer?
 2. The Bible says “woe to those who call good evil and evil good”. May 2021 be the year that in the power of the Holy Spirit we put to death all that is fleshly / worldly in us and are conformed into the image of the Son of God.
- G. “Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.” I pray that in 2021 you will have a reputation of genuine faith and service among everyone who knows you, in the church and outside of it.
1. **Proverbs 22:1 ESV** A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. How often have we seen people claiming to belong to God bring shame upon his great name? From the sexually immoral pastor, to the pride filled braggart in the pew, many who claim membership in Christ’s body are exposed as liars by their actions.
 2. What a blessing to be among those who cherish and defend the honor of God’s name, even through their imperfection! The Bible speaks of rewards which they shall receive⁵, but which will result in praise as they toss those golden crowns at the feet of the only one who is worthy to receive them⁶!
- H. Lastly, I pray that you will appreciate and desire the face to face fellowship of the Body of Christ more than ever in 2021. 2020 was a hard year of isolation, but we must not forget that God has placed us in a church to help us and comfort us as we walk together on our heavenward journey.
1. John had this longing. “I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name.”
 - a) Though necessity guides his pen, he prefers to see those he loves face-to-face. He wishes them peace. I love that he refers to the separated parties as “friends” whose every name is precious to him.
 - b) Is this the way you feel about the people at church, or they just people that go to the same religious gathering place as you semi-regularly? The Body of Christ should be so much more precious to us because it is not a club or social organization. It is an eternal family where when one rejoices, we all rejoice. When one weeps, we all weep.
 2. There it is. My 7 prayers of hope for you in the coming year. I pray you’ll pray the same things for me as we face whatever lies ahead of us together.
- III. **Communion: 1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took

bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

- IV. **Benediction: 1 Thessalonians 5:23 ESV** Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24** He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

¹ 1 Peter 1:1

² From: <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-does-word-gospel-mean-new-testament/> “The word for “gospel” is the word *euangelion*. It has that prefix eu-, which comes into English in a variety of words. We talk about euphonics or euphonious music, which refers to something that sounds good. We talk about a eulogy, which is a good word pronounced about someone at his funeral service. The prefix eu- refers to something good or pleasant. The word *angelos* or *angelion* is the word for “message.” Angels are messengers, and an *angelos* is one who delivers a message.” -R.C. Sproul

³ Titus 2:10

⁴ Hebrews 12:14

⁵ 1 Corinthians 3:14; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10 for example

⁶ Revelation 4:9-11