

## GAIUS-THE NAME SHARED By Four Great Men

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The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth (3 John 1).

Scholars have said the meaning of the name Gaius is "I am joyful," and that suggests a very happy occasion when proud parents named their offspring. This was always an important event among Hebrew people, and unlike modern times, the given name often had great significance. The parents of Gaius must have been ecstatic with happiness when they decided what to call their child. It is also interesting to know four men in the early church shared the same honor. It would appear that other families shared this great experience. There is reason to believe that God-the Heavenly Father-had similar thoughts. Each of the four infants grew to be remarkable adults whose conduct pleased the Almighty. The children became leaders in the Christian church, but each exhibited a special characteristic.

#### Gaius-The Convert. How Decided

I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius (1 Cor. 1:14).

Paul was disturbed and disappointed. He had been told by "the household of Chloe" that the church in Corinth had been divided by quarrelsome members. The people had lost sight of Christ and were arguing about unimportant things. The members of the assembly were becoming excessively proud of heroes. Some admired Paul, but others boasted of their affection for Simon Peter and other leaders. A few claimed that Christ alone was the Head of the church, while the intellectuals appreciated the eloquence of Apollos. People were arguing about believers' baptism and were proud their favorite hero had performed their own ceremony. Paul was disturbed by this terrible situation and his statement "I thank God I only baptized two of you" surely upset his readers. He

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was not even pleased with the faction which claimed to be his supporters. They were dishonoring Paul, for he believed in the lordship of Christ, who alone was the inspiration in the sacrament of baptism. Converts were not baptized into Paul. nor Cephas, nor Apollos-they were baptized into Christ. Paul appeared to say: "I thank God I only immersed two of you. and I am sure they would never be embroiled in your foolish disputes." Nevertheless. he had baptized two of the converts, and in all probability that was the commencement of their Christian experience. What Gaius was prior to his conversion was never revealed, but evidently he forsook all and followed Christ. His friend, Crispus, had been the ruler of the synagogue (see Acts 18:8) and was an outstanding convert whose profession stirred the city. The transformation of his family was a remarkable victory for Jesus of Nazareth, and possibly Gaius and Crispus were baptized together. Their decision was not made without thought; the anger of the Jewish population would be directed against people thought to be traitors. Paul did not say he wished he had not immersed his friends. He was pleased he had not participated in the baptism of the

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other foolish people who were disturbing God's family. Gaius and Crispus were two brilliant stars shining against the darkness of their surroundings. The apostle was proud of them. The Christians in Corinth should be as dedicated as their brethren.

When Paul referred to his friend, he said: "Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you" (see Rom. 16:23). This remarkable man must have been wealthy, but when God touched his heart, He reached his pocket!

Gal us-The Courageous... How Determined

And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius, Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre (Acts 19:29).

The city of Ephesus was in an uproar, for Demetrius, the silversmith, had become a rabble-rouser. He and his colleagues made the silver shrines used in the worship of the goddess

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Diana, but the profits from their business had been diminishing. Paul was interfering in the worship of Diana, and the infuriating preacher had to be stopped immediately. Demetrius had addressed a private meeting of the craftsmen, and his speech had aroused their anger. The mob rushed into the street, and seeing Gaius and Aristarchus who were known to be visiting Christians, rushed them into the amphitheater. The noise of the tumult echoed through the city.

And when the town clerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshiper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give account of this concourse. And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly (Acts 19:35-41).

The appearance and speech of the city official temporarily eased the situation. Had he not arrived in time, the Christians might have been murdered. Their lives were being threatened, and escape seemed to be impossible. The captives never flinched nor offered to recant. When the tumult ceased, they were reunited with Paul, but their safety was only temporary. The news spread quickly, and all the worshipers of Diana would renew their attacks. Caution might have suggested a vacation to provide time for the storm to pass, but determined men never run from danger. Luke, the writer of this story, said:

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And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia. .. and there accompanied him into Asia, Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. These going before tarried for us at Troas (Acts 20:1, 45).

The Savior said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Gaius and his friends who narrowly escaped death, had no intention of being pronounced unfit for the Lord's domain. They had taken up their cross, and would carry it until it was exchanged for a crown. Their confession might have been expressed in the words of a modern hymn-' 'No turning back; no turning back."

#### Gaius - The Carrier... How Dependable

And in those days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:27-30).

When that special offering was given to Barnabas and Paul, it became evident their mission would be dangerous. The news that a large sum of money was being carried to Jerusalem by two unarmed men could not remain a secret. Bandits would be a continuing threat, and therefore the two missionaries needed an escort. Probably that explains why Luke said the missionaries were accompanied by seven reliable men among whom was Gaius of Derbe (see Acts 20:4). The guardians of what many considered to be a small fortune had to be trustworthy, for the love of money had already become a snare to people within the church (see Ananias and Sapphira,

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Acts 5:1-10). Even Judas had stolen money that was donated to help the Lord and His disciples. The escort would need to be watchful, for an attack could come at any moment, and sufficiently courageous to defend what had been committed to their care. When the church trusted Gaius of Derbe with the responsibility of being one of those guardians, they conferred upon him the greatest honor he ever received. The fact that Luke explained this man came from Derbe, suggested he was not the Gaius seized by the citizens of Ephesus. Paul traveled extensively and consequently had helpers from numerous places. Most commentators believe the two men had different identities.

#### Gal us-The Charitable... How Delightful

Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles (3 John 5-7).

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This message written by John provided a word picture of the church where a prominent member called Diotrephes had become a dictator. His domineering attitude had disturbed the assembly, for he had become a self-proclaimed deity who worshiped at his own shrine. When John sent a letter to the church, this arrogant man refused to accept it, and his belligerent attitude compelled other Christians to reject the apostle's advice. John's message was unmistakable. He wrote:

Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church (3 John 10).

The question might be asked how Gaius could remain in such a disappointing church. Perhaps he believed a lighthouse

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should be in a place where its services were needed. Many years ago I listened to a Welsh preacher speaking about the Lord standing outside the church of Laodicea and saying: "Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). The minister paused for a moment and then said, "If the Lord desires to enter your disappointing church, at least, stay in there with Him."

When itinerant evangelists arrived in his community, Diotrephes refused to welcome them and persuaded the church to follow his example. Some of the people may have secretly disagreed with this policy but refrained from opposing their belligerent leader. Standing alone against this outrageous man, Gaius welcomed the young preachers, provided hospitality, and when they left, supplied financial assistance to meet their immediate needs. Ignoring the repercussions which might follow, Gaius accepted the responsibility of helping his brethren in Christ. It would not be difficult to imagine the reaction of the man who loved to have the preeminence among church members. He would be infuriated by opposition within the church.

Some people might question whether or not this Gaius had a separate identify from others bearing his name. Maybe there were only two men or, to go to extremes, one who possessed all the characteristics of the four disciples mentioned in this

study. At least it may be said that when the four records are placed together, the world is supplied with an outline of what God expects from His children. It would be wonderful if all the characteristics of the four could be found in one life. It would be even more desirable if every reader of these words could be that person!

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