

3 John 1:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

Analysis

Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true. After Diotrephes' negative example, John presents positive: "Demetrius hath good report" (Δημητρίῳ μαρτυρήται, *Dēmētriō memarturtai*)—literally "to Demetrius witness has been borne." This passive construction emphasizes that Demetrius's good reputation came from others' observation, not self-promotion. "Of all men" (ὑπὸ πάντων, *hupo pantōn*) indicates universal testimony—even unbelievers recognized his integrity.

More significantly, testimony came "of the truth itself" (ὑπὸ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας, *hupo autēs tēs alētheias*). This striking phrase could mean:

1. the gospel truth he proclaimed validated him through its fruit
2. his life so conformed to truth that truth itself testified through him; or
3. the church (pillar and ground of truth, 1 Timothy 3:15) witnessed to his character.

Likely John means Demetrius's consistent walk in truth provided self-evident testimony—his life validated his profession so thoroughly that truth itself was his witness.

"And we also bear record" (μαρτυροῦμεν δὲ καὶ ἡμεῖς, *martouroumen de kai hēmeis*) adds apostolic endorsement. John personally vouches for Demetrius's character. "And ye know that our record is true" (οἶδας ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν

ἀληθῆς ἐστιν, oidas hoti hē marturia hēmōn alēthēs estin) appeals to Gaius's knowledge of John's reliability. The apostle's testimony carried weight because his own life demonstrated integrity—Gaius knew John spoke truthfully because he'd proven trustworthy. This layered testimony (universal reputation, truth itself, apostolic endorsement, recipient's knowledge) provided overwhelming validation of Demetrius's character.

Historical Context

Demetrius was likely the letter's carrier, bearing John's epistle to Gaius and perhaps the traveling missionaries needing hospitality. In an era of limited communication and no identification systems, personal recommendations were crucial. Travelers carried letters of commendation validating their identity and vouching for their character (see Romans 16:1-2, 2 Corinthians 3:1-3). Such letters protected both travelers (from being rejected as imposters) and hosts (from being deceived by false teachers).

The emphasis on multiple witnesses reflects biblical legal principle requiring two or three witnesses to establish truth (Deuteronomy 19:15, Matthew 18:16, 2 Corinthians 13:1). Demetrius had:

1. universal testimony from all who knew him
2. truth's self-evident validation through his life
3. John's apostolic endorsement,
4. Gaius's personal knowledge of John's reliability.

This overwhelming testimony ensured Gaius could receive Demetrius with confidence, providing the hospitality Diotrophes wrongly refused.

Demetrius's "good report of all men" recalls Timothy's reputation "well reported of by the brethren" (Acts 16:2) and the requirement that elders have "a good report of them which are without" (1 Timothy 3:7). Christian character should be so evident that even unbelievers acknowledge it. This doesn't mean seeking worldly approval or compromising truth to gain popularity, but living with such integrity, love, and consistency that even opponents recognize genuine godliness.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Would others—including unbelievers—testify to your Christian character, or does your life contradict your profession?
2. Does 'truth itself' validate your walk, or is there disconnect between what you profess and how you live?
3. Are you actively commending and supporting believers of proven character, helping advance their gospel ministry?

Interlinear Text

Δημητρίῳ μαρτυροῦμεν ὑπ' πάντων καὶ ὑπ' αὐτῆς τῆς
Demetrius **also bear record** **of** **all** **and** **of** **itself** G3588
G1216 G3140 G5259 G3956 G2532 G5259 G846

ἀληθείας· καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ οἴδατε ὅτι
the truth **and** **we** **yea** **also bear record** **and** **ye know** **that**
G225 G2532 G2249 G1161 G3140 G2532 G1492 G3754

ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθής ἐστιν
G3588 **record** **our** **true** **is**
G3141 G2257 G227 G2076

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 3:7 (Good): Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

John 21:24 (Truth): This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

Acts 22:12 (Good): And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

Acts 10:22 (Good): And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

John 19:35 (Truth): And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

1 Thessalonians 4:12 (Parallel theme): That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

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