

The Epistles of John

Week 8: 3 John 5-8

Third John provides insight into a personality conflict that arose at the end of the first century and the strategy adopted by the elder to resolve it. Clearly then, there is much that is valuable for our consideration in this letter. The church has neglected it for too long —at its own expense.

3 John 1-4

3 John 1–4 (ESV)

The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

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. 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.

3 John 5-8

3 John 5–8 (ESV)

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.

3 John 5-8

In vs. 5 the elder is commending Gaius (It is a faithful thing you do):

“Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are”

- He has expended effort in doing this
- He is doing it for brothers (fellow believers)
- Even though he does not know them (they are strangers)

3 John 5-8

Verse 5:

When one reads 3 John alongside 2 John, it becomes apparent that two groups of missionaries were moving around among the churches. There were those who were spreading heretical teaching, about whom the elder warns his readers lest they aid and abet their 'wicked work' by providing hospitality for them (2 John 7–11). There were also those who had gone out 'for the sake of the Name' and who deserved to be given hospitality (3 John 5–8).

3 John 5-8

In vs. 6 we see the result of Gaius action and a further instruction:

“who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.”

- The testimony of Gaius treatment of the visiting missionaries has spread
- The last phrase of v. 6 is somewhat complex grammatically though the meaning is clear. Literally the verse reads “whom well you will do sending them forward worthily of God.” The phrase “whom well you will do” is an idiom meaning “please.” It is a polite request
- The phrase "send them on their way" is a technical term for missionary support in the early church (Acts 15:3, 1 Cor 16:11, 2 Cor 1:16, Titus 3:13)

3 John 5-8

In vs. 7 the elder gives us the back story of these missionary groups:

“For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.”

- They have gone out “for the sake of the name” which is a very interesting phrase
- There is one Name and only one Name that they proclaim. Interestingly, this is the only time the Lord Jesus is mentioned in 3 John (and indirectly at that).
- The apostles had been warned by the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem not to preach “in the name of Jesus” The complete account is told in Acts 5:12-42

3 John 5-8

The key verse is Acts 5:40 (ESV)

“and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.”

Then verse 7 ends with the information that these missionaries accepted nothing from the gentiles (or in some translations, pagans)

3 John 5-8

This section concludes with verse 8:

3 John 8 (ESV)

Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

The elder says that supporting these missionaries is an obligation!

Then he goes further saying that when we support them we participate in what they do, “we become coworkers in the truth”.

We may not physically go where they go, but when we support them, we go with them anyway. We work together, as one, for the truth. Some give support and some are sent. Both are essential.

Application for This Week

Would someone describe you or me as expending effort on behalf of missionaries?

In our post-Christian era, would we/are we reacting to the pressure to not preach/speak “in his name” in what we say and when we say it?

How well are each of us doing in meeting our obligation towards supporting the missionaries and participating in their ministry?

Homework

John McArthur has said that he reads each book of the Bible 30 times before he begins to study it in preparation for teaching it. I'd like us to all read 3 John just one time per day this coming week to prepare for next week.

Read one translation of 3 John each day this week. It takes less than 2 minutes. Go slowly and think about what is being said.

Write down any questions or things you'd like to discuss in class next week on the first page or email them to me.

Thank you for coming!

See you next week