

III JOHN: THE NURTURING NATURE OF OUR FELLOWSHIP

II. Nurturing God's Godly Servants

(3 John 5-15)

I. Introduction

- A. Having written on true spiritual fellowship in 1 John and about whom we are to exclude from our fellowship in 2 John, the Apostle John wrote a third epistle on the nurturing nature of our fellowship in the Lord!
- B. Local churches are involved in outreach both directly through members of the church as well as indirectly by way of prayer and material support for those who disciple people in places other than the local church.
- C. God's godly traveling servants are worthy of the local church's nurture, and 3 John 5-15 explains this ministry:

II. Nurturing God's Godly Servants, 3 John 5-15.

- A. We need to give for the financial the support of God's servants who uphold the truth in word and deed, v. 5-8:
 - 1. John praised Gaius for his faithful ministry to fellow believers who were travelling evangelists, 3 John 5: the word "strangers" in this context referred to "traveling preachers" who gained financial support by traveling from church to church as they ministered along the way, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 912. Applied to our era, these would be travelling evangelists and missionaries to other places. (3 John 5)
 - 2. Such "strangers" had testified to John about Gaius' hospitality and financial support of them, and John testified that Gaius would do well to donate more funds to send these servants of God on their way, v. 6.
 - 3. John explained that these "strangers" were reputable servants of God, for they had gone out to minister without accepting support from unsaved pagans for the sake of the "Name" (3 John 7), and we explain:
 - a. Christ's Gospel was the message of salvation by grace through faith apart from works, Eph. 2:8-9.
 - b. However, if a teacher were to accept donations from unsaved pagans, he might cause them to think they were helping to "buy" their salvation, what the Apostle Paul worked hard to oppose in 1 Corinthians 9:18!
 - c. Thus, out of protection for the true Gospel, these godly "strangers" had refused to receive money from unsaved pagans in order to reinforce the Gospel they preached of salvation by grace, not by human merit!
 - d. They then upheld the truth of Christ's Gospel, upholding His reputation signified in His "Name"!
 - 4. Thus, John added that we ought to support such people that we might be fellow workers together with them for the truth, 3 John 8. [Those who give to support godly missionaries participate in their ministries!]
- B. We also need to support such worthy servants of God emotionally and mentally, 3 John 9-10:
 - 1. John complained about Diotrephes who liked to have the preeminence and who thus did not accept the authority of even Christ's apostles, 3 John 9. Accordingly, we need to relate to God's servants who are travelling evangelists and missionaries with an attitude of humility that nurtures them. [We also need to respect all of God's servants who have been given authority in the local church, cf. Hebrews 13:17.]
 - 2. John added that Diotrephes talked "wicked nonsense" (ESV; *phluareo*, "talk nonsense [about], bring unjustified charges against," Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 870), who in some way maligned Christ's apostles, 3 John 10b. Accordingly, we need to compliment and verbally encourage instead of slander or verbally undermine God's servants.
 - 3. The Apostle John added that Diotrephes even refused to offer hospitality to godly travelling preachers and even excommunicated those in the church who showed such hospitality, obviously exhibiting unrighteous control efforts on his part, 3 John 10c,d. Accordingly, instead of trying to control God's servants or others, we need to give people room to be themselves and thus to nurture them.
- C. John exemplified such nurturing actions in the conclusion of this epistle at 3 John 11-15:
 - 1. He told Gaius not to imitate Diotrephes' evil, but to imitate what was good, what John prescribed, for doing what Diotrephes did indicated a lack of fellowship with the Lord versus fellowship with God, v. 11.
 - 2. John added that Demetrius, apparently a traveling preacher himself who may have carried this letter from John to Gaius, was reputable, deserving support and nurture, 3 John 12; *Ibid.*, B. K. C., N. T., p. 914.
 - 3. The epistle closes with John's exemplifying warm, edifying remarks to Gaius, 3 John 13-15.

Lesson: We need to nurture God's godly servants who uphold God's truth in word and deed, doing so by financially supporting them and emotionally and mentally nurturing them by humbly relating to them, verbally encouraging them and giving them room to be themselves instead of trying to manipulate or control them.

Application: May we nurture God's servants who uphold the truth in word and deed with our financial support as well as nurture them emotionally and mentally when we interact with them.