

2 John 1:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

Analysis

For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. John explains the rationale behind the previous command: "he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (Greek *ho legōn autō chairein koinōnei tois ergois autou tois ponērois*, ὁ λέγων αὐτῷ χαίρειν κοινωνεῖ τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς). The verb "is partaker" (*koinōnei*, κοινωνεῖ) means to share in, participate with, or become an accomplice. Greeting false teachers—extending Christian fellowship or endorsement—makes one complicit in their "evil deeds" (*ponērois ergois*, πονηροῖς ἔργοις).

John labels spreading false doctrine about Christ as "evil deeds," not merely theological error. Denying Christ's incarnation is morally wicked, not just intellectually mistaken, because it destroys the gospel and leads people to eternal ruin. False teaching is not a victimless crime or legitimate alternative viewpoint—it damns souls. Those who enable, endorse, or provide platform for such teaching share moral responsibility for its destructive effects.

This verse establishes that spiritual fellowship creates real solidarity. We cannot maintain neutrality toward false teachers—receiving them implies approval and creates partnership in their work. Ancient readers would have understood this: hospitality signified alliance, endorsement, and shared purpose. Modern readers sometimes struggle with this concept, distinguishing between personal kindness and ideological solidarity. But John insists the distinction collapses regarding false

teachers: welcoming them as Christian teachers makes us accomplices in their soul-destroying work. Truth demands loving separation, not tolerant compromise.

Historical Context

In the ancient world, extending hospitality was not a casual act but a significant commitment implying alliance and solidarity. Receiving someone into your home signaled endorsement of their character and mission. Providing food and lodging for traveling teachers specifically communicated approval of their message and partnership in their ministry. The early church understood this cultural reality.

False teachers exploited Christian hospitality to gain credibility and spread heresy. A respectable host's endorsement provided legitimacy; generous hospitality enabled wider travel and influence. Christians who thoughtlessly welcomed anyone claiming Christian identity inadvertently became funding sources and endorsers of destructive teaching. This created a practical and moral crisis: how could believers show Christian love while protecting the church from deception?

John's solution distinguished between general kindness to all people and specific Christian fellowship reserved for those faithful to apostolic truth. The early church would develop this principle further through formal processes for testing teachers, defining orthodox doctrine, and exercising church discipline. The principle remained constant: truth and love are inseparable, and genuine love for believers requires protecting them from false teaching even when this demands seemingly harsh measures like refusing hospitality to deceivers.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do our modern platforms (social media, recommendations, partnerships) create complicity with teaching we share or promote?
2. What criteria help distinguish essential doctrines requiring separation from secondary issues allowing fellowship despite disagreement?
3. How can churches balance the mandate to guard truth with the danger of becoming isolated, judgmental, or divisive over minor matters?

Interlinear Text

ὁ γὰρ λέγων αὐτοῦ χαίρειν κοινωνεῖ τοῖς ἔργοις
G3588 **For** G1063 **he that biddeth** G3004 **him** G846 **God speed** G5463 **is partaker** G2841 G3588 **deeds** G2041

αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς
him G846 G3588 **evil** G4190

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 5:22 (Parallel theme): Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

Ephesians 5:11 (Parallel theme): And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.