

3 John 1:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. John details Diotrephes' offenses and promises apostolic discipline. "If I come" (ἐάν ἔλθω, ean elthō) indicates John's intended visit, when he will "remember" (ὑπομνήσω, hupomēsō)—bring to public attention, call to account—Diotrephes' actions. This isn't vindictive but pastoral: addressing sin that harms Christ's church.

First offense: "prating against us with malicious words" (λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς, logois ponērois phluarōn hēmas). The verb φλυαρέω (phuareō) means to talk nonsense, gossip, or slander—spreading false accusations. The adjective πονηρός (ponēros, "malicious/evil") characterizes these words as wicked, not merely mistaken. Diotrephes engaged in character assassination against apostolic authority, poisoning the congregation's attitude through lies and distortions.

Second: "not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren" (μὴ ἀρκούμενος ἐπὶ τούτοις οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐπιδέχεται τοὺς ἀδελφούς, mē arkoumenos epi toutois oute autos epidechetai tous adelphous)—he refused hospitality to traveling

ministers. Third: "forbiddeth them that would" (τοὺς βουλομένους κωλύει, tous boulomenous kōluei)—he prevented others from welcoming these workers. Fourth: "casteth them out of the church" (ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκβάλλει, ek tēs ekklēσίας ekballei)—he expelled members who defied his prohibition. This escalating tyranny shows power-hungry control, not godly leadership.

Historical Context

Church discipline in the apostolic era followed Christ's teaching (Matthew 18:15-17) and apostolic practice (1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). It aimed at restoration through confronting sin, protecting the congregation from false teaching or destructive behavior, and maintaining the church's witness. Discipline was communal—the congregation participated in decisions—and remedial rather than merely punitive. Diotrephes perverted this process, using "discipline" (casting people out) to consolidate personal power rather than promote holiness.

The practice of excommunication (casting out of the church) was serious action reserved for unrepentant sin or heresy. It involved removing someone from fellowship, excluding them from the Lord's Table, and treating them as an unbeliever until repentance occurred. This powerful tool could be abused, as Diotrephes demonstrated, to punish opponents and eliminate dissent. The church needed clear criteria (Scripture-based), proper procedure (involving witnesses and multiple confrontations), and right motivation (seeking restoration, not revenge) to exercise discipline faithfully.

John's promise to personally address Diotrephes upon visiting demonstrates apostolic authority's weight. Despite having no official institutional power (no denominational structure to enforce decisions), John's spiritual authority as Christ's apostle carried immense weight. His public confrontation would expose Diotrephes' behavior, vindicate expelled members, and restore proper order. This illustrates that ultimate authority in the church rests with Christ, exercised through Scripture and legitimate spiritual leaders, not with whoever accumulates most human power.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Have you witnessed or experienced church discipline exercised biblically (for restoration) versus abusively (for control)?
2. How should Christians respond when leaders exhibit Diotrephes-like behaviors: slander, refusing accountability, or abusive control?
3. Do you practice biblical confrontation of sin in your own relationships, or do you avoid necessary correction?

Interlinear Text

διὰ	τοῦτο	ἐὰν	ἔλθω	ὑπομνήσω	αὐτὸς	τὰ	ἔργα
Wherefore G1223	G5124	if G1437	I come G2064	I will remember G5279	he himself G846	G3588	deeds G2041
ὃ	ποιεῖ	λόγοις	πονηροῖς	φλυαρῶν	ἡμᾶς	καὶ	μὴ
which G3739	he doeth G4160	with G3056	malicious words G4190	prating against G5396	us G2248	and G2532	not G3361
ἀρκούμενος	ἐπὶ	τούτοις	οὔτε	αὐτὸς	ἐπιδέχεται		
content G714	therewith G1909	G5125	neither G3777	he himself G846	doth G1926		
τοὺς	ἀδελφοὺς	καὶ	τοὺς	βουλομένους	κωλύει	καὶ	
G3588	the brethren G80	and G2532	G3588	them that would G1014	forbiddeth G2967	and G2532	
ἐκ	τῆς	ἐκκλησίας	ἐκβάλλει				
them out of G1537	G3588	the church G1577	casteth G1544				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 66:5 (Word): Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

Proverbs 10:10 (Parallel theme): He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall.

Proverbs 10:8 (Word): The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

2 Corinthians 13:2 (Parallel theme): I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

Luke 6:22 (Parallel theme): Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.