

3 John 1:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

Analysis

Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers. John now specifically commends Gaius's hospitality. The address "Beloved" (ἀγαπητέ, agapēte) again expresses warm affection, while "thou doest faithfully" (πιστὸν ποιεῖς, piston poieis) literally means "you do a faithful thing" or "you act faithfully." The adjective πιστός (pistos) carries rich meaning: faithful, trustworthy, reliable, believing. Gaius's actions demonstrate fidelity to Christian duty and reliability in serving others.

"Whatsoever thou doest" (ὃ ἐὰν ἐργάσῃ, ho ean ergasē) emphasizes the comprehensive nature of Gaius's service—not occasional or selective, but consistent ministry. The objects of his service are "the brethren" (τοὺς ἀδελφούς, tous adelphous)—fellow Christians, probably local church members—and "strangers" (τοὺς ξένους, tous xenous)—unfamiliar traveling believers. The Greek word ξένος (xenos) means foreigner, stranger, or guest, from which we derive "xenophobia." Rather than fearing or avoiding strangers, Gaius extended hospitality to them.

This dual focus on both familiar brothers and unknown strangers reveals mature Christian love. It's relatively easy to serve those we know and like; extending the same care to strangers requires deeper commitment to Christian principle over personal preference. Gaius apparently welcomed traveling ministers without partiality, regardless of whether he had prior relationship with them. His

hospitality wasn't selective or motivated by expectation of reciprocity, but flowed from genuine Christian love and commitment to supporting gospel work.

Historical Context

Hospitality held critical importance in the ancient world and especially in early Christianity. The Roman Empire's road system facilitated travel, but accommodations were problematic. Public inns (pandocheion) existed but were often associated with immorality, excessive drinking, and unsafe conditions. Travelers depended heavily on hospitality networks. For Christians, this need was intensified by their marginal social status and the necessity of traveling missionaries and teachers.

The New Testament repeatedly commands hospitality: Romans 12:13 instructs "distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality"; 1 Peter 4:9 exhorts "Use hospitality one to another without grudging"; Hebrews 13:2 reminds "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares"; and 1 Timothy 3:2 requires elders to be "given to hospitality." This wasn't optional nicety but essential Christian practice enabling the church's mission.

However, hospitality created vulnerability to exploitation. False teachers could abuse Christian generosity to spread heresy while enjoying believers' support. Hence 2 John 10-11 warns against receiving or supporting those who deny Christ's incarnation. Discernment was necessary: support genuine gospel workers while refusing aid to deceivers. Gaius evidently exercised this discernment well, welcoming true ministers regardless of prior acquaintance while maintaining doctrinal boundaries. His faithfulness in this area made him invaluable to the church's mission.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How are you using your home and resources to practice biblical hospitality toward both friends and strangers?
2. What barriers (cultural, personal, practical) prevent you from regular hospitality, and how might you overcome them?
3. Are you faithfully supporting gospel workers and Christian ministry through hospitality and generosity?

Interlinear Text

Ἀγαπητέ,	πιστὸν	ποιεῖς	ὃ	ἐὰν	ἐργάσῃ	εἰς	τοὺς
Beloved	faithfully	thou doest	G3739	whatsoever	thou doest	to	G3588
G27	G4103	G4160		G1437	G2038	G1519	
ἀδελφοὺς	καὶ	εἰς	τοὺς	ξένους			
the brethren	and	to	G3588	strangers			
G80	G2532	G1519		G3581			

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 6:10 (Faith): As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Colossians 3:17 (Parallel theme): And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Luke 12:42 (Faith): And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?