

3 John 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church:
whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly
sort, thou shalt do well:

Analysis

Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well. The traveling brethren "have borne witness" (έμαρτύρησαν, emarturēsan) of Gaius's love—they publicly testified to his Christian character. The noun "charity" (ἀγάπη, agapē) is divine love characterizing genuine Christianity, not mere affection but self-giving commitment to others' good. This testimony occurred "before the church" (ἐνώπιον ἐκκλησίας, enōpion ekklēsias), suggesting these workers reported to John's congregation about Gaius's exemplary hospitality.

John then encourages continued support: "whom if thou bring forward on their journey" (οὓς καλῶς ποιήσεις προπέμψας, hous kalōs poiēseis propempsas). The verb προπέμπω (propempō) means to send forward, escort, or equip for a journey—providing supplies, financial support, and assistance for ongoing ministry. This wasn't merely offering a meal and bed, but actively supporting their mission by funding travel, providing provisions, and facilitating their work. Paul uses this same term in Romans 15:24 and 1 Corinthians 16:6 regarding support for his missionary travels.

"After a godly sort" (ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ, axiōs tou theou) literally means "worthily of God"—in a manner befitting God's character and honoring His name. Christian generosity should reflect God's own generous nature and represent the gospel worthily. "Thou shalt do well" (καλῶς ποιήσεις, kalōs poiēseis) indicates such

support is not merely good but noble, excellent, and commendable. John affirms that Gaius's continued generous support for traveling ministers serves God's purposes and merits highest commendation.

Historical Context

The early church's missionary expansion depended entirely on financial support from local believers. Unlike pagan philosophers who charged fees or wealthy patrons who funded favored teachers, Christian missionaries went forth "taking nothing of the Gentiles" (verse 7). They depended on believers' generosity, making supporters like Gaius essential partners in gospel advance. Without such faithful giving, the church's mission would have collapsed.

The concept of "bringing forward" travelers reflects ancient Near Eastern hospitality customs where hosts not only received guests but equipped them for onward journey. Abraham's hospitality to the three visitors (Genesis 18) and Rebekah's service to Abraham's servant (Genesis 24) exemplify this pattern. In Roman culture, wealthy patrons often sponsored clients or proteges, providing financial backing and social connections. Christians adapted this cultural practice to serve kingdom purposes, with believers supporting ministers they might never meet again, trusting God to multiply the gospel's impact.

Public testimony "before the church" served multiple functions: encouraging other believers to similar generosity, validating the traveling ministers' legitimacy (important when false teachers also traveled), strengthening networks of mutual support across churches, and bringing honor to those whose faithfulness deserved recognition. This accountability and encouragement system helped maintain both doctrinal purity and practical support for genuine gospel workers.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Are you financially supporting gospel work beyond your local church in ways that reflect God's generous character?
2. How can you 'bring forward' ministers and missionaries through prayer, encouragement, and practical assistance?
3. Do you exercise appropriate discernment in determining which ministries warrant your support?

Interlinear Text

οὓς ἔμαρτύρησάν σου τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐνώπιον ἐκκλησίας

Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church

G3739

G3140

G4675

G3588

G26

G1799

G1577

οὓς καλῶς ποιήσεις προπέμψας ἀξίως

Which well thou shalt do if thou bring forward on their journey after

G3739

G2573

G4160

G4311

G516

τοῦ Θεοῦ·

a godly

G3588 G2316

Additional Cross-References

1 Thessalonians 2:12 (References God): That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

Acts 15:3 (Parallel theme): And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

Titus 3:13 (Parallel theme): Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

Acts 21:5 (Parallel theme): And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and

children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

Colossians 1:10 (References God): That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Romans 15:24 (Parallel theme): Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

2 Corinthians 1:16 (Parallel theme): And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.

1 Peter 2:20 (References God): For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

Philippians 4:14 (Parallel theme): Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.