

3 John 1:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

Analysis

Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. John explains why Gaius's support matters so profoundly: these workers went forth (ἐξῆλθον, exēlthon)—departed on mission—"for his name's sake" (ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὄνόματος, huper tou onomatos). The genitive "his name" (τοῦ ὄνόματος) with the definite article but no explicit referent indicates a name so well-known it needs no specification: the name of Jesus Christ. Everything in Christian mission centers on Christ's glory, not human achievement or institutional expansion. The preposition ὑπέρ (huper, "for" or "on behalf of") indicates purpose and motivation—Christ's fame, honor, and worship drove their ministry.

"Taking nothing of the Gentiles" (μηδὲν λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἑθνικῶν, mēden lambanontes apo tōn ethnikōn) reveals these missionaries' principled financial approach. The term ἑθνικοί (ethnikoi, "Gentiles" or "pagans") likely refers not to all non-Jews but specifically to unbelievers. These Christian workers refused financial support from non-Christians, depending entirely on believers' generosity. This prevented gospel ministry from becoming mercenary or appearing self-serving, removed obligation to compromise message for donors, and ensured Christian community bore responsibility for their own mission.

This principle reflects apostolic practice: Paul worked as tentmaker to avoid burdening churches (Acts 18:3, 1 Thessalonians 2:9), though he also taught that workers deserve support (1 Corinthians 9:14). The key issue was maintaining gospel integrity—never allowing financial considerations to compromise message

or create appearance of selfish motivation. By depending solely on believers' voluntary support rather than charging fees or accepting pagan patronage, these missionaries demonstrated that their message wasn't for sale and their motivation was Christ's glory, not personal gain.

Historical Context

In the Greco-Roman world, traveling teachers, philosophers, and religious figures commonly charged fees, depended on wealthy patrons, or engaged in rhetorical performances for pay. Sophists commanded high prices for instruction; itinerant philosophers like Cynics begged publicly; mystery religions charged initiation fees; and various charlatans exploited religious devotion for financial gain. Against this background, Christian missionaries' refusal to accept money from unbelievers was countercultural and powerful testimony.

Jewish practice provided some precedent: rabbis typically supported themselves through trades while teaching Torah freely, believing God's word shouldn't be commercialized. Jesus and His disciples depended on supporters like the women who provided from their resources (Luke 8:2-3), and Jesus instructed apostles that "the workman is worthy of his meat" (Matthew 10:10). However, the principle of refusing unbeliever support was distinctively Christian, preserving gospel independence from worldly entanglement.

This approach required strong faith and sacrificial generosity. Missionaries faced genuine hardship, depending entirely on believers who themselves often had limited resources. Yet this very dependence created interdependence: churches partnered with workers, prayed earnestly for them, and maintained concern for their welfare. This network of mutual support and accountability strengthened both individual believers' generosity and collective mission effectiveness. The church wasn't hiring professional ministers but sending out their own representatives, supported by their own sacrifice.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Does your life and work fundamentally serve Christ's glory or your own advancement and comfort?
2. Are you financially supporting those who have 'gone forth for His name's sake' with adequate, sacrificial generosity?
3. How can you ensure that your Christian service maintains integrity and avoids appearance of selfish motivation?

Interlinear Text

ὑπὲρ	γὰρ	τοῦ	ὄνόματος	ἐξῆλθον	μηδὲν
for	Because that	G3588	name's	they went forth	nothing
G5228	G1063		G3686	G1831	G3367
λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν					
taking	of	G3588	the Gentiles		
G2983	G575		G1484		

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 2:3 (Parallel theme): And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

Colossians 1:24 (Parallel theme): Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

1 Corinthians 9:18 (Parallel theme): What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

2 Corinthians 12:13 (Parallel theme): For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

2 Corinthians 4:5 (Parallel theme): For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

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