

3 John 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

Analysis

We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth. John draws practical application: "We therefore ought" (ἡμεῖς οὖν ὀφείλομεν, hēmeis oun opheilomen)—the verb ὀφείλω (opheilō) indicates moral obligation or debt. Because these workers went forth for Christ's name taking nothing from unbelievers, believers are morally obligated to "receive" (ὑπολαμβάνειν, hupolambanein) them. This verb means to take up, support, welcome, or sustain—comprehensive support, not merely allowing entrance but actively assisting their ministry.

The purpose clause "that we might be" (ἵνα γινώμεθα, hina ginōmetha) introduces the goal: becoming "fellowhelpers to the truth" (συνεργοὶ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, sunergoi tē alētheia). The noun συνεργός (sunergos) means co-worker, colleague, or fellow laborer—we derive "synergy" from this root. Supporting gospel workers makes us their partners in ministry. The dative "to the truth" (τῇ ἀληθείᾳ) indicates we become co-workers not merely with individuals but with truth itself—joining God's purposes to spread gospel truth throughout the world.

This verse reveals profound theology of partnership in ministry. Not everyone can or should become missionaries, preachers, or full-time Christian workers, but all believers can participate in gospel advance through prayer and support. When we welcome and assist faithful ministers, we share in their fruit and become stakeholders in their work. This wasn't sentimental encouragement but theological reality: financial supporters genuinely partner with those they fund. Paul

expressed this same principle in Philippians 4:15-17, recognizing Philippian believers as partners whose gifts accrued to their spiritual account.

Historical Context

The early church functioned as an interconnected network of local congregations supporting missionaries who planted new churches, strengthened existing ones, and combated false teaching. Without institutional structures, denominational budgets, or professional fundraising, the mission depended entirely on individual believers and local churches exercising personal responsibility for gospel advance. This created both vulnerability (insufficient support could halt ministry) and vitality (direct connection between supporters and workers fostered genuine partnership).

The concept of being "fellowhelpers to the truth" reflects the church's self-understanding as truth's guardian and proclaimer. In a world filled with competing religious claims, philosophical systems, and moral frameworks, Christians believed they possessed unique revelation in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Truth wasn't relative or subjective but objective reality centered in Christ, revealed in Scripture, and proclaimed by apostolic testimony. Supporting those who faithfully taught this truth was investing in reality's spread against error's darkness.

This partnership model also reflects early Christianity's non-hierarchical structure. While apostles possessed unique authority and elders led local churches, all believers were priests (1 Peter 2:9) and all had Spirit-given gifts for building up the body (1 Corinthians 12). Wealthy believers like Philemon, Lydia, and Gaius exercised their gift of generosity; others served through hospitality, prayer, or encouraging words. Together they formed a body advancing truth through coordinated, Spirit-empowered effort.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Do you view financial giving to gospel work as partnership in ministry or merely as paying for religious services?
2. Which faithful workers or ministries could you 'receive' and support to become a fellowhelper to the truth?
3. How might reframing giving as investment in truth's advance affect your financial stewardship and priorities?

Interlinear Text

ἡμεῖς	οὖν	ὀφείλομεν	ἀπολαμβάνειν	τοὺς	τοιούτους
We	therefore	ought	to receive	G3588	such
G2249	G3767	G3784	G618		G5108
ἵνα	συνεργοὶ	γινώμεθα	τῇ	ἀληθείᾳ	
that	fellowhelpers	we might be	G3588	to the truth	
G2443	G4904	G1096		G225	

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