

3 JOHN: OVERCOMING MISLEADING ERROR ON THE EXTENT OF GOD'S FELLOWSHIP
Part II: God's Bounds On Who We Should NOT EXCLUDE From His True Fellowship
(3 John 9-14)

I. Introduction

- A. In our effort to enjoy true fellowship with the Lord and God's people in a local church, there is the need to draw lines to **exclude** parties that *fail* to fellowship with God, a truth 2 John clearly commands.
- B. However, **EXCLUDING** others can come from **evil**, even **satanic motives**, and 2 John 9-14 reveals who we must **NOT EXCLUDE** from the local church if we would righteously heed God (as follows):

II. God's Bounds On Who We Should NOT EXCLUDE From His True Fellowship, 3 John 9-14.

- A. The Apostle John revealed a certain influential man named Diotrephes had **ERRANTLY EXCLUDED** godly people from the local church fellowship for **sinful reasons**, 3 John 9-10:
 - 1. John wrote informing his personal friend, Gaius to express his concern over the fact that a letter he had previously written to the Church Gaius attended had **intentionally NOT** been **read** there, 3 John 9.
 - 2. The party blocking the reading of John's letter was a certain influential man named Diotrephes who **selfishly** wanted to have the preeminence in the Church, and so had felt threatened enough by John's letter that he had refused to let it be publicly read, 3 John 9b.
 - 3. Accordingly, Diotrephes did not receive the **other** Apostles into the Church, either, 3 John 9c.
 - 4. Diotrephes had gone so far in his **love** for **preeminence** that he had tried to remove anyone with any influence in the body who stood in the way of his having the **preeminence**, 3 John 10:b,c,d:
 - a. Diotrephes had brought false charges (**phylaron**) against John and the other apostles to discredit them and thus to sway the church away from respecting and heeding the apostles so he could more easily be esteemed in the body, 3 John 10b; Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 914.
 - b. Then, Diotrephes had countered godly itinerant evangelists and teachers when they arrived and refused to show hospitality to them as though they were apostates, 2 John 10c with 2 John 9-10.
 - c. Finally, when other believers in the body had tried to extend fellowship to these traveling ministers, Diotrephes had excommunicated them from the Church to preserve his preeminence in it, 3 Jn. 10d.
- B. Thus, John had written to Gaius, explaining Diotrephes would have to be checked by Apostolic authority when he arrived, and John would then "call to mind" Diotrephes' sinful deeds so as to exercise Apostolic discipline upon him, 3 John 10a; Ibid.
- C. John then urged Gaius not to imitate Diotrephes, but to do what was good in continuing to show hospitality to the godly and to submit to the ministry of the apostles like himself, 3 John 11a with 9-10.
- D. Indeed, those who heeded Diotrephes yielded to **evil**, a fact supported by noting **Satan's** fall in Isaiah 14:12-15 (in light of Luke 10:18) where **he** sought **preeminence** over **God's subjects**, 3 Jn. 11b; Ibid.
- E. To apply this call, John urged Gaius to honor Demetrius, the man who was traveling to carry this letter from John to Gaius, 3 John 12; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, "Introduction To The Third Letter Of John: Characteristics of the Letter."
- F. John then revealed he intended to follow up this epistle with his own future visit at the Church, meaning he intended to apply his apostolic authority to the situation involving Diotrephes so that the body would no longer unrighteously exclude godly people who were part of God's true fellowship, 3 John 13-14.

Lesson: *Though God calls us believers to SEPARATE from ungodly apostates who deny the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and to practice second degree separation from errant believers for reasons specified in Scripture (as we found in our study of 2 John), He does NOT want us to exclude folk out of SELFISH AMBITION in seeking the PREEMINENCE in the Local Church, a very WICKED and even SATANIC practice! Separating others from the group must always come from the motive of HUMBLE HOLINESS, NEVER from SELFISH AMBITION!*

Application: *(1) Let us be SURE there is a BIBLICAL CAUSE for ALL moves we make either to INCLUDE or to EXCLUDE folk from our local church fellowship, and that APART FROM any and all PERSONAL AMBITION! (2) May we be willing always to SACRIFICE our OWN ambitions in humility and love to do God's will, cf. Philippians 2:5-11; Romans 12:16!*