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Diotrephes

“I wrote to the congregation: but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, receives us not. Therefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he does, talking idly against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and forbids them that would, and casts them out of the congregation”.

3 John, verses 9-10

Warnings are not included in God’s Word for no reason. God knew that these practices would not die out with Diotrephes. The cause lies in the evil nature of man. The Apostle John did not issue a command for the brothers to cast him out. He first wanted to expose Diotrephes, so that all the believers there would know, and so that they would be held accountable to act upon it. It is inconceivable that Gaius would continue to treat this Diotrephes as a brother. What was to become of the faithful believers who had been cast out by Diotrephes?

These things still happen today: an ‘expulsion’ possibly disguised as exclusion. Or one even makes a separation because of differences of opinion and not really in accordance with 2 Timothy 2, verses 16–26, which is then piously applied. The divisions and factions addressed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1, vv. 10–13 and 1 Corinthians 11, vv. 8–19 are either ignored or misinterpreted: even the tried and tested are made into a faction.

Yet some of these Diotrephes-like figures hold the strangest views on what excommunication means. They believe that, like the apostles, they are entitled to hand someone over to the devil. For these purposes the authority of the Lord Jesus should not be abused among His own (Matt. 18:20), even in the most pious letters containing decisions that undermine unity. The Apostle himself wanted to come to

settle the matter. What would the outcome have been then? We can assume to discipline Diotrephes if he did not repent, and to restore the believers who had been cast out through his actions.

Through Diotrephes, the Word was blasphemed; people sinned against the holy things of the sanctuary (Leviticus 5:14-16). Can such sectarian actions by Diotrephes be brought about by the Holy Spirit and the Word? On the contrary, they came from the enemy of God. Today's Diotrephes-like figures expel fellow believers who question their authority. They employ a divisive strategy of exclusive intimidation, thereby forcing their fellow believers into absolute submission, ruling over them so that they submit to this exclusionary intimidation.

They engage in divisive behavior, thereby forming a sect, with their undisputed leader Diotrephes as the foremost among them. We are to reject such sectarian people (Titus 3:10-11). To achieve this, he likely had his accomplices; in any case, we can recognize this structure in modern Christianity in clerical tendencies. They do not build the house of God with gold, silver and precious stones, but use wood, hay and straw, and merely create rubble in the house of God.

The Apostle John does not exercise his apostolic authority from a distance, but first simply exposes him. Afterwards, he would settle the matter on the spot. In doing so, he gives us an example of how we must approach such a matter. Such a person should first be exposed; afterwards, the believers should deal with the matter according to the Word and not act as if nothing were amiss.

The Lord Jesus had foreseen that these things would happen during the time of His absence.

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. Truly I say to you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delays his coming. And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him apart and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:45-51).

In the seven epistles to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation, it also becomes clear that true believers are being persecuted by those who call themselves Christians yet reveal hatred towards true children of God and demand obedience to their 'official' churches or congregations.

May the Lord give wisdom to handle and preserve His Word.

May the elders protect the congregation against such wolves.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:28-30).

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