

THE
SECOND EPISTLE
OF
J O H N.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

IT is highly probable, from the opening of this Epistle, that it was particularly directed to some one Person, and not the Church at large. But still, from the contents of it, designed for general use. The word translated *Lady*, which corresponds to the Hebrew name *Martha*, might be a general name. But, certain it is, that it hath respect to every child of GOD, for it is connected with the title *Elect*.

Our chief concern is, to know, that the Writer of it was inspired to the service, and that he wrote it under the immediate influence and direction of the HOLY GHOST. And this the testimony of the Church bears witness to, in every age, wherever the LORD hath blessed it in instruction to his people.

We have no particular *date* to it, neither of the *place* from whence it was written. But, neither are these things material. It is but short: yet, if the LORD teach in it, and by it, He can render it sweet. LORD! let thy unction be upon it, and it will then send forth the fragrancy of CHRIST'S name, as *the ointment poured forth!*

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle opens his Epistle, in calling the Person to whom he writes, Elect. He speaks of the Joy he and his Companions, who were Lovers of the Truth, found in the Opinion they had of the Grace the LORD had given her. He speaks of the Antichrist of the Time, and warns her against all such Teachers. He concludes with affectionate Salutations.

THE elder unto the elect lady, and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;

2 For the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

3 Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

John very properly calls himself an Elder; for, at the time he wrote this Epistle, he could not be less than an hundred years old; if, as some suppose, it was after his return from banishment. But the principal point for the Church of God to regard is, the character to whom *John* wrote; namely, one of the Elect of God. And I mention this the rather, because it bears a correspondence to all the Apostle's writings, which are uniformly to the Church, and not unto the world. The salutation of grace, mercy, and peace, are sweet tokens of Apostolic writings to the Church.

And I beg the Reader to notice with what confidence *John* speaks to this lady, in consequence of being an elect child of God. He saith, he loveth her for the truth's sake, meaning CHRIST himself, who is the truth. *John* xiv. 6. And which *John* saith, *dwelleth in us*, (that is, in all the elect,) *and shall abide in us for ever*. Reader! do not overlook this, for it is blessed. The elect lady, as *John* calls her, had in that election all the blessed fruits and effects wrought up in it, as the bud contains all the future blossoms and foliage of the flower. Together with this electing grace, there is the calling grace appointed also. *For whom he did predestinate, them he also called*. Rom. viii. 30. And in the season of that call, there is given the pardoning grace to all sins. So blessedly speaks the Apostle. *And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses*. Coloss. ii. 13.

And neither doth the blessing stop here. For justification immediately follows. *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in CHRIST JESUS*. Rom. iii. 24. And both sanctification and glory bring up the rear, in the sure events involved in the blessed act of God's sovereign love, when, from all eternity, the Lord chose the Church in CHRIST JESUS. Ephes. i. 4. 1 Cor. i. 30. 2 Tim. i. 9. Rom. viii. 30, 31.

4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

There is somewhat very blessed in this. We find that not only this elect lady, but some of her children, were in grace. And the good old Apostle felt the joy of it. Nothing can be more delightful to a child of God, than when he discovers others that are children also. It was under this view the Psalmist speaks, when he said, *Lo! children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is a reward*. Psm. cxxvii. 3. But, it can only be so spoken, when they arise, like olive branches, round the parent's table, blessed with grace. Sad, and wretched, did the Patriarch view his ungodly children, in the

Absaloms, and Adonijahs, and the Ammons of his loins; when he cried out, my house is not so with God; though he took to himself the blessedness of the everlasting covenant God had made with him, ordered in all things and sure. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

5 And now, I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, That we love one another.

6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments, this is the commandment, That as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

Let the Reader observe, with me, how sweetly a life of grace in JESUS, leads to a life of holiness in JESUS. *As ye have received CHRIST JESUS the LORD, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him. Coloss. ii. 6, 7.* It is impossible to be otherwise. Where CHRIST is, there must be fruitfulness in CHRIST. Exhortations here are all sweet, and in season. But to exhort the unawakened and unregenerate, is like the rain upon the sands and deserts, which can produce nothing!

7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, this is a deceiver and an antichrist.

8 ¶ Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

9 Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

10 ¶ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed.

11 For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.

12 Having many things to write unto you I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee.
Amen.

There is nothing here which can need a comment, the whole being so very plain and obvious. They shew the affectionate mind of the Apostle, in watching over the Church; and they no less teach how very early the heresies sprung up among the people. Very painful must it have been to the hoary Apostle, who had lain in JESUS'S bosom, to live long enough to see men arise who dared to deny that JESUS CHRIST had come in the flesh. But, Reader! had *John* lived to our day, or could he have beheld the infidelity which we are vexed with, what judgments would he not teach the Church they might expect to follow? Not the *true* Church, however, for this is everlastingly and eternally safe; but the *professing* Church, who have frittered away all that is truly valuable in the Gospel of CHRIST, and left nothing to it but the mere name of Christian.

The Apostle very sweetly closeth the Epistle with the greetings from one branch of the LORD'S chosen family to another!

REFLECTIONS.

THE Elders in the Church of JESUS may learn from this short, but gracious Epistle of *John* the Elder, how to address the Elect, and with what words of comfort and consolation in JESUS, they are to be spoken to. And there is nothing more strengthening to the Church of GOD, than when old-Disciples speak to young ones, concerning GOD'S purposes in CHRIST, as manifested in his electing, converting, redeeming, establishing grace! It is blessedly said by one of old, *the righteous shall bring forth fruit in his old age, to shew that the LORD is upright*. I do not presume to say so much, but I humbly ask, did not the LORD the SPIRIT cause this Epistle to be sent by *John* to one Elect Lady, to be recorded in the Church, and handed down, through the several ages, to the present hour, on purpose to teach old saints, and especially faithful old ministers, how to speak to the elect children of CHRIST, in the several stations and characters as they stand in grace?

Blessed and eternal SPIRIT! be thou praised for this sweet morsel of thy holy scripture! Let it be a savor, in thine Almighty hand, for good. And let thy servant *John's* ministry in it be owned and blessed of the LORD for good to *all* thy people, that though the Apostle be dead, he may be said yet to speak. Praised be GOD, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, for all blessings in CHRIST. Amen.