

THE
THIRD EPISTLE
OF
J O H N.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

HERE is another short, but precious Epistle of the same Writer, under GOD the HOLY GHOST, as the former. And this is also written to a private person, and not publicly to the Church. Who this *Gaius* was, to whom the beloved Apostle sent this Epistle, is not known, though it hath occasioned much conjecture. He calls him *well-beloved*. No doubt, as a child of GOD, he was so; and, on this account, *John* called him so. *Paul* had a companion of this name, which we read of, Acts xix. 29, and Acts xx. 4. But, it is hardly possible that this was the same person to whom *John* writes this Epistle, for there must have been more than thirty years between the date of those times. However, this is not so material. It is enough for us to know, that this *Gaius* was well-beloved of *John*; and, consequently, one of the elect of GOD. And we know also, that GOD the HOLY GHOST directed the Apostle's heart and pen to write it, and hath caused it to be recorded for the Church's benefit. These things are enough, in recommendation.

I beg the Reader to enter, with me, upon the perusal of it in prayer. And very sure I am, if we pray over it, we shall profit under it. May the LORD therefore bless it to our use, and to the whole Church of GOD in CHRIST. Amen.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

CONTENTS.

After his usual Salutation, the Apostle tells his beloved Gaius of his Desires, both for his temporal and spiritual Prosperity. He commends him for his Kindness to the Brethren. He remarks of the Opposition made to the Church, by a Man called Diotrephes. He commends another Man of the Name of Demetrius. And concludes his Epistle with Greetings from Friends.

THE elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers.

6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

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

8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.

Next to the health of the soul, the health of the body is the greatest blessing. And, among the promises of God in CHRIST, there are many sweet ones in the Word of God, which are in the Covenant, as they relate to the body. See a string of them, Deut. xxviii. 1—14. And when a child of God, regenerated by the HOLY GHOST, is brought, by divine teaching, to build every thing upon CHRIST, for time and for eternity, every thing must prosper, for every thing must be a blessing, Rom. viii. 28. In *temporal* things, the child of God hath the sanctified use of all. If the goods of this world abound, there is the covenant-love, and the covenant-grace to accompany them; that, like *Gaius*, the man of God is enabled by the LORD to do faithfully, whatsoever he doeth, to the brethren of the Church with him, or to the strangers which belong to the other Churches of the saints from abroad. And, while he doth good to all men, he doth it especially to them that are of the household of faith. And, if the LORD exerciseth him with adversity, still grace gives a sanctifying quality to take out all the bitterness of it. So that, *though the fig-tree do not blossom, neither fruit be found in the vine; though the labor of the olive fail, and the fields yield no meat; though the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herds in the stall; yet, the child of God can, and will say, I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.* Habak. iii. 17, 18.

And, in respect to *spiritual* things, every thing here is blessed. The child of God is blessed with the FATHER'S love, the SAVIOR'S grace, the HOLY GHOST'S fellowship. He hath pardon, mercy, peace, in the blood of the cross. He hath continual manifestations of divine love. JESUS comes to bless him, to comfort him, to encourage him, and to make himself known to him otherwise than he doth to the world. Yea, who shall describe the out-pourings of divine love, or the in-

comings of divine grace, the child of God is continually receiving from the LORD, who is blessing him with all spiritual blessings in CHRIST JESUS?

And, in relation to *eternal blessings*, he hath not only the promise of the life that now is, but of that which is to come. Indeed, eternal life is begun in his soul. For he that hath the SON of GOD hath life. He enjoys it now by faith. *For faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* Heb. xi. 1. And faith is the earnest, given by the SPIRIT of glory. So that, as *John* tells the beloved *Gaius*, where the soul prospereth, the body must have the sanctified enjoyment of all things, which grace sanctifies to prosper also.

9 ¶ I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not.

10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good: he that doeth good, is of God; but he that doeth evil, hath not seen God.

12 Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:

14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

Every thing contained within the bosom of these verses, is fully explained as it stands before us. I only beg the Reader to remark with me, the striking contrast between *Diotrephes* and *Demetrius*. They are known to us only by name. But how different their characters! How opposed while they lived! How differently regarded when they died. How opposite in the esteem of the Church, through all ages! And how everlastingly opposite, if dying as they are here said to have lived, through all the eternal world? Reader! how blessed to have a good report, of all men; yea, and of the truth itself, which is CHRIST. John xiv. 6. Oh! for the whisper of JESUS, in a dying hour, to confirm his grace in the soul, as manifested in a living hour; that both in life and in death the soul be found in him. Isaiah xliii. 1-4.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT a beautiful view is here afforded, of the beloved Apostle in his Pastoral Office, addressing the faithful *Gaius*, beloved in the LORD. To behold the venerable saint of God, amidst all the infirmities of declining years, thus blessing God, and blessing the servant of God, in his wishes both for spiritual and temporal prosperity.

But while we look at *John*, who justly commands our veneration and our love, let us look infinitely above *John*, and behold *John's* LORD still blessing all his Church; and every *Gaius* of his redeemed family below, with blessings in himself. Precious, precious JESUS! we desire to praise thee for all that is lovely, in the disciple whom JESUS loved; for all that is lovely in *John*, was, and is derived from thee! LORD! hasten on thy blessed purposes, and bring on thy glorious day, when thou wilt come, *to be glorified in thy saints, and to be admired in all that believe!* To thee, LORD, it belongs, to keep thy Church from falling, and to present it faultless before the presence of thy glory with exceeding joy. In the blessed hope of thy appearing, may all thy Church in thee, and through thee, daily ascribe to FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, Israel's God in Covenant, endless praises. Amen.

THE
GENERAL EPISTLE

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JUDE is particularly spoken of as the brother of *James*, perhaps to distinguish him from *Judas* the Traitor. For otherwise, it was more the custom to speak of the Jews by descent. *Jude* lived the last of all the Apostles, except *John*. And it could not be well less than *thirty* years after CHRIST's ascension, that he wrote this Epistle. He hath evidently followed the Apostle *Peter*, in his Second Epistle, and thereby confirmed the words of GOD, that, *in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall be established.* Deut. xvii. 6. 2 Cor. xii. 1.

The design of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in sending this Epistle generally to the Church, seems very evident from its contents. Heresies had at this time sprung up, and the Church was infested with them. It is our mercy, that *Jude* as well as *John*,