

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The apostle's address to a Christian matron and her children, 2 John 1:1-3. He rejoices to find that certain of her family had received, and continued to adorn, the truth; and he exhorts them to continue to love one another according to the commandment of Christ, 2 John 1:4-6, And particularly cautions them against deceivers, and to so watch, that they might not lose the benefit of what they had received, 2 John 1:7, 2 John 1:8. The necessity of abiding in the doctrine of Christ, 2 John 1:9. He cautions them against receiving, or in any way forwarding, those who did not bring the true doctrine of Christ, 2 John 1:10, 2 John 1:11. Excuses himself from writing more largely, and purposes to pay her and family a visit shortly, 2 John 1:12, 2 John 1:13.

Verse 1

The elder - John the apostle, who was now a very old man, generally supposed to be about ninety, and therefore he uses the term *ἀρχιεπίσκοπος*, *archiepiskopos*, presbyter or elder, not as the name of an office, but as designating his advanced age. He is allowed to have been the oldest of all the apostles, and to have been the only one who died a natural death.

This title led some of the ancients to attribute this epistle to a person called John the Presbyter, a member of the Church at Ephesus; and not to John the apostle. But this is a groundless supposition.

The elect lady - *ἡ ἐκλεκτή*, *hē eklektē*, As *ἡ* *kuria*, may be the feminine of *κύριος*, *kyrios*, lord, therefore it may signify lady; and so several, both ancients and moderns, have understood it. But others have considered it the proper name of a woman, Kyria; and that this is a very ancient opinion is evident from the Peshito Syriac, the oldest version we have, which uses it as a proper name (*kooreea*), as does also the Arabic (*kooreea*).

Some have thought that Eclecta was the name of this matron, from the word *ἐκλεκτός*, *eklektos*, which we translate elect, and which here signifies the same as excellent, eminent, honorable, or the like. Others think that a particular Church is intended, which some suppose to be the Church at Jerusalem, and that the elect sister, 2 John 1:13, means the Church at Ephesus; but these are conjectures which appear to me to have no good ground. I am satisfied that no metaphor is here intended; that the epistle was sent to some eminent Christian matron, not far from Ephesus, who was probably deaconess of the Church, who, it is likely, had a Church at her house, or at whose house the apostles and traveling evangelists frequently preached, and were entertained. This will appear more probable in the course of the notes.

Whom I love in the truth - Whom I love as the Christian religion requires us to love one another.

And not I only - She was well known in the Churches; many had witnessed or heard of her fidelity, and partook of her hospitality; so that she had a good report of all Christians in that quarter.

Verse 2

For the truth's sake - On account of the Gospel.

Which dwelleth in us - By the grace which it has proclaimed.

And shall be with us - For God will preserve not only the Christian religion but its truth, all its essential doctrines for ever. And they that abide in the truth shall go whither that truth leads, i.e. to glory. The Armenian has a strange reading here: *For the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, because it is also with you; and ye shall be with us for ever.* But this is supported by no other version, nor by any MS.

Verse 3

Grace be with you - This is addressed to her, her household, and probably that part of the Church which was more immediately under her care.

The Son of the Father - The apostle still keeps in view the miraculous conception of Christ; a thing which the Gnostics absolutely denied; a doctrine which is at the ground work of our salvation.

Verse 4

That I found of thy children walking in truth - I have already supposed this Christian matron to be mother of a family, probably a widow, for no mention is made of her husband; and that she was also a deaconess in the church, and one in those house the traveling evangelists preached, and there they were entertained. The children mentioned here may either be her own children, or those members of the Church which were under her

care, or some of both. The apostle was glad to find, probably by an epistle sent from herself to him, or from the information of some of the itinerant evangelists, that the work of God was prospering in the place where she lived, and also in her own household. He does not say that all were walking in the truth, but ἡ μὲν ἐκκλησία, *i.e.*, some of her children; there was a growing and spreading work, and there were many adversaries who strove to pervert them who had already believed, and perhaps were successful in drawing several away from their simplicity.

Verse 5

That which we had from the beginning - The commandment to love one another was what they had heard from the first publication of Christianity, and what he wishes this excellent woman to inculcate on all those under her care. The mode of address here shows that it was a person, not a Church, to which the apostle wrote.

Verse 6

And this is love - That is, our love is shown and proved by our walking according to the commandments of God; for love is the principle of obedience.

Verse 7

For many deceivers, etc. - Of these he had spoken before, see 1 John 4:1, etc. And these appear to have been Gnostics, for they denied that Jesus was come in the flesh. And this doctrine, so essential to salvation, none could deny but a deceiver and an antichrist. Instead of ἡμῶν τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἡμεῖς ὁ κόσμος are entered in, many excellent MSS. and versions have ἡμῶν τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἡμεῖς ὁ κόσμος, are gone out. The sense is nearly the same.

Verse 8

Look to yourselves - Be on your guard against these seducers; watch, pray, love God and each other, and walk in newness of life.

That we lose not those things which we have wrought - That we apostles, who have been the means of your conversion, may not be deprived of you as our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Instead of the first person plural, $\text{ἡμεῖς} \text{ἀπολάβομεν}$, etc., We lose, etc., many MSS., versions, and fathers, read the whole clause in the second person plural, $\text{ὑμεῖς} \text{ἀπολάβετε}$, Ye lose, etc. Take heed to yourselves that Ye lose not the things which Ye have wrought, but that Ye receive a full reward. This reading is more consistent and likely, and is supported by at least as good evidence as the other. We find that if these persons did not keep on their guard they might lose their salvation, and the apostles their rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Even this intimation might put them on their guard. Had the apostle said ye cannot finally fall, what a different effect would it have produced! Griesbach has placed these readings in the margin as being very probable.

Verse 9

Whosoever transgresseth - ἵνα μὴ ἐκτῆς ὁρίων τῶν ἁγίων ὑμᾶς. He who passes over the sacred enclosure, or goes beyond the prescribed limits; and abideth not in the doctrine - does not remain within these holy limits, but indulges himself either in excesses of action or passion; hath not God for his Father, nor the love of God in his heart.

Hath both the father and the Son - He who abideth in the doctrine of Christ, his body is a temple of the Holy Trinity, and he has communion with the Father as his Father, and with the Son as his Savior and Redeemer.

Verse 10

If there come any unto you - Under the character of an apostle or evangelist, to preach in your house; and bring not this doctrine, that Jesus is come in the flesh, and has died for the redemption of the world.

Receive him not unto your house - Give him no entertainment as an evangelical teacher. Let him not preach under your roof.

Neither bid him God speed - לֹא יְבָרַךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָעַמּוּנָה וְאֶת הָעַמּוּנָה. And do not say, Health to him - do not salute him with Peace be to thee! The usual salutation among friends and those of the same religion in the east is, (Salam aleekum), שָׁלוֹם בֵּיתְךָ וְשָׁלוֹם לְכָל חַיֵּי דְבֵיתְךָ which those of the same religion will use among themselves, but never to strangers, except in very rare cases. This is the case to the present day; and, from what John says here, it was a very ancient custom. We have often seen that peace among the Hebrews comprehended every spiritual and temporal blessing. The words mean, according to the eastern use of them, שָׁלוֹם Have no religious connection with him, nor act towards him so as to induce others to believe you acknowledge him as a brother.

Verse 11

