

The 2nd Letter of John

When did you last *write* a letter? Not an e-mail (useful as they are!) but putting pen to paper. How would you begin it if you were writing to a younger church member and their family?

Here we have a letter written by a well known teacher and elder. The Apostle John most likely wrote all three of his Letters (Epistles) from Ephesus some years before he was exiled to Patmos. He writes to someone who has heard and received his teaching to encourage them to continue faithful and to be cautious in case of false teachers.

Read II John

Verses 1 – 3

The Greeting.

There is a difference of opinion among scholars as to the meaning of “*elect Lady*”. The word “*Lady*” (Kyria) could denote a “Church” or be a proper name for a Christian woman. For me, the letter reads as personal to an individual and her family. Someone well known and loved as a Christian sister by John and others in the fellowship. Elect = chosen: a member of “*a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people*” (1 Peter 2, verse 9).

There is also a reminder that our fellowship together depends on “*the truth*” as found in Our Lord Jesus Christ who said “*If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*” , The theme of “the truth” is a favourite of the Apostle John. The revealed Word in Our Lord Jesus Christ must be the touchstone of our faith. Details of how and where we worship are largely irrelevant. What matters is faith in Christ crucified and obedience to His Word.

John gives an assurance that as the truth dwells in us and will be with us for ever, so “*Grace, mercy and peace*” will be with us.

Verses 4 – 7

A Warning!

There are many different false teachers and false teachings around today, as there were at the time this Letter was written. The key question is “Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh”. The Incarnation is vital to the Christian faith. Where it is played down or questioned, errors can easily creep in. Here in II John verse 7 is the same formula as in I John 4, verse 2. The same teaching can be found in the Epistles of Paul e.g. in the familiar verses in Philippians 2: 5 – 11.

Verses 8 – 11

The Practical outworking of his warning!

There is always a tension between loving and caring for our “enemies” and being careful of our own spiritual well-being. Having close fellowship with someone who holds to false teaching can, if we are not careful, lead to us falling into error ourselves. Here is a clear warning from the Apostle, not to offer hospitality to false teachers. As always, the Bible, the written word of God must be our guide as to what is true. The right hand of fellowship, even as a greeting can be seen as a mark of approval for false teaching.

Verses 12 – 13

A longing for face to face meeting!

So familiar to us in our present “Lockdown” is this longing to be with those we love. It sends us straight back to Psalm 42 and the desire to once again meet each other without restraint and be able to worship and praise the Lord God together.