Ignatius to Polycarp

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, sends heartiest greetings to Polycarp, who is bishop of the Church of Smyrna, or rather has for his bishop God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER I.-- COMMENDATION AND EXHORTATION.

I am so well pleased with your God-mindedness, firmly built, as it were, upon an immovable rock, that I am exceedingly grateful for the privilege I had of seeing your saintly face. May it, please God, be a constant joy to me! I exhort you, clothed as you are with the garment of grace, to speed on your course and exhort all others to attend to their salvation. Maintain your position with all care, both physical and spiritual. Be concerned about unity, the greatest blessing. Bear with all, just as the Lord does with you. Have patience with all in love, as indeed you do. To prayer give yourself unceasingly; beg for an increase in understanding; watch without letting your spirit sleep. Speak to each one separately in imitation of God. Bear the infirmities of all, like a master athlete. The greater the toil, the greater the reward.

CHAPTER II.--EXHORTATIONS.

If you love good disciples, you can expect no thanks. Rather, seek, by gentleness, to subdue the more troublesome. Not every hurt is healed by the same plaster. Mitigate violent fits by means of gentle

applications. Be wary like a serpent, yet always guileless like a dove. You consist of body and soul for the reason that you may deal graciously with whatever meets your eye; but pray that what is kept secret may be revealed to you. In this way you will be lacking in nothing and abound in every gift. As a pilot calls on winds and as one storm-tossed looks for a haven, so the times call on you to attain your way to God. As God's athlete, be sober; the prize set before you is immortality and eternal life. Of this you are firmly convinced. In all things, may my soul be for you, and my bonds also, which are your delight.

CHAPTER III.--EXHORTATIONS.

Those that seem worthy of confidence, yet teach strange doctrines, must not upset you. Stand firm, like an anvil under the hammer. It is like a great athlete to take blows and yet win the fight. For God's sake above all we must endure everything, so that God, in turn, may endure us. Increase your zeal. Read the signs of the times. Look for Him who is above all time- - eternal and invisible, who for our sake became visible, the impalpable and impassible, who became passible on our account and for our sake endured every kind of suffering.

CHAPTER IV.--EXHORTATIONS.

Widows must not be neglected. After the Lord, you must be their guardian. Nothing must be done without your approval; nor must

you do anything without God's approval, as indeed you do not, inasmuch as you are steadfast. Let assembling together be a frequently occurrence. Seek after all by name. Do not despise slaves, male or female, neither let them be puffed up with conceit; but rather, for the glory of God they should render all the better service so as to obtain a better freedom from God. They should not long to be set free at the expense of the community; otherwise, they turn out to be slaves of their own desires.

CHAPTER V.--THE DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

Flee evil arts; and do more preaching on this subject. Tell my sisters to love the Lord and to be content with their husbands in body and soul. In like manner, exhort my brethren in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as the Lord loves the Church. If anyone is able to remain continent, to the honor of the Flesh of the Lord, let him do so without boasting. The moment he boasts, he is undone; and if he reckon himself greater the bishop, he is ruined. For those men and women who marry, it is proper to enter the union with the sanction of the bishop; thus their marriage will be acceptable to the Lord and not just gratify lust. Let all things be done to the honor of God.

CHAPTER VI.--THE DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN FLOCK.

Heed the bishop, that God may heed you also. My soul be theirs who are obedient to the bishop, presbyters, and deacons; and may

I obtain my portion in God along with them! Labour together with one another, strive in company together, run together, suffer together, sleep together and awake together, since you are stewards in God's house, members of His household, and His servants. Please Him under whom you fight, and from whom you also draw your wages. Let none of you be found a deserter. Let your baptism be your shield; your faith as your helmet; your love as your spear; your patience as a complete armor. Your deposits should be your works, that you may receive your savings to the exact amount. Be long-suffering toward one another in meekness, as God is with you. May you be my joy always!

CHAPTER VII.--REQUEST THAT POLYCARP WOULD SEND A MESSENGER TO ANTIOCH.

Since, as I was informed, the Church at Antioch in Syria enjoys peace through your prayers, I, too, gather fresh courage, carefree and confident in God, if by means of suffering I may attain to God, so that through your prayers, I may be found a disciple [of Christ]! It is fitting, O Polycarp, most blessed in God, to convene a very solemn council and to appoint someone who is dear to you and untiring in his zeal, one qualified for the part of God's messenger; then confer on him the distinction of going to Syria and glorify your ever active love to the praise of Christ. A Christian is not his own master; his time belongs to God. This is God's work; and it will be yours, too, once you have accomplished it to His glory. For I trust

that, through grace you are ready for every good work which concerns God. Knowing your energetic love for the truth, I confine my exhortation to these few words.

CHAPTER VIII.--LET OTHER CHURCHES ALSO SEND TO ANTIOCH.

Inasmuch as I have not been able to write to all the Churches, because I must suddenly sail from Troas to Neapolis, as the will [of the emperor] enjoins, [I beg that] you, as being acquainted with the purpose of God, write to the adjacent Churches and tell them to do the same thing: those that are able should send messengers; the rest should send letters through those persons sent by you, that you may be glorified by a work which shall be remembered for ever, as indeed you are worthy to be. I salute all by name, especially to the widow of Epitropus, with her whole family and those of her children. I salute Attalus, my beloved. I salute him who shall be deemed worthy to go [from you] into Syria. Grace shall be with him forever, and with Polycarp that sends him. I pray for your happiness forever in our God, Jesus Christ, by whom continue in the unity and under the protection of God. I salute Alce, my dearly beloved. Farewell in the Lord!