

Homily 15

by Clement of Rome

Clement of Rome's Homily 15 emphasizes the importance of aligning beliefs with family, understanding God's providence, and the distinction between true religion and philosophy.

Topics: "Christian Unity", "Faith Conversion"

Description

Clement of Rome preaches to Faustus about the importance of converting to the true religion, emphasizing the unity and peace that comes from aligning beliefs with family members and the eternal consequences of separation due to differing opinions. He addresses obstacles to faith, such as distractions and false beliefs, urging Faustus to consider the impact of his choices on his loved ones. Clement also highlights the providence of God in orchestrating events in Faustus' life to lead him and his family to the truth. He explains the difference between the true religion and philosophy, focusing on the love and compassion that should guide human interactions.

Transcript

CHAPTER 1. PETER WISHES TO CONVERT FAUSTUS

At break of day our father, with our mother and his three sons, entered the place where Peter was, and accosting him, sat down. Then we also did the same at his request; and Peter looking at our father, said: I am anxious that you should become of the same mind as your wife and children, in order that here you may live along with them, and in the other world, after the separation of the soul from the body, you will continue to be with them free from sorrow. For does it not grieve you exceedingly that you should not associate with each other? And my father said: Most assuredly. And Peter said: If, then, separation from each other here gives you pain, and if without doubt the penalty awaits you that after death you should not be with each other, how much greater will your grief be that you, a wise man, should be separated from your own family on account of your opinions? They too, must feel the more distressed from the consciousness that eternal punishment awaits you because you entertain different opinions from theirs, and deny the established truth.

CHAPTER 2. REASON FOR LISTENING TO PETER'S ARGUMENTS

Our father said: But it is not the case, my very dear friend, that souls are punished in Hades, for the soul is dissolved into air as soon as it leaves the body. And Peter said: Until we convince you in regard to this point, answer me, does it not appear to you that you are not grieved as having no faith in a future

punishment, but they who have full faith in it must be vexed in regard to you? And our father said: You speak sense. And Peter said: Why, then, will you not free them from the greatest grief they can have in regard to you by agreeing to their religion, not, I mean, through dread, but through kindly feeling, listening and judging about what is said by me, whether it be so or not? And if the truth is as we state it, then here you will enjoy life with those who are dearest to you, and in the other world you will have rest with them; but if, in examining the arguments, you show that what is stated by us is a fictitious story, you will thus be doing good service, for you will have your friends on your side, and you will put an end to their leaning upon false hopes, and you will free them from false fears.

CHAPTER 3. OBSTACLES TO FAITH

And our father said: There is evidently much reason in what you say. And Peter said: What is it, then, that prevents you from coming to our faith? Tell me, that we may begin our discussion with it. For many are the hindrances. The faithful are hindered by occupation with merchandise, or public business, or the cultivation of the soil, or cares, and such like; the unbelievers, of whom you also are one, are hindered by ideas such as that the gods, which do not exist, really exist, or that all things are subject to Genesis, or chance, or that souls are mortal, or that our doctrines are false because there is no providence.

CHAPTER 4. PROVIDENCE SEEN IN THE EVENTS OF THE LIFE OF FAUSTUS AND HIS FAMILY

But I maintain, from what has happened to you, that all things are managed by the providence of God, and that your separation from your family for so many years was providential; for since, if they had been with you, they perhaps would not have listened to the doctrines of the true religion, it was arranged that your children should travel with their mother, should be shipwrecked, should be supposed to have perished, and should be sold; moreover, that they should be educated in the learning of the Greeks, especially in the atheistic doctrines, in order that, as being acquainted with them, they might be the better able to refute them; and in addition to this, that they should become attached to the true religion, and be enabled to be united with me, so as to help me in my preaching; furthermore, that their brother Clement should meet in the same place, and that thus his mother should be recognised, and through her cure should be fully convinced of the right worship of God; that after no long interval the twins should recognise and be recognised, and the other day should fall in with you, and that you should receive back your own. I do not think, then, that such a speedy filling in of circumstances, coming as it were from all quarters, so as to accomplish one design, could have happened without the direction of Providence.

CHAPTER 5. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TRUE RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

And our father began to say: Do not suppose, my dearest Peter, that I am not thinking of the doctrines preached by you. I was thinking of them. But during the past night, when Clement urged me earnestly to give in my adhesion to the truth preached by you, I at last answered, 'Why should I? For what new commandment can any one give more than what the ancients urged us to obey?' And he, with a gentle smile, said, 'There is a great difference, father, between the doctrines of the true religion and those of philosophy; for the true religion receives its proof from prophecy, while philosophy, furnishing us with beautiful sentences, seems to present its proofs from conjecture.' On saying this, he took an instance, and set before us the doctrine of philanthropy, which you had explained to him, which rather appeared to me to be very unjust, and I shall tell you how. He alleged that it was right to present to him who strikes you on the one cheek the other also, and to give to him who takes away your cloak your tunic also, and to go two miles with him who compels you to go one, and such like.

CHAPTER 6. THE LOVE OF MAN

And Peter answered: You have deemed unjust what is most just. If you are inclined, will you listen to me? And my father said: With all my heart. And Peter said: What is your opinion? Suppose that there were two kings, enemies to each other, and having their countries cut off from each other; and suppose that some one of the subjects of one of them were to be caught in the country of the other, and to incur the penalty of death on this account: now if he were let off from the punishment by receiving a blow instead of death, is it not plain that he who let him off is a lover of man? And our father said: Most certainly. And Peter said: Now suppose that this same person were to steal from some one something belonging to him or to another; and if when caught he were to pay double, instead of suffering the punishment that was due to him, namely, paying four times the amount, and being also put to death, as having been caught in the territories of the enemy; is it not your opinion that he who accepts double, and lets him off from the penalty of death, is a lover of man? And our father said: He certainly seems so. And Peter said: Why then? Is it not the duty of him who is in the kingdom of another, and that, too, a hostile and wicked monarch, to be pleasing to all for the sake of life, and when force is applied to him, to yield still more, to accost those who do not accost him, to reconcile enemies, not to quarrel with those who are angry, to give his own property freely to all who ask, and such like? And our father said: He should with reason endure all things rather, if he prefers life to them.

CHAPTER 7. THE EXPLANATION OF A PARABLE; THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE LIFE

And Peter said: Are not those, then, who you said received injustice, themselves transgressors, inasmuch as they are in the kingdom of the other, and is it not by overreaching that they have obtained all they possess? While those who are thought to act unjustly are conferring a favour on each subject of the hostile kingdom, so far as they permit him to have property. For these possessions belong to those who have chosen the present. And they are so far kind as to permit the others to live. This, then, is the parable; now listen to the actual truth. The prophet of the truth who appeared on earth taught us that the Maker and God of all gave two kingdoms to two, good and evil; granting to the evil the sovereignty over the present world along with law, so that he, it, should have the right to punish those who act unjustly; but to the good He gave the eternal to come. But He made each man free with the power to give himself up to whatsoever he prefers, either to the present evil or the future good. Those men who choose the present have power to be rich, to revel in luxury, to indulge in pleasures, and to do whatever they can. For they will possess none of the future goods. But those who have determined to accept the blessings of the future reign have no right to regard as their own the things that are here, since they belong to a foreign king, with the exception only of water and bread, and those things procured with sweat to maintain life (for it is not lawful for them to commit suicide), and also one garment, for they are not permitted to go naked on account of the all-seeing Heaven.

CHAPTER 8. THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

If, then, you wish to have an accurate account of the matter, listen. Those of whom you said a little before that they receive injustice, rather act unjustly themselves; for they who have chosen the future blessings, live along with the bad in the present world, having many enjoyments the same as the bad,--such as life itself, light, bread, water, clothing, and others of a like nature. But they who are thought by you to act unjustly, shall not live with the good men in the coming age. And our father replied to this: Now when you have convinced me that those who act unjustly suffer injustice themselves, while those who suffer injustice have by far the advantage, the whole affair seems to me still more the most unjust of transactions; for

those who seem to act unjustly grant many things to those who have chosen the future blessings, but those who seem to receive injustice do themselves commit injustice, because they do not give in the other world, to those who have given them blessings here, the same advantages which these gave to them. And Peter said: This is not unjust at all, because each one has the power to choose the present or the future goods, whether they be small or great. He who chooses by his own individual judgment and wish, receives no injustice,--I mean, not even should his choice rest on what is small, since the great lay within his choice, as in fact did also the small. And our father said: You are right; for it has been said by one of the wise men of the Greeks, 'The blame rests with those who chose--God is blameless.'

CHAPTER 9. POSSESSIONS ARE TRANSGRESSIONS

Will you be so good as to explain this matter also? I remember Clement saying to me, that we suffer injuries and afflictions for the forgiveness of our sins. Peter said: This is quite correct. For we, who have chosen the future things, in so far as we possess more goods than these, whether they be clothing, or food or drink, or any other thing, possess sins, because we ought not to have anything, as I explained to you a little ago. To all of us possessions are sins. The deprivation of these, in whatever way it may take place, is the removal of sins. And our father said: That seems reasonable, as you explained that these were the two boundary lines of the two kings, and that it was in the power of each to choose whatever he wished of what was under their authority. But why are the afflictions sent, or do we suffer them justly? And Peter said: Most justly; for since the boundary line of the saved is, as I said, that no one should possess anything, but since many have many possessions, or in other words sins, for this reason the exceeding love of God sends afflictions on those who do not act in purity of heart, that on account of their having some measure of the love of God, they might, by temporary inflictions, be saved from eternal punishments.

CHAPTER 10. POVERTY NOT NECESSARILY RIGHTEOUS

And our father said: How then is this? Do we not see many impious men poor? Then do these belong to the saved on this account? And Peter said: Not at all; for that poverty is not acceptable which longs for what it ought not. So that some are rich as far as their choice goes, though poor in actual wealth, and they are punished because they desire to have more. But one is not unquestionably righteous because he happens to be poor. For he can be a beggar as far as actual wealth is concerned, but he may desire and even do what above everything he ought not to do. Thus he may worship idols, or be a blasphemer or fornicator, or he may live indiscriminately, or perjure himself, or lie, or live the life of an unbeliever. But our teacher pronounced the faithful poor blessed; and he did so, not because they had given anything, for they had nothing, but because they were not to be condemned, as having done no sin, simply because they gave no alms, because they had nothing to give. And our father said: In good truth all seems to go right as far as the subject of discussion is concerned; wherefore I have resolved to listen to the whole of your argument in regular order.

CHAPTER 11. EXPOSITION OF THE TRUE RELIGION PROMISED

And Peter said: Since, then, you are eager henceforth to learn what relates to our religion, I ought to explain it in order, beginning with God Himself, and showing that we ought to call Him alone God, and that we neither ought to speak of the others as gods nor deem them such, and that he who acts contrary to this will be punished eternally, as having shown the greatest impiety to Him who is the Lord of all. And saying this, he laid his hands on those who were vexed by afflictions, and were diseased, and possessed by

demons; and, praying, he healed them, and dismissed the multitudes. And then entering in this way, he partook of his usual food, and went to sleep.

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