

Living in Doubt

by Clement of Rome

Clement of Rome explores the challenges of living in doubt and uncertainty, emphasizing the importance of living piously and seeking established doctrine.

Scripture: Matthew 10:28

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Faith And Doubt"

Description

Clement of Rome grapples with doubts about the afterlife, questioning the purpose of laboring in this life if there is no existence after death. He ponders the possibility of facing eternal punishment in Hades for not living piously, yet struggles with uncertainty about the soul's immortality and what pleases God. Despite the lack of clear answers, Clement acknowledges the importance of living righteously and subduing earthly pleasures in the face of an uncertain hope.

Transcript

And again, living in doubt, I said to myself, Why do I labour in vain, when the matter is clear, that if I lose existence when I die, it is not fitting that I should distress myself now while I do exist? Wherefore I shall reserve my grief till that day, when, ceasing to exist, I shall not be affected with grief. But if I am to exist, what does it profit me now to distress myself gratuitously?

And immediately after this another reasoning assailed me; for I said, Shall I not have something worse to suffer than that which distresses me now, if I have not lived piously; and shall I not be delivered over, according to the doctrines of some philosophers, to Pyriphlegethon and Tartarus, like Sisyphus, or Tityus, or Ixion, or Tantalus, and be punished for ever in Hades?

But again I replied, saying: But there are no such things as these. Yet again I said: But if there be? Therefore, said I, since the matter is uncertain, the safer plan is for me rather to live piously. But how shall I be able, for the sake of righteousness, to subdue bodily pleasures, looking, as I do, to an uncertain hope? But I am neither fully persuaded what is that righteous thing that is pleasing to God, nor do I know whether the soul is immortal or mortal. Neither can I find any well-established doctrine, nor can I abstain from such debates.

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