

Epistle 3

by Cyprian of Carthage

Cyprian's Epistle 3 emphasizes the importance of honoring a bishop's memory and maintaining integrity in church communications.

Scripture: Proverbs 12:22, John 8:32, Ephesians 4:25, Colossians 3:9, 1 Peter 2:1

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Christian Integrity"

Description

Cyprian of Carthage writes a friendly and familiar epistle to the elders and deacons in Rome, expressing joy upon hearing of the glorious end of his colleague. He commends the Roman clergy for honoring their bishop's memory publicly, setting an example of faith and virtue for others to follow. Cyprian also addresses concerns about a potentially altered epistle, emphasizing the importance of truth and integrity in clerical communication.

Transcript

TO THE PRESBYTERS AND DEACONS ABIDING

AT ROME. A.D. 250.

ARGUMENT.--THIS IS A FAMILIAR AND FRIENDLY EPISTLE; SO THAT IT REQUIRES NO FORMAL ARGUMENT, ESPECIALLY AS IT CAN BE SUFFICIENTLY GATHERED FROM THE TITLE ITSELF. THE LETTER OF THE ROMAN CLERGY, TO WHICH CYPRIAN IS REPLYING, IS MISSING.

1. Cyprian to the elders and deacons, brethren abiding at Rome, sends, greeting. When the report of the departure of the excellent man, my colleague, was still uncertain among us, my beloved brethren, and I was wavering doubtfully in my opinion on the matter, I received a letter sent to me from you by Crementius the sub-deacon, in which I was most abundantly informed of his glorious end; and I rejoiced greatly that, in harmony with the integrity of his administration, an honourable consummation also attended him. Wherein, moreover, I greatly congratulate you, that you honour his memory with a testimony so public and so illustrious, so that by your means is made known to me, not only what is glorious to you in connection with the memory of your bishop, but what ought to afford to me also an example of faith and virtue. For in proportion as the fall of a bishop is an event which tends ruinously to the fall of his followers, so on the other hand it is a useful and helpful thing when a bishop, by the firmness of his faith, sets himself forth to his brethren as an object of imitation.

2. I have, moreover, read another epistle, in which neither the person who wrote nor the persons to whom it was written were plainly declared; and inasmuch as in the same letter both the writing and the matter, and even the paper itself, gave me the idea that something had been taken away, or had been changed from the original, I have sent you back the epistle as it actually came to hand, that you may examine whether it is the very same which you gave to Crementius the sub-deacon, to carry. For it is a very serious thing if the truth of a clerical letter is corrupted by any falsehood or deceit. In order, then, that we may know this, ascertain whether the writing and subscription are yours, and write me again what is the truth of the matter. I bid you, dearest brethren, ever heartily farewell.

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