

Audio ■ Epistle to the Ephesians

by Ignatius of Antioch

This sermon is a letter from Ignatius to the church in Ephesus, commending their faith, love, and unity. Ignatius encourages them to honor their bishop and deacon, to be harmonious in their love for Jesus Christ, and to be vigilant against false teachings. He emphasizes the importance of faith, love, and unity in Christ, and warns against pride and deception. The letter concludes with exhortations to remain steadfast in the face of challenges and to gather together in grace and love.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1, 1 Peter 5:5, 1 John 4:1, 1 Corinthians 13:13, Philippians 2:2

Topics: "Faith and Unity", "Vigilance Against False Teachings"

Description

This sermon is a letter from Ignatius to the church in Ephesus, commending their faith, love, and unity. Ignatius encourages them to honor their bishop and deacon, to be harmonious in their love for Jesus Christ, and to be vigilant against false teachings. He emphasizes the importance of faith, love, and unity in Christ, and warns against pride and deception. The letter concludes with exhortations to remain steadfast in the face of challenges and to gather together in grace and love.

Transcript

Ignatius, who is also Theophorus, unto her which hath been blessed in greatness through the plentitude of God the Father, which hath been foreordained before the ages, to be forever unto abiding and unchangeable glory, united and elect, in a true passion, by the will of the Father, and of Jesus Christ our God, even unto the church which is in Ephesus of Asia, worthy of all felicitation, abundant greeting in Christ Jesus, and in blameless joy. While I welcomed in God your well-beloved name which ye bear by natural right, in an upright and virtuous mind, by faith and love in Christ Jesus our Saviour, being imitators of God, and having your hearts kindled in the blood of God, ye have perfectly fulfilled your congenial work. For when ye heard that I was on my way from Syria, in bonds for the sake of the common name and hope, and was hoping through your prayers to succeed in fighting with wild beasts in Rome, that by so succeeding I might have power to be a disciple, ye were eager to visit me, seeing then that in God's name I have received your whole multitude in the person of Onesimus, whose love passeth utterance, and who is moreover your bishop in the flesh.

And I pray that ye may love him according to Jesus Christ, and that ye all may be like him. For blessed is he that granteth unto you, according to your deserving, to have such a bishop. Chapter 2 But as touching my fellow-servant Burrus, who by the will of God is your deacon, blessed in all things, I pray that he may remain with me to the honour of yourselves and of your bishop.

Yea, and Crocus also, who is worthy of God, and of you, whom I received as an ensample of the love which ye bear me, hath relieved me in all ways. Even so may the Father of Jesus Christ refresh him, together with Onesimus and Burrus and Euplas and Fronto, in whom I saw you all with the eyes of love. May I have joy of you always, if so be I am worthy of it.

It is therefore meet for you in every way to glorify Jesus Christ who glorified you, that being perfectly joined together in one submission, submitting yourselves to your bishop and presbytery, ye may be sanctified in all things. Chapter 3 I do not command you as though I were somewhat, for even though I am in bonds for the name's sake, I am not yet perfected in Jesus Christ. For now am I beginning to be a disciple, and I speak to you as to my school fellows, for I ought to be trained by you for the contest in faith, in admonition, in endurance, in long-suffering.

But, since love doth not suffer me to be silent concerning you, therefore was I forward to exhort you, that ye run in harmony with the mind of God, for Jesus Christ also our inseparable life is the mind of the Father, even as the bishops that are settled in the farthest parts of the earth are in the mind of Jesus Christ. End of chapter 3 Chapter 4 So then, it becometh you to run in harmony with the mind of the bishop, which thing also ye do. For your honourable presbytery, which is worthy of God, is attuned to the bishop, even as it strings to a lyre.

Therefore in your conquered and harmonious love Jesus Christ is sung. And do ye each and all form yourselves into a chorus, that being harmonious in conquered and taking the keynote of God, ye may in unison sing with one voice through Jesus Christ unto the Father, that he may both hear you and acknowledge you by your good deeds to be members of his Son. It is therefore profitable for you to be in blameless unity, that ye may also be partakers of God always.

End of chapter 4 Chapter 5 For if I in a short time had such converse with your bishop, which was not after the manner of men, but in the spirit, how much more do I congratulate you who are closely joined with him, as the church is with Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is with the Father, that all things may be harmonious in unity? Let no man be deceived, if any one be not within the precinct of the altar, he lacketh the bread of God. For if the prayer of one and another hath so great force, how much more that of the bishop and of the whole church. Whosoever therefore cometh not to the congregation, he doth thereby show his pride, and hath separated himself.

For it is written, God resisteth the proud. Let us therefore be careful not to resist the bishop, that by our submission we may give ourselves to God. End of chapter 5 Chapter 6 And in proportion as a man seeth that his bishop is silent, let him fear him the more.

For every one whom the master of the household sendeth to be steward over his own house, we ought so to receive as him that sent him. Plainly therefore we ought to regard the bishop as the Lord himself. Now Onesimus of his own accord highly praiseth your orderly conduct in God.

For that ye all live according to truth, and that no heresy hath a home among you, nay, ye do not so much as listen to any one, if he speak of aught else save concerning Jesus Christ in truth. End of chapter 6 Chapter 7 For some are wont of malicious guile to hawk about the name, while they do certain other things unworthy of God. These men ye ought to shun as wild beasts, for they are mad dogs, biting by stealth against whom ye ought to be on your guard, for they are hard to heal.

There is one only physician, of flesh and of spirit, generate and ingenerate, God in man, true life in death, Son of Mary and Son of God, first passable and then impassable, Jesus Christ our Lord. End of chapter 7
Chapter 8 Let no one therefore deceive you, as indeed ye are not deceived, seeing that ye belong wholly to God. For when no lust is established in you, which hath power to torment you, then truly ye live after God.

I devote myself for you, and I dedicate myself as an offering for the church of you Ephesians, which is famous unto all the ages. They that are of the flesh cannot do the things of the Spirit, neither can they that are of the Spirit do the things of the flesh, even as faith cannot do the things of unfaithfulness, neither unfaithfulness the things of faith. Nay, even those things which ye do after the flesh are spiritual, for ye do all things in Jesus Christ.

End of chapter 8 Chapter 9 But I have learned that certain persons passed through you from yonder, bringing evil doctrine, whom ye suffered not to sow seed in you, for ye stopped your ears, so that ye might not receive the seed sown by them. Forasmuch as ye are stones of a temple, which were prepared beforehand for a building of God the Father, being hoisted up to the heights through the engine of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, and using for a rope the Holy Spirit, while your faith is your windlass, and love is the way that leadeth up to God. So then ye are all companions in the way, carrying your God and your shrine, your Christ and your holy things, being arrayed from head to foot in the commandments of Jesus Christ.

And I too, taking part in the festivity, am permitted by letter to bear your company, and to rejoice with you, that ye set not your love on anything after the common life of men, but only on God. End of chapter 9
Chapter 10 And pray ye also without ceasing for the rest of mankind, for there is in them a hope of repentance, that they may find God. Therefore permit them to take lessons at least from your works.

Against their outbursts of wrath be ye meek, against their proud words be ye humble, against their railings set ye your prayers, against their errors be ye steadfast in the faith, against their fierceness be ye gentle, and be not zealous to imitate them by requital. Let us show ourselves their brothers by our forbearance, but let us be zealous to be imitators of the Lord, vying with each other who shall suffer the greater wrong, who shall be defrauded, who shall be set at naught, that no herb of the devil be found in you, but in all purity and temperance abide ye in Christ Jesus, with your flesh and with your spirit. End of chapter 10
Chapter 11 These are the last times, henceforth let us have reverence, let us fear the long-suffering of God, lest it turn into a judgment against us, for either let us fear the wrath which is to come, or let us love the grace which now is, the one or the other, provided only that we be found in Christ Jesus unto true life.

Let nothing glitter in your eyes apart from him, in whom I carry about my bonds, my spiritual pearls in which I would fain rise again through your prayer, whereof may it be my lot to be always a partaker, that I may be found in the company of those Christians of Ephesus, who moreover were ever of one mind with the apostles and the power of Jesus Christ. End of chapter 11
Chapter 12 I know who I am, and to whom I write. I am a convict, ye have received mercy, I am in peril, ye are established, ye are the high road of those that are on their way to die unto God, ye are associates in the mysteries with Paul, who was sanctified, who obtained a good report, who is worthy of all felicitation, and whose footsteps I would fain be found treading, when I shall attain unto God, who in every letter maketh mention of you in Christ Jesus.

End of chapter 12 Chapter 13 Do your diligence, therefore, to meet together more frequently, for thanksgiving to God, and for his glory. For when ye meet together frequently, the powers of Satan are cast

down, and his mischief cometh to naught in the concord of your faith. There is nothing better than peace, in which all warfare of things in heaven, and things on earth, is abolished.

End of chapter 13 Chapter 14 None of these things is hidden from you, if ye be perfect in your faith and love toward Jesus Christ, for these are the beginning and end of life. Faith is the beginning, and love is the end, and the two being found in unity are God, while all things else follow in their train unto true nobility. No man professing faith sinneth, and no man possessing love hateth.

The tree is manifest from its fruit, so they that profess to be Christ's shall be seen through their actions. For the work is not a thing of profession now, but is seen then when one is found in the power of faith unto the end. End of chapter 14 Chapter 15 It is better to keep silence, and to be, than to talk, and not to be.

It is a fine thing to teach, if the speaker practise. Now there is one Teacher, who spake, and it came to pass, yea, and even the things which he hath done in silence are worthy of the Father. He that truly possesseth the word of Jesus is able also to hearken unto his silence, that he may be perfect, that through his speech he may act, and through his silence he may be known.

Nothing is hidden from the Lord, but even our secrets are nigh unto him. Let us therefore do all things as knowing that he dwelleth in us, to the end that we may be his temples, and he himself may be in us as our God. This is so, and it will also be made clear in our sight from the love which we rightly bear towards him.

End of chapter 15 Chapter 16 Be not deceived, my brethren, corruptors of houses shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If then they which do these things after the flesh are put to death, how much more if a man through evil doctrine corrupt the faith of God, for which Jesus Christ was crucified? Such a man, having defiled himself, shall go into the unquenchable fire, and in like manner also shall he that hearkeneth unto him. End of chapter 16 Chapter 17 For this cause the Lord received ointment on his head, that he might breathe incorruption upon the church.

Be not anointed with the ill odour of the teaching of the prince of this world, lest he lead you captive, and rob you of the life which is set before you. And wherefore do we not all walk prudently, receiving the knowledge of God, which is Jesus Christ? Why perish we in our folly, not knowing the gift of grace which the Lord hath truly sent? End of chapter 17 Chapter 18 My spirit is made an offscoring for the cross, which is a stumbling block to them that are unbelievers, but to us salvation and life eternal. Where is the wise, where is the disputer, where is the boasting of them that are called prudent? For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived in the womb by Mary, according to a dispensation of the seed of David, but also of the Holy Ghost.

And he was born and was baptised, that by his passion he might cleanse water. End of chapter 18 Chapter 19 And hidden from the prince of this world were the virginity of Mary, and her childbearing, and likewise also the death of the Lord. Three mysteries to be cried aloud, the which were wrought in the silence of God.

How then were they made manifest to the ages? A star shone forth in the heaven above all the stars, and its light was unutterable, and its strangeness caused amazement, and all the rest of the constellations with the sun and moon formed themselves into a chorus about the star. But the star itself far outshone them all, and there was perplexity to know whence came this strange appearance which was so unlike them. From that time forward every sorcery and every spell was dissolved, the ignorance of wickedness vanished away, the ancient kingdom was pulled down, when God appeared in the likeness of man unto newness of

everlasting life, and that which had been perfected in the counsels of God began to take effect.

Thence all things were perturbed, because the abolishing of death was taken in hand. If Jesus Christ should count me worthy through your prayer, and it should be the divine will, in my second tract, which I intend to write to you, I will further set before you the dispensation whereof I have begun to speak, relating to the new man, Jesus Christ, which consisteth in faith towards him, and in love towards him, in his passion and resurrection, especially if the Lord should reveal ought to me. Assemble yourselves together in common, every one of you severally, man by man, in grace, in one faith, and one Jesus Christ, who after the flesh was of David's race, who is son of man and son of God, to the end that ye may obey the bishop and presbytery without distraction of mind, breaking one bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote that we should not die, but live for ever in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXI I am devoted to you, and to those whom for the honour of God ye sent to Smyrna, whence also I write unto you with thanksgiving to the Lord, having love for Polycarp, as I have for you also. Remember me even as I would that Jesus Christ may also remember you. Pray for the church which is in Syria, whence I am led a prisoner to Rome, I who am the very last of the faithful there, according as I was counted worthy, to be found unto the honour of God.

Fare ye well in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ our common hope. The Ephesians.

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