

Letter of St. Ignatius to the Trallians

(Abridged with mixed translation)

Greeting

Ignatius, who is also called "*Theophorus*", to the holy Church which is at Tralles, in Asia, loved by God the Father of Jesus Christ; elect and an honour to God; possessing peace through the flesh, blood, and passion of Jesus Christ, who is our hope, through our rising again to Him. I salute her in Apostolic fashion with the fullness of grace and wish abundance of happiness.

Chapter 1. Acknowledgment of their excellence

Beyond reproach, I hear, and unshaken in patient endurance – a disposition that is not only your current practice, but is according to your inherent nature. I was informed of this by your bishop Polybius who has come to Smyrna by the will of God and so heartily shared my joy at the chains which I bear in Christ Jesus, that in his person I beheld your whole community. Welcoming your God-inspired goodwill, I burst into thanks and praise, finding that you were patterning yourselves after God.

* Chapter 2. Be subject to the bishop, etc

Surely, when you submit to the bishop as representing Jesus Christ, it is clear to me that you are not living the life of men, but that of Jesus Christ, who died for us, that through faith in His death you yourselves might escape dying. It is therefore necessary that, as you indeed do, that you do nothing without your bishop and be subject also to the presbytery as representing the Apostles of Jesus Christ.

It is further necessary that the deacons, the dispensers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, should win the approval of all in every way; for they are not dispensers of food and drink, but ministers of the Church of God. Hence they must avoid all grounds of accusation against them, as avoiding fire.

Chapter 3. Honour the deacons, etc

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Chapter 4. I have need of humility

I have great knowledge in God, but I restrain myself, lest, I should perish through boasting. For now it is needful for me to be the more fearful; and not give heed to those who flatter my vanity. Those who speak to me in this way, in fact, scourge me. I therefore have need of meekness, by which the Prince of this world is undone.

Chapter 5. I will not teach you profound doctrines

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*** Chapter 6. Abstain from the poison of heretics**

I exhort you therefore – no, not I, but the love of Jesus Christ: use Christian nourishment only and abstain from plants of a different kind, that is, heresy. Heretics mix Jesus Christ with their own poison to gain our confidence, just like those who administer a deadly drug in sweet wine – the ignorant drink it and swallow death!

Chapter 7. The same continued

So, then, be on your guard against such people! And this you will do if you are not puffed up and also if you cling inseparably to Jesus Christ our God, to the bishop, and to the precepts of the Apostles. He that is within the sanctuary is pure, but he that is outside is not; that is, he who does anything apart from the bishop, presbytery, or deacon has no pure conscience.

Chapter 8. Be on your guard against the snares of the devil

Not that I have discovered any such thing in your midst; no, I merely warn you in advance since you are dear to me and I foresee the devil's snares. Therefore, clothing yourselves with meekness, be renewed in faith, that is the flesh of the Lord, and in love, that is the blood of Jesus Christ.

Let none of you cherish any grudge against his neighbour. Give no pretext to the pagans, for fear that, by a few foolish men, the whole multitude be reviled. For, *"Woe to him by whose vanity my name is blasphemed among any"*

*** Chapter 9. Reference to the history of Christ**

Stop your ears, therefore, when anyone speaks to you at variance with Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ who was descended from David, son of Mary, who was truly born, ate and drank, really persecuted under Pontius Pilate, really crucified and really died. He also truly rose from the dead, since His Father raised Him up – His Father, who will likewise raise us also who believe in Him through Jesus Christ, apart from whom we have no true life.

Chapter 10. The reality of Christ's passion

But if, as some unbelievers say, that He only *seemed* to suffer then why am I in bonds? Why do I long to be exposed to the wild beasts? In vain, then, do I die! My testimony is, after all, but a lie about the cross of the Lord!

Chapter 11. Avoid the deadly errors of the Docetæ

Flee, therefore, those evil offshoots which produce death-bearing fruit. If any one tastes, he instantly dies, for these men are not the planting of the Father. For if they were, they would appear as branches of the Cross, and their fruit would be imperishable. It is through His Cross and Passion He calls you to Himself, being members of His Body. Obviously, no head can be born separate from the body! God, who is the Saviour Himself, has promised their union.

* Chapter 12. Continue in unity and love

I greet you from Smyrna, together with the Churches of God present here with me, who have refreshed me in all things, both in the flesh and in the spirit.

My chains, which I carry about with me for the sake of Jesus Christ exhort you. Continue in harmony among yourselves, and in prayer with one another; for it becomes every one of you, and especially the presbyters, to refresh the bishop, to the honour of the Father, of Jesus Christ, and of the Apostles.

I beg that you listen to me in love, so that I may not, by writing to you, prove witness against you. But also pray for me, who stands in need of your love before the mercy seat of God, that I may be granted that which my heart desires and may not be found a reprobate.

Chapter 13. Conclusion

The love of the Smyrnæans and Ephesians salutes you. Remember in your prayer the Church which is in Syria, from which I am not worthy to receive my name, being the very least of them.

Farewell in Jesus Christ. Be obedient to the bishop as to the command of God, and so too, to the presbytery. And, every man, love one another with an undivided heart. Let my spirit be consecrated to you, not only now, but also when I have happily made my way to God. I am still in danger, but the Father is faithful and will, in Jesus Christ, answer both my prayer and yours. May you, in union with Him, be found unblameable.

