

Letter of St. Ignatius to the Ephesians

(Abridged with mixed translation)

Greeting

Ignatius who is also called "*Theophorus*", to the Church which is at Ephesus, in Asia; deservedly most happy, being blessed in the greatness and fullness of God the Father, and predestined before the beginning of time, to be forever united and chosen through the true passion by the will of the Father, and Jesus Christ, our God.

* Chapter 1. Praise of the Ephesians

As soon as you heard that I was coming from Syria in chains for our common Name and hope, you hastened to see me. In the name of God, then, I received your whole multitude in the person of Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love, and your bishop here on earth. I pray you in the spirit of Jesus Christ to love him, and wish all of you to resemble him. Blessed, indeed, is He whose grace made you worthy to possess such a bishop.

* Chapter 2. Congratulations and entreaties

As to my fellow-servant Burrhus, your deacon by God's appointment and blessed with every gift, I beg that he would remain with me, both for your honour and that of your bishop. Crocus also, the manifestation of your love, has in all things refreshed me. Together with Onesimus, Burrhus, Euplus and Fronto, I have beheld you all.

* Chapter 3. Exhortations to unity

I do not issue orders to you, as if I were some great person. For, even though I am in chains for the Name, I am not yet perfected in Jesus Christ. For now I begin to be a disciple and I speak to you as fellow-disciples with me. But love will not allow me to be silent where you are concerned, so I am taking this opportunity to exhort you to live in harmony with the mind of God.

Chapter 4. The Symphony of the Church

It is fitting that you should run together in accordance with the will of your bishop, and this you do. Your renowned presbytery is fitted to the bishop as strings are to a harp. This is why, in the symphony of your harmonious love, Jesus Christ is sung. The rest of you should also form a choir, so that, joining in the song, taking your key note from God, you may with one voice sing to the Father through Jesus Christ, so that He may both hear you, and recognize in you the melodies of His Son. You should live in flawless unity, that you may at all times enjoy communion with God.

* Chapter 5. The praise of unity

For if I in a short time became so warmly attached to your bishop how much more do I count happy you who are as closely knit to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as

Jesus Christ is to the Father! Let no one deceive himself: unless a man is within the sanctuary, he has to go without the Bread of God.

If the prayer of one or two possesses great power, how much more will that of the bishop and the whole Church! He, therefore, that does not assemble with the Church, has even by this manifested his pride, and condemned himself. For it is written, God resists the proud.

Chapter 6. Have respect to the bishop as to Christ Himself

Obviously, anyone whom the Master of the household puts in charge of His domestic affairs, ought to be received by us as He who has charged him with this duty. Plainly, then, we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord Himself.

*** Chapter 7. Beware of false teachers**

As you know, there are some who go about with the Name on their lips, while they indulge in practices at variance with it and which are an insult to God. These you must flee as you would wild beasts: they are rabid dogs that bite in secret; beware of them, for they are hard to cure.

There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh; true life in death; sprung from both Mary and from God; first subject to suffering and then incapable of it — Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 8. Renewed praise of the Ephesians

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*** Chapter 9. You have given no heed to false teachers**

I have heard of those passing through whose doctrine was bad. These you did not permit to sow their seed among you. You consider yourselves stones of the Father's temple, prepared for the building of God the Father, to be taken aloft by the cross of Jesus Christ, while the Holy Spirit serves you as a rope, your faith the means by which you ascend, and your love the way which leads up to God.

And thus you all are fellow-travelers, God-bearers, temple-bearers, Christ-bearers, bearers of holiness, adorned in all respects with the commandments of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 10. Exhortations to prayer, humility, etc

Pray without ceasing on behalf of other men in the hope they repent and win their way to God. Let them be instructed by your works, if in no other way. Meet their angry outbursts with your own gentleness, their boastfulness with your humility, their reviling with your prayers, their error with your constancy in the faith, their harshness with your meekness. Do not imitate their conduct, but prove yourselves their brothers through kindness. Let us strive to follow the Lord's example and see who can suffer greater wrong, who more deprivation, who more contempt! Thus no weed of the devil will be found among you.

Chapter 11. An exhortation to fear God, etc

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*** Chapter 12. Praise of the Ephesians**

You are fellow initiates with Paul, a man sanctified, of character magnificently attested, and worthy of every felicitation, in whose footsteps I wish to be found when I come to meet God, and who in an entire epistle remembers you in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 13. Meet together frequently for the worship of God

Make an effort, then, to meet more frequently to celebrate God's Eucharist and to offer praise. For when you meet frequently, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and the destruction at which he aims is prevented by the unity of your faith.

Chapter 14. Exhortations to faith and love

Here is the beginning and the end of life: faith is the beginning, the end is love. Now these two, being inseparably connected together, are of God, while all other things for a holy life follow after them. The tree is known by its fruit. In like manner, those who profess to belong to Christ will be known as such by their conduct. Certainly, what matters now is not mere profession of faith, but whether one is found to be continuing in the power of faith to the end.

Chapter 15. Exhortation to confess Christ by silence as well as speech

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Chapter 16. The fate of false teachers

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Chapter 17. Beware of false doctrines

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Chapter 18. The glory of the cross

I offer my life's breath for the sake of the Cross, which is a stumbling block to the unbelievers, but to us is salvation and eternal life.

Chapter 19. Three celebrated mysteries

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Chapter 20. Unity and the promise of another letter

Show obedience with undivided mind to the bishop and the presbytery, and break the same Bread, which is the medicine of immortality, the antidote against death, and everlasting life in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 21. Conclusion

I offer my life as a ransom for you and for those whom, for the glory of God, you sent to Smyrna. Remember me, as may Jesus Christ remember you! Pray for the Church which is in Syria. Farewell in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ, our common hope.

