

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF CLEMENT TO THE CORINTHIANS

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1. Brethren, we must think of Jesus Christ as of God, as of "the Judge of the living and the dead" and we must not think little of our salvation, for if we think little of him we also hope to obtain but little. And those who listen as though it were a little matter are sinning, and we also are sinning, if we do not know whence and by whom, and to what place we are called, and how great sufferings Jesus Christ endured for our sake. What return, then, shall we make to him, or what fruit shall we offer worthy of that which he has given us? And how great a debt of holiness do we owe him? For he gave us the light, he called us "son," as a Father, he saved us when we were perishing. What praise, then, or what reward shall we give him in return for what we received? We were maimed in our understanding, worshipping stone, and wood, and gold, and silver, and copper, the works of men, and our whole life was nothing else than death. We were covered with darkness, and our eyes were full of mist; but we have received our sight, and by his will we have cast off the cloud which covered us. For he had pity on us, and saved us in his mercy, and regarded the great error and destruction which was in us, and our hopelessness of salvation save from him; for he called us when we were not, and it was his will that out of nothing we should come to being.

2. "Rejoice thou barren that barest not; break forth and cry thou that travailest not; for the children of the deserted are many more than hers that hath a husband." In saying, "Rejoice thou barren that barest not," he meant us, for our church was barren before children were given her. And in saying, "Cry thou that travailest not," he means this,—that we should offer our prayers in sincerity to God, and not grow weary as women that give birth. And in saying, "For the children of the deserted are many more than hers that hath a husband," he meant that our people seemed to be deserted by God, but that now we who have believed have become many more than those who seemed to have God. And another Scripture also says, "I came not to call righteous, but sinners"; He means that those who are perishing must be saved, for it is great and wonderful to give strength, not to the things which are standing, but to those which are falling. So Christ also willed to save the perishing, and he saved many, coming and calling us who were already perishing.

3. Seeing, then, that he has shewn such mercy towards us, first that we who are living do not sacrifice to the dead gods, and do not worship them, but through him know the father of truth, what is the true knowledge concerning him except that we should not deny him through whom we knew him? And he himself also says, "Whosoever confessed me before men, I will confess him before my Father"; this then is our reward, if we confess him through whom we were saved. But how do we confess him? By doing what he says, and not disregarding his commandments, and honouring him not only with our lips, but "with all our heart and all our mind." And he says also in Isaiah, "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

4. Let us, then, not merely call him Lord, for this will not save us. For he says, "Not everyone that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall be saved, but he that doeth righteousness." So, then, brethren, let us confess him in our deeds, by loving one another, by not committing adultery, nor speaking one against another, nor being jealous, but by being self-

controlled, merciful, good; and we ought to sympathise with each other, and not to be lovers of money. By these deeds we confess him, and not by the opposite kind. And we must not fear men rather than God. For this reason, if you do these things, the Lord said, "If ye be gathered together with me in my bosom, and do not my commandments, I will cast you out, and will say to you, Depart from me, I know not whence ye are, ye workers of iniquity."

5. Wherefore, brethren, let us forsake our sojourning in this world, and do the will of him who called us, and let us not fear to go forth from this world, for the Lord said, "Ye shall be as lambs in the midst of wolves," and Peter answered and said to him, "If then the wolves tear the lambs?" Jesus said to Peter, "Let the lambs have no fear of the wolves after their death; and do ye have no fear of those that slay you, and can do nothing more to you, but fear him who after your death hath power over body and soul, to cast them into the flames of hell." And be well assured, brethren, that our sojourning in this world in the flesh is a little thing and lasts a short time, but the promise of Christ is great and wonderful, and brings us rest, in the kingdom which is to come and in everlasting life. What then shall we do to attain these things save lead a holy and righteous life, and regard the things of this world as not our own, and not desire them? For by desiring to obtain these things we fall from the way of righteousness.

6. And the Lord says:—"No servant can serve two masters." If we desire to serve both God and Mammon it is unprofitable to us, "For what is the advantage if a man gain the whole world but lose his soul?" Now the world that is, and the world to come are two enemies. This world speaks of adultery, and corruption, and love of money, and deceit, but that world bids these things farewell. We cannot then be the friends of both; but we must bid farewell to this world, to consort with that which is to come. We reckon that it is better to hate the things which are here, for they are little, and short-lived, and corruptible, but to love the things which are there, the good things which are incorruptible. For if we do the will of Christ we shall gain rest; but if not, nothing shall rescue us from eternal punishment, if we neglect his commandments. And the Scripture also says in Ezekiel that, "if Noah and Job and Daniel arise, they shall not rescue their children in the captivity." But if even such righteous men as these cannot save their children by their own righteousness, with what confidence shall we enter into the palace of God, if we keep not our baptism pure and undefiled? Or who shall be our advocate if we be not found to have pious and righteous works?

7. So then, my brethren, let us contend, knowing that the contest is close at hand, and that many make voyages for corruptible prizes, but not all are crowned, save those who have toiled much, and contended well. Let us then contend that we may all be crowned. Let us run the straight course, the immortal contest, and let many of us sail to it, and contend, that we may also receive the crown, and if we cannot all receive the crown, let us at least come near to it. We must remember that if he who takes part in the contest for a corruptible prize be detected in unfairness, he is flogged, taken up, and thrown off the course. What do you think? What shall he suffer who cheats in the contest for that which is incorruptible? For of those who have not kept the seal of baptism he says:—"Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be a spectacle for all flesh."

8. Let us repent then while we are on the earth. For we are clay in the hand of the workman; for just as the potter, if he make a vessel, and it be bent or broken in his hand, models it afresh, but if he has come so far as to put it into the fiery oven, he can do nothing to mend it any more; so also let us, so long as we are in this world, repent with all our heart of the wicked deeds which we have done in the flesh, that we may be saved by the Lord, while we have a time for repentance. For after we have departed from this world, we can no longer make confession, or repent any more in that place. So then, brethren, if we do the will of the Father, if we keep the flesh pure, and if we observe the commandments of the Lord, we shall obtain eternal life. For the Lord says in the Gospel, "If ye did not guard that which is small, who shall give you that which is great? For I tell you that he who is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is much." He means, then, this:—Keep the flesh pure, and the seal of baptism undefiled, that we may obtain eternal life.

9. And let none of you say that this flesh is not judged and does not rise again. Understand: in what state did you receive salvation, in what state did you receive your sight, except in this flesh? We must therefore guard the flesh as a temple of God, for as you were called in the flesh, you shall also come in the flesh. If Christ, the Lord who saved us, though he was originally spirit, became flesh and so called us, so also we shall receive our reward in this flesh. Let us then love one another, that we may all attain to the kingdom of God. While we have opportunity to be healed let us give ourselves to God, who heals us, giving him his recompense. What recompense? Repentance from a sincere heart. For he has knowledge of all things beforehand, and knows the things in our hearts. Let us then give him praise, not only with our mouth, but also from our heart, that he may receive us as sons. For the Lord said "My brethren are these who do the will of my Father."

10. Wherefore, my brethren, let us do the will of the father who called us, that we may live, and let us rather follow after virtue, but give up vice as the forerunner of our sins, and let us flee from ungodliness lest evil overtake us. For, if we are zealous to do good, peace will follow after us. For this cause it is not possible for a man to find it, when they bring in human fears, and prefer the pleasures of the present to the promises of the future. For they do not know how great torment the pleasures of the present entail, and what is the joy of the promised future. And if they did these things by themselves it could be endured, but, as it is, they are continuing in teaching evil to innocent souls, and do not know that they will incur a double judgment, both themselves and their hearers.

11. Let us then serve God with a pure heart, and we shall be righteous, but if we do not serve him, because we do not believe the promise of God, we shall be miserable. For the prophetic word also says:—"Miserable are the double-minded that doubt in their heart, who say, These things we heard long ago and in the time of our fathers, but we have waited from day to day, and have seen none of them. O foolish men! compare yourselves to a tree; take a vine; first it sheds its leaves, then there comes a bud, after this the unripe grape, then the full bunch. So also my people has had tumults and afflictions; afterwards it shall receive the good things." Therefore, my brethren, let us not be double-minded, but let us be patient in hope, that we may also receive the reward. "For he is faithful who promised" to pay to each man the recompense of his deeds. If then we

do righteousness before God we shall enter into his kingdom, and shall receive the promises "which ear hath not heard, nor hath eye seen, neither hath it entered into the heart of man."

12. Let us then wait for the kingdom of God, from hour to hour, in love and righteousness, seeing that we know not the day of the appearing of God. For when the Lord himself was asked by someone when his kingdom would come, he said: "When the two shall be one, and the outside as the inside, and the male with the female neither male nor female." Now "the two are one" when we speak with one another in truth, and there is but one soul in two bodies without dissimulation. And by "the outside as the inside" he means this, that the inside is the soul, and the outside is the body. Therefore, just as your body is visible, so let your soul be apparent in your good works. And by "the male with the female neither male nor female" he means this, that when a brother sees a sister he should have no thought of her as female, nor she of him as male. When you do this, he says, the kingdom of my Father will come.

13. Therefore, brethren, let us at last repent forthwith, and be sober for our good, for we are full of much folly and wickedness; let us wipe off from ourselves our former sins, and let us gain salvation by repenting with all our souls. Let us not be menpleasers, and let us wish to please by our righteousness not ourselves alone, but also those who are without, that the name be not blasphemed on our account. For the Lord says, "Every way is my name blasphemed among all the heathen," and again, "Woe unto him on whose account my name is blasphemed." Wherein is it blasphemed? In that you do not do what I desire. For when the heathen hear from our mouth the oracles of God, they wonder at their beauty and greatness; afterwards, when they find out that our deeds are unworthy of the words which we speak, they turn from their wonder to blasphemy, saying that it is a myth and delusion. For when they hear from us that God says: "It is no credit to you, if ye love them that love you, but it is a credit to you, if ye love your enemies, and those that hate you";—when they hear this they wonder at this extraordinary goodness; but when they see that we not only do not love those that hate us, but not even those who love us, they laugh us to scorn, and the name is blasphemed.

14. Thus, brethren, if we do the will of our Father, God, we shall belong to the first Church, the spiritual one which was created before the sun and moon; but if we do not the will of the Lord, we shall fall under the scripture, which says, "My house became a den of brigands." Therefore let us choose to belong to the Church of life, that we may win salvation. Now I imagine that you are not ignorant that the living "Church is the body of Christ." For the scripture says, "God made man male and female"; the male is Christ, the female is the Church. And moreover the books and the Apostles declare that the Church belongs not to the present, but has existed from the beginning; for she was spiritual, as was also our Jesus, but he was made manifest in the last days that he might save us; and the Church, which is spiritual, was made manifest in the flesh of Christ, showing us that if any of us guard her in the flesh without corruption, he shall receive her back again in the Holy Spirit. For this flesh is an anti-type of the Spirit; no one therefore who has corrupted the anti-type shall receive the reality. So, then, he means this, brethren: Guard the flesh, that you may receive the Spirit. Now if we say that the flesh is the Church, and the Spirit is Christ, of course he who has abused the flesh, has abused the Church. Such a one therefore will not receive the Spirit, which is Christ. So great a gift of life and immortality has this flesh the power to receive, if the Holy Spirit

be joined to it, nor can any man express or speak of the things "which the Lord hath prepared" for his elect.

15. Now I think that I have given no mean advice concerning self-control, and if any man follow it, he shall have no regret, but shall save both himself and me his counselor; for it is no small reward to turn to salvation a soul that is wandering and perishing. For this is the recompense which we can pay to God, who created us, if he who speaks and hears both speak and hear with faith and love. Let us then remain righteous and holy in our faith, that we may pray with confidence to God, who says, "While thou art speaking I will say, Behold, here I am." For this saying is the sign of a great promise; for the Lord says that he is more ready to give than we to ask. Let us then accept such great goodness, and not grudge ourselves the gaining of such benefits, for as great joy as these words offer to those who do them so severe a condemnation do they threaten to the disobedient.

16. Seeing therefore, brethren, that we have received no small opportunity for repentance; let us, now that we have time, turn to the God who call us, while we still have one who awaits us. For if we bid farewell to these enjoyments, and conquer our soul, by giving up its wicked lusts, we shall share in the mercy of Jesus. But you know that "the day" of judgment is already "approaching as a burning oven, and some of the heavens shall melt," and the whole earth shall be as lead melting in the fire, and then shall be made manifest the secret and open deeds of men. Almsgiving is therefore good even as penitence for sin; fasting is better than prayer, but the giving of alms is better than both; and love "covers a multitude of sins," but prayer from a good conscience rescues from death. Blessed is every man who is found full of these things; for almsgiving lightens sin.

17. Let us then repent with our whole heart, that none of us perish by the way. For if we have commandments to do this also, to tear men away from idols and to instruct them, how much more is it our duty to save from perishing a soul that already knows God? Let us then help one another, and bring back those that are weak in goodness, that we may all be saved, and convert and exhort one another. And let us not merely seem to believe and pay attention now, while we are being exhorted by the Elders, but also when we have gone home let us remember the commandments of the Lord, and let us not be dragged aside by worldly lusts, but let us try to come here more frequently, and to make progress in the commands of the Lord; that we may "all have the same mind" and be gathered together unto life. For the Lord said: "I come to gather together all the nations, tribes, and languages." Now by this he means the day of his appearing, when he will come and ransom each of us according to his works. And the unbelievers "shall see his glory" and might, and they shall be amazed when they see the sovereignty of the world given to Jesus and shall say: Woe unto us, that it was thou, and we knew it not, and did not believe, and were not obedient to the Elders, when they told us of our salvation. "And their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be a spectacle to all flesh." He means that day of judgment, when they shall see those who were ungodly among us and perverted the commandments of Jesus Christ. But the righteous who have done good, and have endured torture, and have hated the indulgences of the soul, when they see how those who have done amiss, and denied Jesus by word or deed, are punished with terrible torture in unquenchable fire, shall

give “glory to their God,” saying, There shall be hope for him who has served God with all his heart.

18. Let us then also belong to them who give thanks, who have served God, and not to the ungodly who are judged. For I myself too am altogether sinful, and I have not yet escaped temptation, but I am still in the midst of the devices of the devil, yet I am striving to follow after righteousness, that I may have the strength at least to draw near to it, in fear of the judgment to come.

19. Therefore, brothers and sisters, following the God of truth, I am reading you an exhortation to pay attention to that which is written, that you may both save yourselves and him who is the reader among you. For as a reward I beg of you that you repent with all your heart, and give to yourselves salvation and life. For if we do this we shall set a mark for all the younger, who wish to work in the cause of piety and the goodness of God. And let us not be displeased or be vexed in our foolishness when any one admonishes us, and turns us from unrighteousness to righteousness. For sometimes when we do evil we do not know it because of the double-mindedness and unbelief which is in our breasts, and we are “darkened in our understanding” by vain desires. Let us then do righteousness, that we may be saved at the end. Blessed are they who obey these instructions: though they suffer for a short time in this world, they shall gather the immortal fruit of the resurrection. Let not, then, the pious grieve if he endure sorrow at this present time; a time of blessedness awaits him; he shall live again with the fathers above, and rejoice to an eternity wherein is no sorrow.

20. But neither let it grieve your mind that we see the unrighteous enjoying wealth, and the servants of God oppressed. Let us then have faith, brothers and sisters: we are contending in the contest of the living God, and we are being trained by the life which now is, that we may gain the crown in that which is to come. None of the righteous has attained a reward quickly, but waits for it; for if God should pay the recompense of the righteous speedily, we should immediately be training ourselves in commerce and not in godliness; for we should seem to be righteous when we were pursuing not piety but gain. For this reason divine judgment punishes a spirit which is not righteous and loads it with chains. To the only invisible God, the father of truth, who sent forth to us the Saviour and prince of immortality, through whom he also made manifest to us truth and the life of heaven, to him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.