

THE LETTER OF IGNATIUS TO THE EPHESIANS

Salutation

Ignatius the Image-bearer to the church at Ephesus in Asia, blessed with greatness through the fullness of God the Father, predestined before the ages for lasting and unchangeable glory forever, united and elect through genuine suffering by the will of the Father and of Jesus Christ our God, a church most worthy of blessing: heartiest greetings in Jesus Christ and in blameless joy.

Thanks for Visit and Assistance

1 I welcomed in God your well-beloved name, which you possess by reason of your righteous nature, characterized by faith in and love of Christ Jesus our Savior. Being imitators of God, once you took on new life through the blood of God you completed perfectly the task so natural to you. **2** For when you heard that I was on my way from Syria in chains for the sake of our shared name and hope, and was hoping through your prayers to succeed in fighting with wild beasts in Rome—in order that by so succeeding I might be able to be a disciple—you hurried to visit me. **3** Since, therefore, I have received

Salutation *the Image-bearer* Gk *Theophoros*. In Greek inscriptions the term is commonly used as a title, describing those who carry divine images or shrines in religious processions (imagery and terminology that Ignatius applies to the Christian community in 9.2). It is possible that here the term is used as a name ("Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus"); if so, it would be the first instance of such a usage. **1.1 name** I.e., that of "Christian." • *by reason . . . nature* Other ancient authorities read *possess by natural right in an upright and righteous mind*

in God's name your whole congregation in the person of Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love who is also your earthly bishop, I pray that you will love him in accordance with the standard set by Jesus Christ and that all of you will be like him. For blessed is the one who has graciously allowed you, worthy as you are, to have such a bishop.

2 Now concerning my fellow servant Burrhus, who is by God's will your deacon, blessed in every respect, I pray that he may remain with me both for your honor and the bishop's. And Crocus also, who is worthy of God and of you, whom I received as a living example of your love, has refreshed me in every way; may the Father of Jesus Christ likewise refresh him, together with Onesimus, Burrhus, Euplius, and Fronto, in whom I saw all of you with respect to love. **2** May I always have joy in you—if, that is, I am worthy. It is proper, therefore, in every way to glorify Jesus Christ, who has glorified you, so that you, joined together in a united obedience and subject to the bishop and the council of presbyters, may be sanctified in every respect.

Obedience to the Bishop

3 I am not commanding you, as though I were someone important. For even though I am in chains for the sake of the Name, I have not yet been perfected in Jesus Christ. For now I am only beginning to be a disciple, and I speak to you as my fellow students. For I need to be trained by you in faith, instruction, endurance, and patience. **2** But since love does not allow me to be silent concerning you, I have therefore taken the initiative to encourage you, so that you may run together in harmony with the mind of God. For Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is the mind of the Father, just as the bishops appointed throughout the world are in the mind of Christ.

1.3 earthly Some ancient authorities omit this word. If original, the contrast is likely with Christ, their heavenly bishop. **2.1 pray** Or *wish*.

4 Thus it is proper for you to run together in harmony with the mind of the bishop, as you are in fact doing. For your council of presbyters, which is worthy of its name and worthy of God, is attuned to the bishop as strings to a lyre. Therefore in your unanimity and harmonious love Jesus Christ is sung. **2** You must join this chorus, every one of you, so that by being harmonious in unanimity and taking your pitch from God you may sing in unison with one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father, in order that he may both hear you and, on the basis of what you do well, acknowledge that you are members of his Son. It is, therefore, advantageous for you to be in perfect unity, in order that you may always have a share in God.

5 For if I in a short time experienced such fellowship with your bishop, which was not merely human but spiritual, how much more do I congratulate you who are united with him, as the church is with Jesus Christ and as Jesus Christ is with the Father, so that all things may be harmonious in unity. **2** Let no one be misled: if anyone is not within the sanctuary, he lacks the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two has such power, how much more that of the bishop together with the whole church! **3** Therefore whoever does not meet with the congregation thereby demonstrates his arrogance and has separated himself, for it is written: "God opposes the arrogant." Let us, therefore, be careful not to oppose the bishop, in order that we may be obedient to God.

6 Furthermore, the more anyone observes that the bishop is silent, the more one should fear him. For everyone whom the Master of the house sends to manage his own house we must welcome as we would the one who sent him. It is obvious, therefore, that we must regard the bishop as the Lord himself. **2** Now Onesimus himself

5.2 bread of God Cf. John 6:33. *5.3 separated* Or. *judged*. • *God... arrogant* Prov. 3:34; cf. James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5. • *be obedient to God* One ancient authority reads *belong to God by our subjugation*.

highly praises your orderly conduct in God, reporting that you all live in accordance with the truth and that no heresy has found a home among you. Indeed, you do not so much as listen to anyone unless he speaks truthfully about Jesus Christ.

Warnings about Teachers of Error

7 For there are some who are accustomed to carrying about the Name maliciously and deceitfully while doing other things unworthy of God. You must avoid them as wild beasts. For they are mad dogs that bite by stealth; you must be on your guard against them, for their bite is hard to heal. **2** There is only one physician, who is both flesh and spirit, born and unborn, God in man, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first subject to suffering and then beyond it, Jesus Christ our Lord.

8 Therefore let no one deceive you, just as you are not now deceived, seeing that you belong entirely to God. For when no dissension capable of tormenting you is established among you, then you indeed live God's way. I am a humble sacrifice for you and I dedicate myself to you Ephesians, a church that is famous forever. **2** Those who belong to the flesh cannot do spiritual things, nor can those who are spiritual do fleshly things, just as faith cannot do the things of unfaithfulness, nor unfaithfulness the things of faith. Moreover, even those things that you do according to the flesh are in fact spiritual, for you do everything in Jesus Christ.

6.2 heresy Or. *faction*. • *unless... Christ* An editor's emendation. One ancient authority reads *except Jesus Christ speaking in truth*; another has a grammatically impossible reading. *7.2 God in man* Other ancient authorities read *God come in flesh* (cf. John 1:14). *8.1 dissension* Other ancient authorities read *lust*. *8.2 Those who belong...* *the things of faith* Cf. Rom. 8:5, 8.

9 But I have learned that certain people from elsewhere have passed your way with evil doctrine, but you did not allow them to sow it among you. You covered up your ears in order to avoid receiving the things being sown by them, because you are stones of a temple, prepared beforehand for the building of God the Father, hoisted up to the heights by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, using as a rope the Holy Spirit; your faith is what lifts you up, and love is the way that leads up to God. **2** So you are all participants together in a shared worship, God-bearers and temple-bearers, Christ-bearers, bearers of holy things, adorned in every respect with the commandments of Jesus Christ. I too celebrate with you, since I have been judged worthy to speak with you through this letter, and to rejoice with you because you love nothing in human life, only God.

Response to Maltreatment

10 Pray continually for the rest of humankind as well, that they may find God, for there is in them hope for repentance. Therefore allow them to be instructed by you, at least by your deeds. **2** In response to their anger, be gentle; in response to their boasts, be humble; in response to their slander, offer prayers; in response to their errors, be steadfast in the faith; in response to their cruelty, be civilized; do not be eager to imitate them. **3** Let us show by our forbearance that we are their brothers and sisters, and let us be eager to be imitators of the Lord,

9.1 *from elsewhere have passed your way* Or *from there have passed by*. • *temple, prepared beforehand* An editor's emendation. Some ancient authorities read *temple of the Father, prepared*. **9.2** *carrying . . . things* Here Ignatius applies to the Ephesians the image of a pagan religious procession, in which the participants carry with them their gods, idols, shrines, etc. • *in human life, only God* An editor's emendation. The ancient authorities may be translated *in your new way of life except God*. **10.2** *steadfast in the faith* Cf. Col. 1:23. **10.3** *brothers and sisters* Gk *adelphoi*.

to see who can be the more wronged, who the more cheated, who the more rejected, in order that no weed of the devil may be found among you, but that with complete purity and self-control you may abide in Christ Jesus physically and spiritually.

The Last Times: Both Cosmic and Personal

11 These are the last times. Therefore let us be reverent; let us fear the patience of God, lest it become a judgment against us. For let us either fear the wrath to come or love the grace that is present, one of the two; only let us be found in Christ Jesus, which leads to true life. **2** Let nothing appeal to you apart from him, in whom I carry around these chains (my spiritual pearls!), by which I hope, through your prayers, to rise again. May I always share in them, in order that I may be found in the company of the Christians of Ephesus, who have always been in agreement with the apostles by the power of Jesus Christ.

12 I know who I am and to whom I am writing. I am a convict; you have received mercy. I am in danger; you are secure. **2** You are the highway of those who are being killed for God's sake; you are fellow initiates of Paul, who was sanctified, who was approved, who is deservedly blessed—may I be found in his footsteps when I reach God!—who in every letter remembers you in Christ Jesus.

Frequent and Harmonious Meetings

13 Therefore make every effort to come together more frequently to give thanks and glory to God. For when you meet together frequently,

10.3 *cheated* Cf. 1 Cor. 6:7. **12.2** *highway* Ephesus was on the route by which prisoners from the East would be taken to Rome; Ignatius seems to suggest that their spiritual position corresponds to their geographical location. **13.1** *to give thanks and glory to God* Or possibly *for the Eucharist and glory of God*.

the powers of Satan are overthrown and his destructiveness is nullified by the unanimity of your faith. **2** There is nothing better than peace, by which all warfare among those in heaven and those on earth is abolished.

Words versus Actions

14 None of these things escapes your notice, if you have perfect faith and love toward Jesus Christ. For these are the beginning and the end of life: faith is the beginning and love is the end, and the two, when they exist in unity, are God. Everything else that contributes to excellence follows from them. **2** No one professing faith sins, nor does anyone possessing love hate. The tree is known by its fruit; thus those who profess to be Christ's will be recognized by their actions. For the work is a matter not of what one promises now, but of persevering to the end in the power of faith.

15 It is better to be silent and be real than to talk and not be real. It is good to teach, if one does what one says. Now there is one teacher, who spoke and it happened; indeed, even the things that he has done in silence are worthy of the Father. **2** The one who truly possesses the word of Jesus is also able to hear his silence, so that he may be perfect, so that he may act through what he says and be known through his silence. **3** Nothing is hidden from the Lord; even our secrets are close to him. Therefore let us do everything with the knowledge that he dwells in us, in order that we may be his temples, and he may be in us as our God—as, in fact, he really is, as will be made clear in our sight by the love that we justly have for him.

14.2 *The tree . . . fruit* Cf. Matt. 12:33. • *the work* I.e., Christianity; cf. Rom. 3:3. **15.1** *spoke and it happened* Ps. 33(LXX 32):9. • *as our God* Some ancient authorities omit *our*.

The Stench of Evil Teaching

16 Do not be misled, my brothers and sisters: those who adulterously corrupt households will not inherit the kingdom of God. **2** Now if those who do such things physically are put to death, how much more if by evil teaching someone corrupts faith in God, for which Jesus Christ was crucified! Such a person, having polluted himself, will go to the unquenchable fire, as will also the one who listens to him.

17 The Lord accepted the ointment upon his head for this reason: that he might breathe incorruptibility upon the church. Do not be anointed with the stench of the teaching of the ruler of this age, lest he take you captive and rob you of the life set before you. **2** Why do we not all become wise by receiving God's knowledge, which is Jesus Christ? Why do we foolishly perish, ignoring the gracious gift that the Lord has truly sent?

The Mystery of Jesus' Death

18 My spirit is a humble sacrifice for the cross, which is a stumbling block to unbelievers but salvation and eternal life to us. Where is the wise? Where is the debater? Where is the boasting of those who are thought to be intelligent? **2** For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to God's plan, both from the seed of David and of the Holy Spirit. He was born and was baptized in order that by his suffering he might cleanse the water.

19 Now the virginity of Mary and her giving birth were hidden from the ruler of this age, as was also the death of the Lord—three mysteries to be loudly proclaimed, yet which were accomplished

16.1 *brothers and sisters* Gk *adelphoi*. • *will not inherit . . . God* Cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10. **17.1** *The Lord . . . head* Cf. Matt. 26:16-13. **18.1** *a stumbling block to unbelievers* Cf. 1 Cor. 1:23. • *Where is the wise . . . debater* Cf. 1 Cor. 1:20. **18.2** *God's One* ancient authority omits this word. • *water* I.e., the water of baptism.

in the silence of God. **2** How, then, were they revealed to the ages? A star shone forth in heaven brighter than all the stars; its light was indescribable and its strangeness caused amazement. All the rest of the constellations, together with the sun and moon, formed a chorus around the star, yet the star itself far outshone them all, and there was perplexity about the origin of this strange phenomenon, which was so unlike the others. **3** Consequently all magic and every kind of spell were dissolved, the ignorance so characteristic of wickedness vanished, and the ancient kingdom was abolished when God appeared in human form to bring the newness of eternal life; and what had been prepared by God began to take effect. As a result, all things were thrown into ferment, because the abolition of death was being carried out.

Promise of a Second Letter

20 If Jesus Christ, in response to your prayer, should reckon me worthy, and if it is his will, in a second letter that I intend to write to you I will further explain to you the subject about which I have begun to speak, namely, the divine plan with respect to the new man Jesus Christ, involving faith in him and love for him, his suffering and resurrection, **2** especially if the Lord reveals anything to me. All of you, individually and collectively, gather together in grace, by name, in one faith and one Jesus Christ, who physically was a descendant of David, who is Son of Man and Son of God, in order that you may obey the bishop and the council of presbyters with an undisturbed mind, breaking one bread, which is the medicine of immortality, the antidote we take in order not to die but to live forever in Jesus Christ.

19.3 *magic . . . abolished* Other ancient authorities read *magic was dissolved and every wicked spell vanished; ignorance was abolished and the ancient kingdom was destroyed*. **20.1** *faith . . . for him* Or *his faith and his love*. **20.2** *reveals . . . gather* An editor's emendation; the ancient authorities read *reveals to me that all of you, individually and collectively, continue to gather*. • *one* Other ancient authorities read *in*.

Personal Greetings and Parting Requests

21 I am devoted to you and to those whom for the honor of God you sent to Smyrna, from where I am writing to you, with thanksgiving to the Lord and love for Polycarp as well as for you. Remember me, as Jesus Christ remembers you. **2** Pray for the church in Syria, from where I am being led to Rome in chains, as I—the very least of the faithful there—have been judged worthy of serving the glory of God. Farewell in God the Father and in Jesus Christ, our shared hope.

THE LETTER OF IGNATIUS TO THE SMYRNAEANS

Salutation

Ignatius the Image-bearer to the church of God the Father and of the beloved Jesus Christ at Smyrna in Asia, mercifully endowed with every spiritual gift, filled with faith and love, not lacking in any spiritual gift, most worthy of God, bearing holy things: heartiest greetings in a blameless spirit and the word of God.

The Reality of Jesus' Human Experiences

1 I glorify Jesus Christ, the God who made you so wise, for I observed that you are established in an unshakable faith, having been nailed, as it were, to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ in both body and spirit, and firmly established in love by the blood of Christ, totally convinced with regard to our Lord that he is truly of the family of David with respect to our Lord that he is truly of the family of the divine will and power, truly born of a virgin, baptized by John in order that all righteousness might be fulfilled by him, **2** truly nailed in the flesh for us under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch (from its fruit we derive our existence, that is, from his divinely blessed suffering), in order that he might raise a banner for the ages through his resurrection for his saints and faithful people, whether among Jews or among Gentiles, in the one body of his church.

Salutation the Image-bearer See note at Ign. Eph. Salutation. **1.1** *the divine will and power* Lit. *the will and power*; some ancient authorities read *God's will and power*. • *baptized . . . by him* Cf. Matt. 3:15. **1.2** *its* I.e., the cross's.

2 For he suffered all these things for our sakes, in order that we might be saved; and he truly suffered just as he truly raised himself—not, as certain unbelievers say, that he suffered in appearance only (it is they who exist in appearance only!). Indeed, their fate will be determined by what they think: they will become disembodied and demonic.

3 For I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection; **2** and when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them: "Take hold of me; handle me and see that I am not a disembodied demon." And immediately they touched him and believed, being closely united with his flesh and blood. For this reason they too despised death; indeed, they proved to be greater than death. **3** And after his resurrection he ate and drank with them like one who is composed of flesh, although spiritually he was united with the Father.

Warnings about Teachers of Error

4 Now I am advising you of these things, dear friends, knowing that you are of the same mind. But I am guarding you in advance against wild beasts in human form—people whom you must not only not welcome but, if possible, not even meet. Nevertheless, do pray for them, that somehow they might repent, difficult though it may be. But Jesus Christ, our true life, has power over this.

Martyrdom Motivated by Jesus' Real Passion

2 For if these things were done by our Lord in appearance only, then I am in chains in appearance only. Why, moreover, have I surrendered

2.1 *in order . . . saved* Some ancient authorities omit. **3.2** *Take hold . . . demon* Cf. Luke 24:39; the (now lost) *Gospel according to the Hebrews* and the *Teaching [or possibly Preaching] of Peter* are reported to have contained the same (or a very similar) saying. • *blood* Some ancient authorities read *spirit*.

myself to death, to fire, to sword, to beasts? But in any case, "near the sword" means "near to God"; "with the beasts" means "with God." Only let it be in the name of Jesus Christ, so that I may suffer together with him! I endure everything because he himself, who is the perfect human being, empowers me.

5 Certain people ignorantly deny him, or rather have been denied by him, for they are advocates of death rather than of the truth. Neither the prophecies nor the law of Moses have persuaded them, nor, thus far, the gospel nor our own individual suffering; **2** for they think the same thing about us. For what good does it do me if someone praises me but blasphemes my Lord by not confessing that he was clothed in flesh? Anyone who does not acknowledge this thereby denies him completely and is clothed in a corpse. **3** Given that they are unbelievers, it did not seem worthwhile to me to record their names. Indeed, far be it from me even to remember them, until such time as they change their mind regarding the passion, which is our resurrection.

Bad Teachers and Bad Beliefs

6 Let no one be misled. Even the heavenly beings and the glory of angels and the rulers, both visible and invisible, are subject to judgment if they do not believe in the blood of Christ. Let the one who can accept this accept it. Do not let a high position make anyone proud, for faith and love are everything; nothing is preferable to them.

2 Now note well those who hold heretical opinions about the grace of Jesus Christ that came to us; note how contrary they are to the

4.2 is Some ancient authorities read *became*. **5.2** *they think . . . us* i.e., they have the same opinion of Ignatius's suffering that they do of Christ's: it is all "in appearance only." • *it . . . someone* Some ancient authorities read *someone do me if he*. **6.1** *Christ* One ancient authority adds *who is God*. • *Let . . . it* Cf. Matt. 19:12.

mind of God. They have no concern for love, none for the widow, none for the orphan, none for the oppressed, none for the prisoner or the one released, none for the hungry or thirsty. They abstain from Eucharist and prayer because they refuse to acknowledge that the Eucharist is the flesh of our savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father by his goodness raised up.

7 Therefore those who deny the good gift of God perish in their contentiousness. It would be more to their advantage to love, in order that they might also rise up. **2** It is proper, therefore, to avoid such people and not speak about them either privately or publicly. Do pay attention, however, to the prophets and especially to the gospel, in which the passion has been made clear to us and the resurrection has been accomplished.

Obedience to the Bishop

8 Flee from divisions as the beginning of evils. You must all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and follow the council of presbyters as you would the apostles; respect the deacons as the commandment of God. Let no one do anything that has to do with the church without the bishop. Only that Eucharist which is under the authority of the bishop (or whomever he himself designates) is to be considered valid. **2** Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church.

6.2 or *the one released* Some ancient authorities omit. • *They abstain . . .* Some editions begin chapter 7 here. **8.1** *beginning of evils* Some editions end chapter 7 here. **8.2** *catholic* This term here occurs in Christian literature for the first time. In later use (by ca. AD 200) the word "catholic" became a technical term designating "the Catholic Church," as opposed to the heretical sects, but here the expression is used in the sense of "universal" or "general" (thus the adjective could be attached to words like "resurrection" or "salvation" as well as to "church"), or possibly "whole" (conveying the idea of organic unity or completeness).

It is not permissible either to baptize or to hold a love feast without the bishop. But whatever he approves is also pleasing to God, in order that everything you do may be trustworthy and valid.

9 Finally, it is reasonable for us to come to our senses while we still have time to repent and turn to God. It is good to acknowledge God and the bishop. The one who honors the bishop has been honored by God; the one who does anything without the bishop's knowledge serves the devil.

Thanks for Services Rendered

2 May all things, therefore, be yours in abundance in grace, for you are worthy. You refreshed me in every respect, and Jesus Christ will refresh you. In my absence and in my presence you loved me. God is your reward; if you endure everything for his sake, you will reach him.

10 You did well to welcome Philo and Rhaius Agathopus, who followed me for God's sake, as deacons of God. They too give thanks to the Lord on your behalf because you refreshed them in every way. You will certainly not lose any of this! **2** May my spirit be a ransom on your behalf, and my chains as well, which you did not despise, nor were you ashamed of them. Nor will the perfect hope, Jesus Christ, be ashamed of you.

8:2 love feast *Or fellowship meal.* This congregational meal almost certainly included a celebration of the Eucharist. Cf. 1 Cor. 11:17-34; Jude 12. **9.2 God... reward** Other ancient authorities read *God will reward you*; some editors (following an ancient Latin version) emend to *may God reward you*. **10.1 Rhaius** An editor's emendation; some ancient authorities read *Rheus*, others *Gaius*. Cf. *Philad.* 11.1. • *deacons* *Or ministers* or *servants*. • *of God* Some ancient authorities read *of Christ God*. **10.2 hope** Some ancient authorities read *faith*.

Details about Antioch

11 Your prayer reached the church at Antioch in Syria; having come from there bound in the most God-pleasing chains I greet everyone, even though I am not worthy to be from there, for I am the very least of them. Nevertheless in accordance with the divine will I was judged worthy, not because of the witness of my own conscience, but by the grace of God, which I pray may be given to me in perfection, so that by your prayer I may reach God. **2** Therefore, in order that your work may become perfect both on earth and in heaven, it is appropriate that your church appoint, for the honor of God, a godly ambassador to go to Syria to congratulate them, because they are at peace and have regained their proper stature and their corporate life has been restored to its proper state. **3** It seemed to me, therefore, to be a deed worthy of God for you to send one of your own people with a letter, so that he might join in glorifying the tranquility that by God's will has come to them, and because they have now reached, thanks to your prayers, a safe harbor. Inasmuch as you are perfect, let your intentions also be perfect, for if you want to do well, God is ready to help you.

Personal Greetings and Parting Requests

12 The love of the brothers and sisters in Troas greets you. I am writing you from there through Burrhus, whom you, together with your Ephesian brothers and sisters, sent with me. He has refreshed me in every respect. Would that all were imitators of him, for he is a model of service to God. Grace will reward him in every respect. **2** I greet the bishop, so worthy of God, and the godly council of presbyters, and my fellow servants, the deacons, and all of you, indi-

11.3 deed... God Some ancient authorities read *worthy deed*. • *let... be* *Or aim at what is*. • *perfect* Cf. *Phil.* 3:15. **12.1 brothers and sisters** *Gk adelphoi* (twice).

individually and collectively, in the name of Jesus Christ and in his flesh and blood, his suffering and resurrection (which was both physical and spiritual), in unity with God and with you. Grace, mercy, peace, patience to you always.

13 I greet the households of my brothers with their wives and children, and the virgins who are called widows. I bid you farewell in the power of the Father. Philo, who is with me, greets you. **2** I greet the household of Gavia, and pray that she may be firmly grounded in faith and love both physically and spiritually. I greet Alce, a name very dear to me, and the incomparable Daphnus, and Eutecnus and everyone else individually. Farewell in the grace of God.

13.1 *Father*. Some ancient authorities read *Spirit*. 13.2 *Gavia*. Some ancient authorities read *Tavia*.