

Introduction

- Polycarp was a disciple of John and the bishop of the church in Smyrna.
- Polycarp, and the elders, write to the church in Philippi.
- The church asked for Polycarp to write (3:1) to teach them about righteousness and because one of their elders disqualified himself.
- We know he wrote other letters, but this is the only writing of his we have.
- The letter repeatedly and seamlessly quotes Scripture.

Chapters 1-2: Greetings and Encouragement

- He is thankful for how they helped martyrs and did not hinder them.
- He praises them as one of the earliest churches.
- He gives a clear summary of the gospel.
- Encourages them to continue in their faith in Christ by living righteously.

Chapter 3: Why Polycarp Writes

- They want a letter from Polycarp, but he acknowledges he is not Paul.
- He encourages them to continue studying the book of Philippians.
- They are to grow in their love for Christ and their neighbor.

Chapters 4-6: Instructions for the Church

- Each people group is given instructions in holiness in a way that mirrors Paul.
- Widows are called "God's altar."
- Homosexuality is explicitly condemned.
- They are encouraged to submit to their elders and deacons.
- Elders are to be godly and care for the weak.

Chapter 7: Rejecting Jesus

- Anyone who denies the incarnation is an antichrist.
- Those who deny resurrection, words of Christ, or the cross are demonic.
- These appear to be widespread teachings of the crowds.
- They are to hold to the original words of Christ.

Chapters 8-10: Examples to Follow

- Reminds them of the gospel hope of Christ.
- Urge to follow Christ's example in suffering.
- Follow the example of Martyrs, whom they know and some were from their own church.
- They should endure in love not putting it off because death could come at any moment.
- The churches conduct with bears witness to God or blasphemes Him.

Chapter 11: The Disqualified Elder

- Valens, one of their elders, appears to have disqualified himself through greed.
- They are to avoid love of money.
- Elders must practice what they are to preach.
- They are to pray for Valen's and his wife, treating them as those who need to be restored.

Chapter 12: Final Exhortation

- Polycarp explicitly refers to the New Testament writings as "Scriptures."
- They are to pray for church, rulers, persecutors, and their emeries.
- The hope is that their holiness is a witness to Christ.

Chapters 13-14: Final Instructions

- He sends them copies of Ignatius' 7 letters, which they asked for.
- He asks that they would pass along any news they have of what happened to Ignatius.
- The Philippian church wants to pass along their letters, and Polycarp's response to the church in Syria.
- Polycarp and the church endorse Crescens and his sister as worthwhile leaders who will aid their church.

Application

- Polycarp is deeply familiar with the Scriptures and treats them as Scripture.
- Polycarp helps prove the origins of the Bible.
- He views Jesus as God and our only hope for salvation.
- The early church is more organized than we might have imagined.