

The Didache

The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the Twelve Apostles

Preface

This ancient teaching may possibly cause those, who are from a modern day Church background, a little trouble in understanding its intent. However, I prefer not to give a paraphrased version, but the entire English translation, word for word, as it was translated in the 19th century, with only a few minor exceptions. I am neither qualified, nor do I wish to solicit such an undertaking to you. **(See Editor's note at the conclusion of this teaching for particulars)**

Because of possible misconstrued meanings, it has become necessary to commentate on a few parts beforehand. Most of us have taken into our heart years of sermons explaining the background and intent of the New Testament. However, because of such, much of the Ante-Nicene (33A.D.-300A.D.) writings are almost impossible to interpret by the average 20th century minister or lay person. This is due largely to our culturized and leavened view of the Bible, the Gospel, Salvation, etc. It is not my intent to detail all the reasons why. I only wish to express the need to try and clear up some of the misunderstandings that are clearly possible, if one reads this cold.

The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the Twelve Apostles

(universally accepted as Genuine by the entire Church from approx.100 A.D.-on past-see editor's note at ending)

THERE are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways. The way of life is this:

First of all, you shall love the God that made you; secondly, your neighbor as yourself. And all things whatsoever you would not have befall yourself, neither do to another. Now of these words the doctrine is this. Bless them that curse you, and pray for your enemies and fast for them that persecute you; for what thank is it, if you love them that love you? Do not even the Gentiles the same? But love them that hate you, and you shall not have an enemy. Abstain from fleshly and bodily lusts. If any man give you a blow on your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you shall be perfect; if a man impress you to go with him one mile, go with him two; if a man take away your cloak, give him your coat also; if a man take away from you that which is your own, ask it not back, for neither are you able. To every man that asks of you give, and ask not back; for the Father desires that gifts be given to all from His own bounties. Blessed is he that gives according to the commandment; for he is guiltless. Woe to him that receives; for if a man receives having need, he is guiltless; but he that has no need shall give satisfaction why and wherefore he received; and being put in confinement he shall be examined concerning the deeds that he has done, and he shall not come out from there until he has given back the last farthing. Yea, as touching this also it is said; Let your alms sweat into your hands, until you shall have learned to whom to give.

2. And this is the second commandment of the teaching. You shall do no murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not corrupt boys, you shall not commit fornication, you shall not steal, you shall not deal in magic, you shall do no sorcery, you shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill them when born, you shall not covet your neighbor's goods, you shall not perjure yourself, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not speak evil, you shall not cherish a grudge, you shall not be double-minded nor double-tongued; for the double tongue is a snare of death. Your word shall not be false or empty, but fulfilled by action. You shall not be exceedingly eager for material gain, nor a plunderer, nor a hypocrite, nor ill-tempered, nor proud. You shall not entertain an evil design against your neighbor. You shall not hate any man, but some you shall reprove, and for others you shall pray, and others you shall love more than your life.

3. My child, flee from every evil and everything that resembles it. Be not angry, for anger leads to murder, nor jealous, nor contentious, nor wrathful; for of all these things murders are engendered. My child, be not lustful, for lust leads to fornication, neither foul-speaking, neither with uplifted eyes (lofty-proud thoughts-grk.); for of all these things adulteries are engendered. My child, be no dealer in omens, since it leads to idolatry, nor an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a magician, neither be willing to look at them; for from all these things idolatry is engendered. My child, be not a liar, since lying leads to theft, neither exceedingly eager for material gain, neither vainglorious; for from all these things thefts are engendered. My child, be not a murmurer, since it leads to blasphemy, neither self-willed, neither a thinker of evil thoughts; for from all these

things blasphemies are engendered. But be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth. Be long-suffering and pitiful and guileless and quiet and kindly and always fearing the words which you have heard. You shall not exalt yourself, neither shall you admit boldness into your soul. Your soul shall not cleave together with the lofty, but with the righteous and humble shall you walk. The accidents that befall you, you shall receive as good, knowing that nothing is done without God.

4. My child, you shall remember him that speaks to you the word of God, night and day, and shall honor him as the Lord; for whenever the Lordship speaks, there is the Lord. Moreover you shall seek out day by day the persons of the saints, that you may find rest in their words. You shall not make a schism, but you shall pacify them that contend; you shall judge righteously, you shall not make a difference in a person to reprove him for transgressions. You shall not doubt whether a thing shall be or not be.

Be not found holding out your hands to receive, but drawing them in as to giving. If you have ought passing through your hands, you shall give a ransom for your sins. You shall not hesitate to give, neither shall you murmur when giving; for you shall know who is the good paymaster of your reward. You shall not turn away from him that is in want, but shall make your brother partaker in all things, and shall not say that anything is your own. For if you are fellow-partakers in that which is imperishable, how much rather in the things which are perishable?

You shall not withhold your hand from your son or from your daughter, but from their youth you shall teach them the fear of God. You shall not command your bondservant or your handmaid in your bitterness, who trust in the same God as yourself, lest haply they should cease to fear the God who is over both of you, for He comes, not to call men with respect of persons, but He comes to those whom the Spirit has prepared. But servants, you shall be subject to your masters, as to a type of God, in shame and fear. You shall hate all hypocrisy, and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord. You shall never forsake the commandments of the Lord; but shall keep those things which you have received, neither adding to them nor taking away from them. Among (Greek) the church you shall confess your transgressions, and shall not betake yourself to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

5. But the way of death is this:

First of all, it is evil and full of a curse; murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magical arts, witchcrafts, plunderings, false witnessings, hypocrisies, doubleness of heart, treachery, pride, malice, stubbornness, covetousness, foul-speaking, jealousy, boldness, exaltation, boastfulness; persecutors of good men, hating truth, loving a lie, not perceiving the reward of righteousness, not cleaving to the good nor to righteous judgment, wakeful not for that which is good but for that which is evil; from whom gentleness and forbearance stand aloof; loving vain things, pursuing a recompense, not pitying the poor man, not toiling for him that is oppressed with toil, not recognizing Him that made them, murderers of children, corrupters of the creatures of God, turning away from him that is in want, oppressing him that is afflicted, advocates of the wealthy, unjust judges of the poor, altogether sinful. May you be delivered, my children, from all these things.

6. See lest any man lead you astray from this way of righteousness, for he teaches you apart from God. For if you are able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you shall be perfect; but if you are not able, do that which you are able. But concerning eating, bear that which you are able; yet abstain by all means from meat sacrificed to idols; for it is the worship of dead gods.

7. But concerning baptism, thus shall you baptize. Having first recited all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living (running) water. But if you have not living water, then baptize in other water; and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let him that baptizes and him that is baptized fast, and any others also who are able; and you shall order him that is baptized to fast a day or two before.

8. And let not your fastings be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second and the fifth day of the week; but keep your fast on the fourth and on the preparation (the sixth) day. Neither pray as the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, thus say: Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one; for Thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever. Three times in the day pray so.

9. But as touching the eucharistic (grk.-thanksgiving) thanksgiving give thanks thus. First, as regards the cup: We give Thee thanks, O our Father, for the holy vine of Thy son David, which Thou madest known to us through Thy Son Jesus; Thine is the glory for ever and ever. Then as regards the broken bread: We give Thee thanks, O our Father, for the life and knowledge which Thou didst make known to us through Thy Son Jesus; Thine is the glory for ever and ever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one, so may Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. But let no one eat or drink of this eucharistic thanksgiving, but they that have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said: Give not that which is holy to the dogs.

10. And after you are satisfied thus give thanks: We give Thee thanks, Holy Father, for Thy holy name, which Thou hast made to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which Thou hast made known to us through Thy Son Jesus; Thine is the glory for ever and ever. Thou, Almighty Master, didst create all things for Thy name's sake, and didst give food and drink to men for enjoyment, that they might render thanks to Thee; but didst bestow upon us spiritual food and drink and eternal life through Thy Son. Before all things we give Thee thanks that Thou art powerful; Thine is the glory for ever and ever. Remember, Lord, Thy Church to deliver it from all evil and to perfect it in Thy love; and gather it together from four winds & emdash; even the Church which has been sanctified & emdash; into Thy kingdom which Thou hast prepared for it; for Thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever. May grace come and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If any man is holy, let him come; if any man is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen.

But permit the prophets to offer thanksgiving as much as they desire.

11. Whosoever therefore shall come and teach you all these things that have been said before, receive him; but if the teacher himself be perverted and teach a different doctrine to the destruction thereof, hear him not; but if to the increase of righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.

But concerning the apostles and prophets, so do according to the ordinance of the Gospel. Let every apostle, when he comes to you, be received as the Lord; but he shall not abide more than a single day, or if there be need, a second likewise; but if he abide three days, he is a false prophet. And when he departs let the apostle receive nothing except bread, until he finds shelter; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet. And any prophet speaking in the Spirit you shall not try neither discern; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. Yet not every one that speaks in the Spirit is a prophet, but only if he have the ways of the Lord. From his ways therefore the false prophet and the prophet shall be recognized. And no prophet when he orders a table in the Spirit shall eat of it, otherwise he is a false prophet. And every prophet teaching the truth, if he does not what he teaches, is a false prophet. And every prophet approved and found true, if he does ought as an outward mystery typical of the Church, and yet teaches you not to do all that he himself does, shall not be judged before you; he has his judgment in the presence of God; for in like manner also did the prophets of old time. And whosoever shall say in the Spirit, Give me silver or anything else, ye shall not listen to him; but if he tell you to give on behalf of others that are in want, let no man judge him.

12. But let every one that comes in the name of the Lord be received; and then when you have tested him you shall know him, for you shall have understanding on the right hand and on the left. If the comer is a traveler, assist him, so far as you are able; but he shall not stay with you more than two or three days, if it be necessary. But if he wishes to settle with you, being a craftsman, let him work for and eat his bread. But if he has no craft, according to your wisdom provide how he shall live as a Christian among you, but not in idleness. If he will not do this, he is trafficking upon Christ. Beware of such men.

13. But every true prophet desiring to settle among you is worthy of his food. In like manner a true teacher is also worthy, like the workman, of his food. Every first fruit then of the produce of the wine-vat and of the threshing-floor, of your oxen and of your sheep, you shall take and give as the first fruit to the prophets; for they are chief. But if you have not a prophet, give them to the poor. If you make bread, take the first fruit and give according to the commandment. In like manner, when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the first fruit and give to the prophets; yea and of money and raiment and every possession take the first fruit, as shall seem good to you, and give according to the commandment.

14. And on the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. And let no man, having his dispute with his fellow, join your assembly until they have been reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be defiled, for this sacrifice it is that was spoken of by the Lord; In every place and at every time offer Me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great king, saith the Lord, and My name is wonderful among the nations.

15. Appoint for yourselves therefore bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not lovers of money, and true and approved; for to you they also perform the service of the prophets and teachers. Therefore despise them not; for they are your honorable men along with the prophets and teachers. And reprove one another, not in anger but in peace, as you find in the Gospel; and let no one speak to any that has gone wrong towards his neighbour, neither let him hear a word from you, until he repents. But your prayers and your almsgiving's and all your deeds so do as you find it in the Gospel of our Lord.

16. Be watchful for your life; let your lamps not be quenched and your loins not ungirded, but be ready; for you know not the hour in which our Lord comes. And you shall gather yourselves together frequently, seeking what is fitting for your souls; for the whole time of your faith shall not profit you, if you be not perfected at the last season. For in the last days the false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate. For as lawlessness increases, they shall hate one another and shall persecute and betray. And then the word-deceiver shall appear as a son of God; and shall work signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands; and he shall do unholy things, which have never been since the world began. Then all created mankind shall come to the fire of testing and many shall be offended and perish; but they that endure in their faith shall be saved by the Curse Himself (Jesus). And then shall the signs of the truth appear; first a sign of a rift in the heaven, then a sign of a voice of a trumpet, and thirdly a resurrection of the dead; yet not of all, but as it was said: The Lord shall come and all His saints with him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

Editor's note: It may be helpful to learn, at this point, what the history is behind this writing, so one may understand what is meant by the opening caption "universally accepted as Genuine by the entire Church".

Some may not be aware that the early church (first three centuries) did not have a Bible as we know it. This is not to say that they did not have many of the writings of the Apostles and the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament). However, it was not in the same form as we have them today. Most, but not all, of the Church had copies of the Septuagint as well as what they referred to as "the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets" (quote from Justin Martyr approx. 125 A.D.).

Of course these writings consisted in the form of scrolls. Through the years they were recopied with much the same care given the Jewish Scriptures. It was well known, by the writings of the early Church leaders, that these writings (Scriptures & New Test. writings) were communicated to the Church by oral readings and group studies. (refer to "[The Way it Really was](#)" by Christian Reality Ministries-1985)

It must be understood that there was a slight diversity in each local Church as to what was included in their collection of the New Testament. (See Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History Book III, Chapter 25 @100 A.D.). Most possessed the four Gospels and the Epistles, but not all. It must be pointed out that along with these familiar books others were included as well. Such early writings as Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians (see Phillipians 4:3) and the teaching contained herein were commonly found.

Of these other revered Epistles and Homilies (sermons), this was one of the oldest. It does not appear to be authored by any Apostle directly. It was, however, an early attempt by the early Church Brethren (100-125 A.D.) to retain, in writing, the verbal teachings given by the Apostles during their evangelistic exhortations. Although it is one of the oldest non-canonized writings, it appears to have survived the ages with little corruption. Its present tone and content also help justify this notion, because none of the liberal theologians and unprincipled Church leaders throughout the ages would have ever been comfortable with the wording of such a convicting declaration.

This translation is essentially from Lightfoot's (1889) with the "thee's" and "thou's" updated to "you" and "your". When a word or two was hard to understand, in a couple places, we used the Greek meaning (marked Grk.) from the original Greek manuscript.

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