

**THE DAWN OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**  
The First Century of Christianity *continued*  
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CLEMENT OF ROME:

Who was Clement of Rome, what do we know about him and what did he do?

Actually, we know very little. Except that he was Bishop of Rome from about A.D. 92 to 99, and may have died about 101. He was, after Peter, referred to most often as the 3<sup>rd</sup> bishop of Rome. He was clearly known by Paul himself, who refers to him in the Epistle to the Philippians 4.3. And a number of early Church writers refer to him: Tertullian in around 200, Eusebius a century later. But he was best known for his writings. He wrote an epistle or letter to the Church in Corinth as a correction to action that church had taken to dismiss its elders and replace them with others. We still have that epistle though it was lost for centuries and not re-discovered until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For centuries it was read and treasured by the church though it was not considered scripture since Clement was not and never claimed to be an apostle. In time it fell into disuse.

There is a tradition that says that Clement was imprisoned under the emperor Trajan, led a ministry among fellow prisoners, and was executed by being tied to an anchor and thrown into the sea.

What is most interesting about him is what he wrote. It provides an insight into life in at least one early church, that of Corinth, where problems did not die with the apostles and where factions continued. It is a letter of some 65 chapters, albeit short ones. If you'd like to read more of it, you can read it online. However, I'd like to quote some of it for you here as it is in many ways a beautiful letter and reminds one of the writings of Paul. The following excerpts are the first two of sixty-five chapters of his epistle. The rest can be found online. Listen:

*“The church of God that temporarily resides in Rome, to the church of God that temporarily resides in Corinth, to those who have been called and made holy by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be increased among you, from the all powerful God, through Jesus Christ.”*

*1. Because of the sudden and repeated misfortunes and setbacks we have experienced, we realize that we have been slow to turn our attention to the matters causing disputes among you, loved ones, involving that vile and profane faction that is alien and foreign to God's chosen people—a faction stoked by a few reckless and headstrong persons to such a pitch of madness that your venerable and renowned reputation, worthy of everyone's love, has been greatly slandered.*

*For who has ever visited you and not approved your highly virtuous and stable faith? And not been astonished by your temperate and gentle piety in Christ? And not proclaimed the magnificent character of your hospitality? And not uttered a blessing for your perfect and unwavering knowledge?*

*For you used to act impartially in all that you did, and you walked according to the ordinances of God, submitting yourselves to your leaders and rendering all due honor to those*

*who were older (or presbyters) among you. You instructed your young people to think moderate and respectful thoughts. You directed women to accomplish all things with a blameless, respectful, and pure conscience, dutifully loving their husbands. And you taught them to run their households respectfully, living under the rule of submission, practicing discretion in every way.*

- 2. And all of you used to be humble in mind, not arrogant in the least, being submissive rather than forcing submission, giving more gladly than receiving, being satisfied with the provisions supplied by Christ. You heeded his words, carefully storing them up in your inner selves. And his sufferings were present before your eyes.*

*For this reason a deep and rich peace was given to all, along with an insatiable desire for doing good; and a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit came upon everyone.*

*And being filled with his holy will, you sued to stretch out your hands to the all-powerful God, zealous for the good, with pious confidence, begging him to be gracious if you inadvertently committed any sin.*

*Day and night you struggled on behalf of the entire brotherhood, that the total number of his chosen ones might be saved, with mortal fear and self-awareness.*

*You were sincere and innocent and bore no grudges against one another. Every faction and schism was loathsome to you. You used to grieve over the unlawful acts of your neighbors and considered their shortcomings your own.*

*You had no regrets when doing good; you were prepared for every good deed.*

*You were adorned with a highly virtuous and honorable way of life, and you accomplished all things in reverential awe of him. The commandments and righteous demands of the Lord were inscribed upon the tablets of your heart.”*

#### QUESTION:

Please read these first two chapters of 1 Clement. What strikes you as you read it? What are the main themes? Whose writing does it remind you of. How would you compare this teaching and writing to that of the Didache? What does Clement, third bishop of Rome's addressing a letter to the Church of Corinth show you about inter-church relations?