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The Didache, or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles

THE COMPLETE TEXT

1 There Are Two Ways

1:1 There are two ways, one of life and one of death!
and there is a great difference between the two ways.

1:2 The way of life is this:

First, you shall love God who made you.

And second, love your neighbor as yourself, and do not
do to another what you would not want done to you.

1:3 The meaning of these sayings is this:

Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies,
and fast for those who persecute you. For what reward
is there for loving those who love you? Do not the
heathens do the same? But you should love those who
hate you, and then you shall have no enemies.

1:4 Abstain from fleshly and bodily lusts:

If someone strikes your right cheek, turn the other
also, and be perfect. If someone forces you to go one
mile, go two. If someone takes your cloak, give also
your coat. If someone takes from you what is yours,
don't ask for it back. You really cannot.

- 1:5** Give to every one who asks you, and don't ask for it back. The Father wants his blessings shared. Happy is the giver who lives according to this rule, for that one is guiltless. But the receiver must beware; for if one receives who has need, he is guiltless, but if one receives not having need, he shall stand trial, answering why he received and for what use. If he is found guilty he shall not escape until he pays back the last penny.
- 1:6** However, concerning this, there is a saying: "Let your alms sweat in your hands until you know to whom to give them."

2 The Second Commandment

2:1 The second commandment of the teaching is this:

- 2:2** Do not commit murder;
do not commit adultery;
do not corrupt boys;
do not have illicit sex;
do not steal;
do not practice magic;
do not practice witchcraft;
you shall not murder a child,
whether it be born or unborn.
Do not covet the things of your neighbor.

2:3 Do not swear or bear false witness.

Do not speak evil of others; do not bear grudges.

2:4 You should not be double-minded or double-tongued, for a double-tongue is a deadly snare.

2:5 Your speech should not be false nor empty, but fulfilled by action.

2:6 Do not be covetous, or greedy, or hypocritical, or malicious, or arrogant.

Do not have designs against your neighbor.

2:7 Hate no one;

correct some, pray for others, and some you should love more than your own life.

3 My Child, Flee Evil

3:1 My child, flee evil of all kinds, and everything like it.

3:2 Don't be prone to anger, for anger leads to murder.

Don't be jealous or quarrelsome or hot-tempered, for all these things lead to murder.

3:3 My child, don't be lustful, for lust leads to illicit sex.

Don't be a filthy talker or allow your eyes a free reign, for these lead to adultery.

3:4 My child, don't observe omens, since it leads to idolatry. Don't be an enchanter, or an astrologer, or a purifier, or be willing to see or hear about these things, for these all lead to idolatry.

- 3:5** My child, don't be a liar, since a lie leads to theft. Don't love money or seek glory, for these things lead to thievery.
- 3:6** My child, don't grumble, since it leads to blasphemy, and don't be self-willed or evil-minded, for all these things lead to blasphemy.
- 3:7** On the contrary, be gentle, since the gentle will inherit the earth.
- 3:8** Be long-suffering and pitiful and guileless and gentle and good, and with trembling, treasure the words you have received.
- 3:9** Don't exalt yourself or open your heart to overconfidence. Don't be on intimate terms with mighty people, but with just and lowly ones.
- 3:10** Accept whatever happens to you as a blessing, knowing that nothing comes to pass apart from God.

4 My Child, Remember

- [4:1** My child, remember day and night him who speaks the word of God to you, and honor him as the Lord. For wherever his lordship is spoken of, there he is.]
- 4:2** Seek each day the faces of the saints, in order that you may be refreshed by their words.
- 4:3** Do not initiate divisions, but rather bring peace to those who contend against one another. Judge

righteously, and do not take social status into account when reproofing for transgressions.

4:4 Do not waver in your decisions.

4:5 Do not be one who opens his hands to receive, or closes them when it is time to give.

4:6 If you have anything, by your hands you should give ransom for your sins.

4:7 Do not hesitate to give, and do not complain about it. You will know in time who is the good Rewarder.

4:8 Do not turn away from one who is in want; rather, share all things with your brother, and do not say that they are your own. For if you are sharers in what is imperishable, how much more in things which perish!

4:9 Do not remove your hand from your son or daughter; teach them the fear of God from their youth.

4:10 Do not give orders to your servants when you are angry, for they hope in the same God, and they may lose the fear of God, who is over both of you. God is surely not coming to call on us according to our outward appearance or station in life, but to them whom the Spirit has prepared.

4:11 And you, servants, be subject to your masters as to God's image, in modesty and fear.

4:12 You should hate all hypocrisy and everything which is not pleasing to the Lord.

4:13 Do not in any way neglect the commandments of the Lord, but keep what you have received, neither adding nor taking away anything.

4:14 In your gatherings, confess your transgressions, and do not come for prayer with a guilty conscience.

This is the way of life!

5 The Way of Death

5:1 The way of death, on the other hand, is this:

It is evil and accursed—murders, adulteries, lust, illicit sex, thefts, idolatries, magical arts, sorceries, robberies, false testimonies, hypocrisy, double-heartedness, deceit, haughtiness, depravity, self-will, greediness, filthy talking, jealousy, over-confidence, loftiness, boastfulness—those who do not fear God.

5:2 The way of death is the way of those who persecute the good, hate the truth, love lies, and do not understand the reward for righteousness.

They do not cleave to good or righteous judgment; they do not watch for what is good, but for what is evil.

They are strangers to meekness and patience, loving vanities, pursuing revenge, without pity for the needy and oppressed.

They do not know their Creator; they are murderers of children, destroyers of God's image.

They turn away from those who are in need, making matters worse for those who are distressed.

They are advocates for the rich, unjust judges of the poor.

In a word, the way of death is full of those who are steeped in sin.

Be delivered, children, from all of this!

6 See That No One Leads You Astray

6:1 See that no one leads you astray from the way of this teaching, since all other teachings train you without God.

6:2 For if you are able to bear the entire yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect; but if you are not able, then at least do what you can.

6:3 Concerning food, do what you are able to do and be on guard against meat offered to idols, for that is to worship dead gods.

7 Concerning Baptism

7:1 Concerning baptism, you should baptize this way: After first explaining all things, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in flowing water.

- 7:2** But if you have no running water, baptize in other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, then in warm.
- 7:3** If you have very little, pour water three times on the head in the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit.
- 7:4** Before the baptism, both the baptizer and the candidate for baptism, plus any others who can, should fast. The candidate should fast for one or two days beforehand.

8 Your Fasts and Prayers

- 8:1** Your fasts should not be with the hypocrites, for they fast on Mondays and Thursdays. You should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.
- 8:2** And do not pray like the hypocrites, but rather as the Lord commanded in the gospel:
Our Father in heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us enough bread day-by-day. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.
- 8:3** Pray this three times each day.

9 Concerning the Eucharist

9:1 Concerning the Eucharist, give thanks this way.

9:2 First, concerning the cup:

We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant, which you made known to us through Jesus your servant. To you be the glory forever.

9:3 Next, concerning the broken bread:

We thank you, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you made known to us through Jesus your servant. To you be the glory forever.

9:4 Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. To you is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.

9:5 Allow no one to eat or drink of your Eucharist, unless they have been baptized in the name of the Lord. For concerning this, the Lord has said, "Do not give what is holy to dogs."

10 After the Eucharist

10:1 After the Eucharist when you are filled, give thanks this way:

10:2 We thank you, holy Father, for your holy name which you enshrined in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality that you

made known to us through Jesus your servant. To you be the glory forever.

10:3 You, Master Almighty, have created all things for your name's sake. You gave food and drink to all people for enjoyment, that they might give thanks to you; but to us you freely give spiritual food and drink and life eternal through Jesus, your servant.

10:4 Before all things we thank you because you are mighty. To you be the glory forever.

10:5 Remember, Lord, your church. Deliver it from all evil and make it perfect in your love, and gather it from the four winds sanctified for your kingdom which you have prepared for it. For Yours is the power and the glory forever.

10:6 Let grace come, and let this world pass away!
Hosanna to the Son of David! If anyone is holy,
let him come; if anyone is not holy, let him
repent. Maranatha!
Amen.

[10:7 But permit the prophets to make thanksgiving as much as they desire.]

11 Welcome the Teacher

11:1 Welcome the teacher when he comes to instruct you in all that has been said.

- 11:2** But if he turns and trains you in another tradition to the destruction of this teaching, do not listen. If he teaches so as to increase righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.
- 11:3** Act according to the precepts of the gospel concerning all apostles and prophets:
- 11:4** Let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord.
- 11:5** But he must not remain more than one day, or two, if there's a need. If he stays three days, he is a false prophet.
- 11:6** And when the apostle goes away, let him take nothing but bread to last him until his next night of lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet.
- 11:7** In addition, if any prophet speaks in the Spirit, you shall not try or judge him; for every sin will be forgiven, but this sin cannot be forgiven.
- 11:8** But not everyone who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet; only he is a prophet who has the ways of the Lord about him. By their ways will the false prophet and the prophet be known.
- 11:9** Any prophet who orders a meal in the Spirit does not eat it; if he does, he is indeed a false prophet.
- 11:10** And any prophet who teaches the truth, but does not do what he teaches, is a false prophet.

11:11 When a prophet, proved true, works for the mystery of the church in the world but does not teach others to do what he himself does, he will not be judged among you, for his judgment is already before God. The ancient prophets acted in this way, also.

11:12 But whoever says in the Spirit, "Give me money," or something else like this, you must not listen to him. But if he tells you to give for the sake of others who are in need, let no one judge him.

12 Welcome Anyone Coming in the Name of the Lord

12:1 Welcome anyone coming in the name of the Lord. Receive everyone who comes in the name of the Lord, but then, test them and use your discretion.

12:2 If he who comes is a transient, assist him as far as you are able; but he should not remain with you more than two or three days, if need be.

12:3 If he wants to stay with you, and is a craftsman, let him work for his living.

12:4 But if he has no trade, use your judgment in providing for him; for a Christian should not live idle in your midst.

12:5 If he is dissatisfied with this sort of an arrangement, he is a Christ peddler. Watch that you keep away from such people.

13 Every Genuine Prophet

13:1 Every genuine prophet who wants to live among you is worthy of support.

13:2 So also, every true teacher is, like a workman, entitled to his support.

13:3 Every first fruit, therefore, of the products of vintage and harvest, of cattle and of sheep, should be given as first fruits to the prophets, for they are your high priests.

13:4 But if you have no prophet, give it all to the poor.

13:5 If you bake bread, take the first loaf and give it according to the commandment.

13:6 If you open a new jar of wine or of oil, take the first fruit and give it to the prophets.

13:7 If you acquire money or cloth or any other possession, set aside a portion first, as it may seem good to you, and give according to the commandment.

14 On the Lord's Day

14:1 On the Lord's day, gather yourselves together and break bread, give thanks, but first confess your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure.

14:2 However, let no one who is at odds with his brother come together with you, until he has reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be profaned.

14:3 For this is what the Lord has said: "For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts. . . . For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name is revered among the nations."

15 Appoint Bishops for Yourselves

15:1 Appoint bishops for yourselves, as well as deacons, worthy of the Lord, of meek disposition, unattached to money, truthful and proven; for they also render to you the service of prophets and teachers.

15:2 Do not despise them, after all, for they are your honored ones, together with the prophets and teachers.

15:3 And reprove one another, not in anger, but in peace, as you have it in the gospel. But to anyone who acts amiss against another, let no one speak to him, nor let him hear anything from you until he repents. But your prayers and alms and all your deeds so do, as you have it in the gospel of our Lord.

16 Watch Over Your Life

16:1 Watch over your life, that your lamps are never quenched, and that your loins are never unloosed. Be ready, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

16:2 Come together often, seeking the things that are good for your souls. A life of faith will not profit you if you are not made perfect at the end of time.

16:3 For in the last days false prophets and corrupters will be plenty, and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love will be turned into hate.

16:4 When lawlessness increases, they will hate and persecute and betray one another, and then the world-deceiver will appear claiming to be the Son of God, and he will do signs and wonders, and the earth will be delivered into his hands, and he will do iniquitous things that have not been seen since the beginning of the world.

16:5 Then humankind will enter into the fire of trial, and many will be made to stumble and many will perish; but those who endure in their faith will be saved from under the curse itself.

16:6 And then the signs of the truth will appear: the first sign, an opening of the heavens; the second sign, the sounding of the trumpet; and the third sign, the resurrection of the dead—

16:7 not of every one, but as it is said: "Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him."

16:8 Finally, "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see 'the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven' with power and great glory."

Questions for Reflection, Study, and Discussion

Record your initial reactions to reading the Didache. What surprised you? What did you appreciate most? What did you find confusing?