**BISHOP POLYCARP OF SMYRNA**

**TO THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI**

***Who is Polycarp?***

Polycarp was a disciple of St. John the Apostle. He was the bishop of Smyrna when John wrote Revelation. His work that has survived comes to us through his epistle to Philippi, the epistle written to him by St. Ignatius and the account of his martyrdom.

Irenaeus and Eusebius regarded Polycarp as a great peacemaker in the Church as well as an important link from the Apostles to the Church catholic of the late second century regarding the teachings against the Gnostics.

Polycarp was martyred under Emperor Trajan around 108 AD. With his claim in the *Martyrdom* of being at least eighty-six (MartPoly 9:3), that would put his birth around 22 AD at the latest. With this reference, he cannot be pointing to his Baptism since John the Baptizer would not be ministering for at least another five years.

***Bishop of Smyrna***

 The city of Smyrna was located on the coast of Anatolia, where the modern city of Izmir is located. The city was founded by Alexander the Great, but it rose to prominence in the Roman era. The congregation was an original recipient of Revelation. One of the most famous native citizens of Smyrna was Irenaeus of Lyons, who had heard Polycarp preach as a child. His epic tome, *Against Heresies*, is still referenced by twenty-first century apologists to help rebuke heresies.

***When did he write?***

Polycarp wrote this epistle in 108 AD between Ignatius’ layover in Philippi on his way to martyrdom in Rome (1:1; 9:1; 13:1-2). Traditionally, both Polycarp and Ignatius were martyred in the same year.

***What is the situation at Philippi when he writes?***

St. Paul founded the congregation in Philippi as the first congregation in Macedonia in 49/50 AD. The congregation began in Lydia’s house (Acts 16:11-15). Over the almost six decades between its establishment and this epistle, the congregation has likely grown out of her house into a larger building or into multiple congregations. St. Paul wrote his own epistle to Philippi shortly before his martyrdom in 62 AD. Much is known about this congregation.

When Polycarp writes, Ignatius’ martyrdom is fresh in their minds (9:1-2). Martyrdom is on Polycarp’s mind as he writes concerning Ignatius but also understanding his own impending martyrdom around the same time.

For Polycarp, martyrdom is strongly based in its etymology. The word “martyr” simply means “witness.” You don’t have to die to be a martyr. However, death is typically considered to be a requirement in most people’s minds. The basic understanding of Polycarp’s witness is his faith in the same justification that Paul taught the Philippians in his epistle. Polycarp specifically states this in chapter 3 and references it deeply in chapter 8.

Polycarp had heard that the Philippian congregation were witnesses to their neighbors and the Church catholic. He points this out with his words against Docetism (7:1-2, see commentary for a description) and the unhappy account of their former presbyter Valens (11:1-4). Polycarp can speak this way to the congregation because he knows they are “well-trained in the Scriptures” and “nothing is hidden from you” (12:1). Not only Paul but the presbyters that had served the congregation since its establishment had kept them grounded in the Scriptures.

***Chapter 1***

1 I rejoice with you greatly in our Lord Jesus Christ that you received the images of true love and sent them away, as was your part, those who had been bounded with holy chains, who are truly diadems chosen by our God and Lord. 2 When the root of your faith is certain, proclaimed to you from the earliest times, which has remained until now and bears fruit in our Lord Jesus Christ, who endured suffering until death for our sins. God raised Him, having loosed the pangs of Hades, 3 in whom you believe with unspeakable joy even though you have not seen Him, in which many have desired to enter, because you are saved by grace, not by works, but by God’s will through Jesus Christ.

Joy has always been a major theme for the congregation in Philippi. St. Paul’s epistle to them had been filled with the joy he had over the congregation. A generation or two after Paul’s death sees Philippi once again showing Christian love to those in need. They had received Ignatius and those with him who were on their way to be killed in Rome. While they did not have an opportunity to help Paul (Philippians 4:10), they were able to help these saints as they were awaiting their execution in Rome.

***Chapter 2***

1 Therefore gird up your loins and serve God in fear and truth, leaving behind empty and idle talking and the error of the crowd. Believe that God raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and gave Him glory and a throne at His right hand. Every wind serves Him who is coming to judge the living and the dead, whose blood God will require of those who disobey Him. 2 He who raised Him from the dead will also raise us if we do His will, walk in His commandments and love who He loves. Abstain from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, slander and false witness. Do not return evil for evil nor abuse for abuse, blow for blow or curse for curse. 3 Remember what He said, “Do not judge, that you may not be judged. With what measure you measure, it will be measured against you. Blessed are the poor and those persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God.”

Polycarp has a quick overview of the Christian life in the way of life, even though he doesn’t use that terminology. He summarizes proper obedience and life with the oft-misquoted words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:1-2). He also brings in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount with the eighth Beatitude (Matthew 5:10). Walking worthy of the Lord is a life that brings persecution. This was a well-established theme in Paul’s writings (Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12). As Polycarp is writing to a congregation Paul established, he will use Paul’s phrases often throughout the epistle.

***Chapter 3***

1 I write these things to you, brothers, concerning righteousness not from my own initiative but because you wrote to me first. 2 For neither I nor anyone like me is able to attain Paul’s blessed wisdom and glory. When he was with you face to face with the men of that day, he taught exactly and steadfastly the Word of truth. When he was absent, he wrote epistles. If you study them, you will be built up in the faith given you, 3 which is the mother of all. Hope follows closely behind and love toward God, Christ and the neighbor. For if any of these things are within you, you have fulfilled the commandment of righteousness. For he who has love is far from sin.

Like many of Paul’s epistles, Polycarp writes this epistle in response to an epistle from Philippi. They had written to him because he was well-respected for his pastoral care in Smyrna. He was also well-respected because he was a disciple of St. John the Evangelist. The Philippians were looking for encouragement about righteousness.

Polycarp refers them back to Paul’s epistles. Not just the one he wrote to them. By Polycarp’s time, it seems that the bulk of Paul’s epistles had been copied and distributed as a set throughout the Church. Since we date this epistle in 108, this compilation of Paul’s epistles into a canonized set happened within fifty years of his death. In a world without high-speed internet, social media, or even modern travel options, God’s Word, through His servant Paul, spread throughout the world because it proved to be truly divine in origin. Polycarp encourages studying these so that the Philippians will be built up in faith. Polycarp would likely echo Jesus’ words, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about Me” (John 5:39). Polycarp esteems God’s Word above all because it speaks of Jesus.

***Chapter 4***

1 The love of money is the beginning of all hardships. Therefore, knowing that we brought nothing into the world, we will take nothing out. Let us arm ourselves with the armor of righteousness and teach first ourselves to walk in the Lord’s commandments. 2 Next, teach your wives to walk in their gifts of faith, love and purity, showing affection to their husband in complete fidelity, loving everyone equally in complete chastity, teaching their children in the fear of God. 3 Teach widows to be sober concerning the faith of the Lord, unceasingly praying for all men that they stay away from everything evil: slander, false witness, love of money. They know that they are an altar of God and every offering will be inspected. Nothing escapes Him—neither reason nor thoughts nor any of their hearts’ desires.

Polycarp shows his great study of the Scriptures by combining words from Paul and Job. St. Paul wrote to St. Timothy, “For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). When all the calamity of the first attack happened, Job replied, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (1:21). To encourage a similar attitude among the Philippians, Polycarp points to the armor of righteousness (Ephesians 6:10) and the Lord’s commandments.

Polycarp moves to walking in God’s commandments through our individual vocations. He begins with wives to use their faith, love and purity to care for their husbands and families. He calls widows to a life of prayer, as was seen in many places as the widow was an honored class in many congregations.

From the very beginning of the Church, the widows were an important part of the congregation (Acts 6:1). Dorcas was a widow heavily involved in the care of the poor in Joppa (Acts 9:36-41). Paul encouraged the enrollment of widows who had achieved the age of 60 so that the Church could care for their needs (1 Timothy 5:9-16). They were an altar of God because their main priority in the Church was to pray for the saints and the ministry.

***Chapter 5***

1 Knowing that God is not mocked, we ought to walk worthy of His commandments and glory. 2 Likewise, deacons must be righteous and blameless as ministers before God and Christ and not of men: not slanderers, not double-tongued, not covetous, but self-controlled in everything, compassionate, attentive, walking according to the Lord’s truth. He is a minister to all. If we please Him in the present age, we will receive what is to come, just as He promised to raise us from the dead, and if we live worthy as His citizens, we will reign with Him as long as we believe. 3 Likewise the younger men must be blameless in everything, caring above all for purity and restraining themselves from every evil. For it is good to refrain from worldly lusts because every lust wars against the Spirit. Neither the sexually immoral, the effeminate nor the homosexual will inherit the kingdom of God. Neither will those who do what is improper. Therefore, it is right to abstain from these things, being subject to the presbyters and deacons as to God and Christ. Virgins ought to walk in a blameless and pure conscience.

"Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). We cannot hide our sinfulness from God. Therefore, we should walk in the commandments. This becomes very evident in the Church, as Polycarp refers to this need for deacons, younger men and virgins. Although we have a God who loves to forgive sins, we cannot think that we can continue to live in sin so that we may have more grace shown to us (Romans 6:1-2).

Polycarp turns his attention to the deacons in Philippi, reminding them of the necessities for those ministering in that office. Paul had detailed these requirements to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3. (More information about deacons can be found in the 1 Clement commentary.)

In his aged state, Polycarp especially reminds the younger generation about the need for sexual purity. He refers to the younger men and virgins in this respect, referencing passages from St. John's Revelation about the sexually immoral not inheriting the kingdom of Heaven (21:8; 22:15). We need not be involved in anything that keeps us out of Heaven.

***Chapter 6***

1 Also, the presbyters must be compassionate and merciful to everyone, bringing back those who have gone astray, looking after the sick, not neglecting the widows, the orphans or the poor man. They must always provide what is good before God and men, holding off all anger, favoritism and unjust judgment. They must be far from the love of money, not quick to believe evil of anyone, not severe in judgment, knowing that we are all debtors to sin. 2 If, therefore, we entreat the Lord to forgive us, we ought also to forgive. We are before the eyes of the Lord and of God. Everyone must stand before Christ’s judgment seat and give an account of himself. 3 So then, let us serve Him with fear and all reverence as He has commanded, along with the Apostles who evangelized and the prophets who proclaimed our Lord’s mercies. Let us seek what is good, abstaining from scandals and false brothers and those who hypocritically bear the Lord’s name. These will lead idle men astray.

Polycarp now turns to the presbyters, reminding them of their pastoral duties. As he knows he is reaching the end of his life, he acknowledges the difficulties that they face. All their duties are difficult to do and be available for everyone. As difficult as the office of presbyter or pastor is, it is also one that is very blessed through its struggles. Therefore the encouragement of those seeking this office is plentiful. So also, are the encouragements to the laity to obey and respect the presbyters (Hebrews 13:17; cf. 1 Clement).

A major portion of the presbyter's job is the teaching of God's Word. The biggest issue is the reminder that "everyone must stand before Christ's judgment seat and give an account of himself" (#CITATIONS#). Presbyters imitate the Prophets and Apostles who evangelized whether the people liked it or not. St. Paul charged Timothy, "Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2). From this, they seek what is good for their hearers. They abstain from joining together with those who cause scandals and teach false doctrine. They do it so that all might be called by the Gospel to salvation.

***Chapter 7***

1 For everyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is Antichrist. Whoever does not confess the witness of the cross is from the devil. Whoever perverts the Lord’s words for his own desires and says there is neither resurrection nor judgment is Satan’s firstborn.

Polycarp shows his discipleship of St. John in this verse. St. John states this in his first epistle (4:1-6). He adds to this foundation by focusing it even closer and clearer. Those who deny the Incarnation set themselves against Christ. They refuse to accept that He is God and man. There are many ways this has been taught throughout history.

The teaching that Christ did not take on actual human flesh is called Docetism. This heresy was very prevalent in Gnostic circles. St. John had to battle with this teaching in his first epistle. Polycarp picks it up in the next generation. Unfortunately, the teaching is still acknowledged in the twenty-first century.

Docetism takes two forms: other worldly or nothing. When they speak in other worldly terms, they believe and teach that Jesus brought His body with Him down from Heaven. It is not human flesh and blood, but it is something else. Some believe it was the original flesh that Adam and Eve were created with but have yet lost. They say it is not human because it is not tainted by this world. Others believe that His body was of angelic substance or something between divine and human. Still others believe that His body was celestial, and a foretaste of what humanity will look like in Heaven. Regardless of their spin, Jesus did not have human flesh and blood like you and me.

When they speak of nothing, they teach that Jesus' body was an illusion. A manifestation of a human-like body but not the real Christ. The real Christ, being God, is spirit and not flesh. When Jesus walked and talked with His disciples, it was only a phantasm like the angelic appearances in the Bible. These Docetists have a difficult time with the Incarnation because they also typically teach that the life of faith is a journey to get rid of the flesh. Why would God want to go backwards? They cannot grasp this most fundamental doctrine of Christianity.

When you examine Docetism, you see why John and Polycarp warn their readers about it. If Jesus did not take on human flesh, you cannot be certain about your salvation. It would be just as questionable as the Old Testament sacrifices. There would always be something missing. There would never be certainty. What good is a religion without certainty? As John wrote in his Gospel, "These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (20:30-31). Jesus wants His disciples to firmly believe His promises. Docetism casts a big shadow over them with their teachings.

Beyond that, those who deny that He died on the cross or that HIs death doesn't grant us salvation teaches exactly what the devil has taught since the Fall. Many seek to take away the scandal of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:23).

When neither of these work, or when false teachers seek to be "more crafty" in their words (Genesis 3:1), they will verbally acknowledge the Incarnation and the Crucifixion. However, they will take the Lord's Gospel and turn it into a second Law. They make Jesus a second Moses, a second Lawgiver. In this, they seek to change the true Christian faith into any other religion. Those who do this are Satan's firstborn. They are the "brood of vipers" (Matthew 3:7; 12:34; 23:33) who are of their father, the devil, who has been a murderer and a liar from the beginning (John 8:44).

2 Therefore let us leave behind the vanity of the crowd and false teachings and return to the Word which has been handed down to us from the beginning, being sober in prayer and persevering in fasts, entreating God not to lead us into temptation. As the Lord said, “The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

As the author to the Hebrews encourages us to look around at the great cloud of witnesses surrounding us (12:1-2), Polycarp encourages us to take our eyes off the world around us. The "vanity of the crowd" is all this world knows. What opinion is most popular or most vehemently defended. The world will follow that. It doesn't matter how logical the argument. It doesn't matter if it is the exact opposite of the previous consensus. In fact, that might prove the vanity of the world's situation. As long as it keeps "progressing," that is the only thing necessary.

God's Word is solid and steadfast. It does not change. It upholds all of Creation because God created everything through His Word (Genesis 1). His Word changes lives as it makes saints out of sinners. His Word has begun the new creation through His own death and resurrection. This is where our focus should be as we walk through this world.

Keeping that focus isn't easy. "The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Jesus said these words to Peter, James and John as He found them sleeping while He prayed in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38). We are often tempted to follow the world's vanity, but Solomon reminds us how futile it is in the end (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14). We are to seek things eternal, not fleeting fancies (Colossians 3:1). They are what will be remembered after our time on earth is over.

***Chapter 8***

1 Let us, therefore, persevere in our hope and the pledge of our righteousness, which is Christ Jesus, who bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He did not sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. But He endured everything for us so that we might live in Him. 2 Therefore, let us be imitators of His endurance. If we suffer in His name, let us glorify Him. For this is the example He set for us. This we learned to believe.

St. Paul writes, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). Jesus told Polycarp's congregation in Smyrna, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Smyrna's hope is based on the certainty of Jesus' promise. All the congregations to which Revelation was first written had similar promises:

* Ephesus: "To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the Paradise of God" (2:7).
* Smyrna: "The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death" (2:11).
* Pergamum: "To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it" (2:17).
* Thyatira: "The one who conquers and who keeps My works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations ... and I will give him the morning star" (2:26-28).
* Sardis: "The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the Book of Life. I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" (3:5).
* Philadelphia: "The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God" (3:12).
* Laodicea: "The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also conquered and sat down with My Father on His throne" (3:21).

Christians persevere in hope because of Christ and His perfect righteousness. Part of this perseverance is the imitation of His sufferings. Peter and John rejoiced because "they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name" (Acts 5:41). St. Paul encouraged St. Timothy, "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:3). "As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5). Through this suffering, we glorify God because "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Romans 5:3-4).

***Chapter 9***

1 Therefore I exhort you to obey the Word of righteousness and to exercise all endurance, which was portrayed to you not only by the blessed Ignatius, Zosimos and Rufus, but also by others among you: Paul himself and the rest of the Apostles. 2 Being persuaded that all these did not run in vain, but in faith and righteousness, they are in their due place with the Lord with whom they also suffered. For they did not love the present age but Him who died for us and was raised by God for our sakes.

The Philippians had received Ignatius and his fellow prisoners while on their way to martyrdom in Rome. The three named came from Antioch and stopped briefly in Philippi as the ship took on provisions to continue its journey to Rome. Polycarp encourages the Philippians to remember what these beloved martyrs had spoken to them. On top of that, he encourages them to look to the writings which became the New Testament, starting with Paul's epistle to them. All these sources show that Christian righteousness and endurance are not in vain. All these have died in faith, not loving the present age. They longed to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. Polycarp desires the same for the Philippians.

***Chapter 10***

1 Stand firm and follow the Lord’s example, strong in the faith and immoveable, loving the brothers, devote to one another, united in truth, serving one another with the Lord’s gentleness, despising no one. 2 When you are able to do good, do not put it off, because alms deliver from death. Each of you be subject to one another, maintaining a blameless conduct among the Gentiles, so that you may be praised because of your good works and the Lord’s name is not blasphemed because of you. 3 Woe to him through whom the Lord’s name is blasphemed! Therefore teach all men the sobriety in which you walk.

The earliest disciples "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). As this third generation of Christians was navigating life as a congregation, Polycarp desired them to imitate the disciples in Jerusalem after Pentecost. The entire book of Acts displays and encourages these same things.

The questionable statement comes when Polycarp says, "Alms deliver from death." He is quoting from Tobit 4:11. The Roman Church took this verse to mean that giving alms merited forgiveness and salvation. Melanchthon tackles this text in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (V 156-159 [*Concordia*: *The Lutheran Confessions* counting]; IV 277-280 [traditional counting]). Almsgiving is certainly a good work and should be done. However, it should be done because you have been saved and forgiven, not in order to obtain these blessings.

Woe is pronounced on those who blaspheme the Lord's name. The Second Commandment speaks about the proper and improper usages of God's name. Leviticus 24:10-16 speaks of an Israelite who blasphemed the name. God commanded him to be put to death. God deals seriously with those who misuse His name.

***Chapter 11***

1 I am very saddened by Valens, who once was a presbyter among you, that he should misunderstand the office given to him so badly. I exhort you to abstain from the love of money and be pure and trustworthy. 2 Indeed, how is he who cannot keep himself in these things to prescribe them to another? If a man does not refrain from the love of money, he will be wholly defiled by idolatry and he will be judged as if he were a Gentile who is ignorant of the Lord’s judgment. Or do we not know that the saints will judge the world, as Paul teaches? 3 But I have not perceived or heard anything of the sort among you, in whose midst the blessed Paul labored and are mentioned in the beginning of his epistle. He boasts of you in all the churches, which alone knew the Lord. We had not yet known Him. 4 Therefore I am greatly and deeply sorrowful for him and his wife. May the Lord give them true repentance! Therefore be sober in this matter, and do not consider such people enemies, but bring them back as erring and weak members that you may preserve your body whole. By doing this, you build yourselves up.

Valens abused his office as presbyter in Philippi. It is evident from Polycarp's repetitive exhortation to abstain from the love of money that Valens' sin had something to do with the congregation's finances. The extent of his crimes against the congregation are not given, but Polycarp quickly categorizes it as idolatry. He is likely thinking of Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Matthew 6:24).

This was part of Judas' downfall. Judas kept the money bag (John 13:29). Many have thought that Judas often helped himself to what went into it, but Jesus makes no mention of it. His betrayal of Jesus only happened after he arranged a price for Jesus' imprisonment (Matthew 26:14-16). Judas condemns himself through suicide.

Simon Magus became a disciple after hearing Philip the Deacon preach in Samaria. When the Apostles came from Jerusalem to lay hands on the new converts, Simon offered them money in order to be able to give the Holy Spirit to whomever he wished (Acts 8). Obviously, his previous life as a magician colored his young faith at this point. Simon begs Peter to pray that the woe pronounced against him would not happen.

***Chapter 12***

1 I have confidence that you are well-trained in the Scriptures and nothing is hidden from you. But that is not left to me. The Scripture says, “Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.” Blessed is he who remembers this. I believe this about you. 2 May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal High Priest, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, build you up in faith, truth, and in all gentleness, without anger, in patience, longsuffering, tolerance and purity. May He give you a lot and portion with His saints, to us along with you, and to everyone under Heaven who will believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His Father, who raised Him from the dead. 3 Pray for all the saints. Pray also for kings, powers and princes, for those who persecute and hate you, for the enemies of the cross. May your fruit be manifested to everyone, that you may be perfect in Him.

Polycarp points them back to the origin. St. Paul had grounded them firmly in the Scriptures. Timothy had been with Paul when the congregation at Philippi was established. His own grounding in the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15) provided for a solid foundation.

With this solid foundation, Polycarp encourages them to continue to grow in faith through the study of the Scriptures. This growth in faith brings us into truth, gentleness, patience, longsuffering, tolerance and purity. This growth assures us of our lot and portion with His saints in Heaven. This growth allows and prompts prayers for everyone in every circumstance. Finally, this growth manifests itself to those around you as you serve them in Christ's love.

***Chapter 13***

1 Both you and Ignatius wrote to me that your letter be taken along by anyone going to Syria. I will do this, if I have a convenient time—either myself or someone I send as an ambassador for both you and me. 2 We are sending Ignatius’ epistles, as you requested, which he sent to us and any other we possess. They are attached to this epistle. May they benefit you greatly! They deal with faith and endurance and all the edification that belongs to the Lord. Let us know anything more certain about Ignatius and those with him.

The Philippian congregation had written to Polycarp. They also asked for that letter to be sent on into the province of Syria. Ignatius (IgnPoly 7) made a similar request. Ignatius was the Bishop of Antioch in Syria. He wanted to make sure that those who had been under his pastoral care were doing well. As a concerned congregation, the Philippians were worried about the congregation who was losing its pastor to martyrdom.

Polycarp sent Ignatius' epistles as attachments to this epistle. A major reason to put Polycarp after Ignatius is this promise. Although Ignatius' epistles were written first, Polycarp saw them as an excellent addendum to his own words. As he recommended Paul's epistles (3:2; 11:3), he also exhorts study of Ignatius' epistle. The Philippians also see their value since they requested this from Polycarp.

As Polycarp begins to close his epistle, he asks the Philippians to relay any information about Ignatius and his travel companions. Philippi was closer to Rome than Smyrna. It was a Roman colony. Therefore, it received more news from the imperial capital than the smaller, more insignificant Smyrna in Asia Minor. It was also likely the last port on the voyage from Antioch until the ship arrived in Italy. Both Polycarp and the Philippians show genuine love and concern for their brothers in Christ.

***Chapter 14***

1 I am writing you these things through Crescens, whom I have commended to you in the past and commend to you again. He has walked among us blamelessly. I believe he will do so among you also. His sister is also commended to you when she comes to you. Farewell in our Lord Jesus Christ in grace, to you and everyone with you. Amen.

As St. Paul would at the end of most of his epistles, Polycarp commends the letter carrier who delivered the epistle. Crescens and his sister were great witnesses to the faith in Smyrna. Polycarp was sending them to do the same in Philippi.

In Valens' and Judas' cases, someone was needed to replace them in their office (Acts 1:20). Neither was able to fulfill their task because of the shame they had brought on themselves. The shame drove Judas to despair and suicide. We are not told what happened to Valens, but Polycarp encourages the Philippians not to treat him or his wife as enemies. He commends them to the congregation as erring members who need to be called back. He might not be entrusted with the office again, but his sin does not exclude him from God's forgiveness.