Outline to the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians

I. The Corinthian church has slipped from being praiseworthy to reprehensible due to the presence of disunity but can still be redeemed
   A. Prior to the breakdown of unity, the Corinthian church was a model of righteousness
      1) Their faith was strong and buttressed by knowledge of the truth
      2) They possessed an excellent spirit of giving
      3) Members showed obedience to church elders
      4) They were examples of humility and contrition
   B. Jealousy was the cause of Corinth’s spiritual breakdown
      1) Scriptures provide examples of the dangers of envy
         a. Cain’s murder of his brother Abel
         b. Jacob’s pilfering his brother Esau’s blessing
         c. Joseph’s brothers selling him into slavery in Egypt
         d. Aaron’s and Miriam’s murmuring in the camp against Moses
         e. The sufferings of Peter and Paul
   C. Clement’s exhortation to and arguments for repentance
      1) Scripture proves that God will forgive repentant sinners
         a. Those who heeded Noah were spared from death by the flood
         b. Nineveh’s response to Jonah saved them from destruction
         c. Ezekiel quoted as saying God takes no pleasure in damning the sinner
         d. Isaiah quoted as saying God will make sins white as snow

II. Unity and humility are what God wills for us, and doing the will of God results in blessings
   A. Unity is a teaching of God from both nature and Scripture
      1) The whole universe follows fixed patterns of operation that allow life to exist
      2) Jesus and the saints provide imitable examples of humility
         a. God could have visited earth as a rich and powerful king but chose the lowly role of a beggar instead
         b. Abraham, though God’s friend, called himself dust and ashes
         c. Job confessed that he sinned daily
         d. Moses admitted to a speech defect
      3) Scriptures reveal that we reap rewards through obeying God’s will
         a. Enoch and Noah were saved from death
         b. Abraham became the father of many nations
         c. Lot was delivered from Sodom’s destruction
         d. Rahab was spared Jericho’s annihilation

III. Both faith and works are necessary to please the Lord
   A. God has proven the truth of Christ’s Resurrection and our resurrection
      1. Nature behaves in cycles of renewal (i.e. the leaves on a tree, the sun rising/setting)
      2. Story of the phoenix bird of Arabia and its rebirth every 500 years
      3. Since God forbids deception for His people, He cannot Himself be a deceiver
      4. God can do anything, even what is impossible for humans
   B. Faith Should Move us to Shun Immoral Behavior
      1. God witnesses all we do (Quotes Psalm 139)
2. Being set apart as God’s special people, we should be different from the world
3. Since God also witnesses our inner hearts, we must not be haughty
C. God’s merciful offer of blessings thru faith does not excuse us from the obligation of
having to perform good deeds
   1. God Himself is the perfect example of a hard worker (i.e. Creation)
   2. The Lord will repay us according to our works, as Scripture testifies
   3. The angels are examples of those who love to do the will of God
   4. We cannot imagine how wonderful heaven will be for those who work righteousness

IV. The oneness of the Church must be preserved for God’s pleasure and glory
A. No single part of the Church is independent of the others
   1. Like the chain of a military command, every officer is necessary
   2. As a body cannot function without all its members (i.e. arms without legs)
   3. We must all provide for one another in proportion to our gifts
B. Ecclesiastical structure and function is not man-made but designed by God
   1. Participation in communion parallels the sacrificial rituals of the Torah
   2. The offices of bishops and deacons can be traced back to the apostles, and then
to Christ, and then to God Himself, making their government God’s will
   3. Moses provides an example of organization by the blossoming of Aaron’s rod, a
sign to the Hebrew congregation of Aaron’s divine legitimacy as priest
C. Rebellion against Church powers, therefore, is tantamount to rebellion against God
   1. Scripture contains examples of rebellions by the wicked against God’s anointed
   2. Factions within the Church are leading others away from Christ
   3. The Apostle Paul warned Corinth about this same danger in his letters to them

V. It is time to confess and repent of these sins: only if we do so will God forgive us
A. Hardness of heart leads to ruin
   1. Stubborn resistance against Moses led to the downfall of Pharaoh and Korah
   2. The Psalms of David reveal God’s desire for our contrition and confession
B. Encouragement to accept correction
   1. Scripture teaches that God chastises those He loves
   2. Warning from Proverbs concerning those who ignore God’s discipline
   3. Now that Corinth has been warned, refusal to heed reproof will incur guilt
D. Corinth’s reconciliation would bring joy both to God and the rest of the Church
   1. A doxology praising the mercifulness of God
   2. A reminder of the exemplars of old
   3. To hear of reconciliation in the near future would give the Roman church great joy