

which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

We are fortunate to live in a time and place when the threat of death for being a Christian is something far removed from our experience. However, as we are coming into a time when Christians are increasingly demonized, slandered, and mocked we would do well to remember that it has not always been this so safe to be a Christian. The time may come when we too, like men and women in the second century faced death for the charge of being a Christian. Is so, would be found guilty? If so, would we have the faith and courage to endure death for our faith? Peter wrote:

> **But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter** (1 Pet. 4:15-16).

4700 Andrews Ave.
Amarillo TX 79106
806-352-2809
www.olsenpark.com

Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.

Let us know if you have any questions.

ISSUE 20.30
BULLETIN OF THE OLSEN PARK CHURCH OF CHRIST
July 29, 2018

Faithful Sayings



Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM
10:00 AM
11:00 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Steve Dixon
Ryan Ferguson
Arend Gressley
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear
Ryan Matney
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott
Justin Smiley
Kevin Wise
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

"How Can I Blaspheme My King?"

By Kyle Pope

In the middle of the second century a Christian named Polycarp served as a bishop for the church in Smyrna. Polycarp was young when the apostle John and others who had known Jesus before His ascension were still alive. Polycarp knew them and learned from them (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.24). By the time of Polycarp, Christians had already faced a localized persecution under Nero (AD 64—), and more widespread persecutions under Domitian (AD 81—), Trajan (98—), and Hadrian (117—). In 138 the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius began yet another persecution that would extend (in one form or another) into the time of his successor, Marcus Aurelius who began his own persecution in 161. Sometime during these dark days, Polycarp was arrested on the charge of being a Christian.

To these pagan worshippers of false gods, Christians were considered atheists because they only worshipped Christ and refused to sacrifice to or address the emperor as "Lord." To be a Christian meant that you discouraged the worship of the gods recognized by the Greeks and Romans, and discouraged

honoring the emperor as if he was a god. To be found guilty of being a Christian—especially a teacher and preacher of Christ—was a death sentence. There was no question about the fate that awaited Polycarp. He was a Christian and did not deny it. He was sentenced to death for his faith.

Before his execution, as an old man, Polycarp was given an opportunity to renounce his faith and spare his life. The proconsul urged him to swear by Caesar and declare "Away with the atheists!" As Polycarp stood in the stadium, in defiance he waved his hand, motioning towards the watching crowds and said, "away with the atheists!" In frustration, the proconsul again gave him the chance to renounce Christ. Bravely, Polycarp replied, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?" (*Martyrdom of Polycarp,* 9).

The proconsul then threatened him with wild beasts and fire. An account written by members of the church in Smyrna records his reply:

> You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why do you tarry? Bring forth what you will (ibid., 11).

The proconsul then had a messenger announce to the crowds, "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the overthrower of our gods, he who has been teaching many not to sacrifice, or to worship the gods" (ibid., 12). Like the crowds that yelled for Jesus' death, with anger they shouted that he should be thrown to the lions. Apparently it was past the time of the day for executions using wild beasts, so Polycarp's execution had to come through fire.

When the pile for the fire and stake to which he would be fastened was set, they started to nail his hands to the stake. Reportedly he said, "Leave me as I am; for He that gives me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails, to remain without moving in the pile" (ibid., 13). He then is said to have offered the following prayer:

> O Lord God Almighty, the Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of You, the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the righteous who live before you, I give You thanks that You have counted me, worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Your martyrs, in the cup of your Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, through the incorruption [imparted] by the Holy Ghost. Among whom may I be accepted this day before You as a fat and acceptable sacrifice, according as You, the ever-truthful God, have foreordained, have revealed beforehand to me, and now have fulfilled. Wherefore also I praise You for all things, I bless You, I glorify You, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, with whom, to You, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen (ibid., 14).

In the hope of eternal life in Christ, Polycarp bravely yielded to being burned at the stake, dying by the thrust of a dagger. Hope in Christ carried him through this ultimate test of his faith (Sources: *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies;* Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*).

Jesus promised His disciples, **"you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved"** (Matt, 10:22, NKJV). As Polycarp confessed to the proconsul, Jesus had warned, **"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"** (Matt. 10:28). Christians near the end of the first century were told, **"Do not fear any of those things**

