

“The Blessing of Being Faithful”

Revelation 2:8-11

September 29, 2019

Polycarp is a celebrated figure in the history of Christianity. A direct pupil of the apostle John, Polycarp lived between 70 and 155 A.D., connecting him to both the biblical apostles and the age of the early church fathers. Polycarp served as the bishop of the church at Smyrna (modern day Izmir in Turkey) and was recognized as one of the early combatants of Christian heresies.

Polycarp was arrested on the charge of being Christian – a member of a politically dangerous cult whose rapid growth needed to be stopped. Amidst an angry mob, the Roman proconsul took pity on such a gentle old man and urged Polycarp to proclaim, “Caesar is Lord.” To this, Polycarp responded, “Eighty-six years I have served Christ and He never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my king who saved me?” Steadfast in his stand for Christ, Polycarp refused to compromise his beliefs and, thus, was burned alive at the stake.

The Blessings of Faithfulness

I. Jesus understands our suffering:

- A. His understanding of our suffering is because of His resurrection from the dead.
- B. His understanding of our suffering is predicated on His ability to sympathize.
- C. His understanding of our suffering is because He knows it's for Him!

D. “Suffering ceases to be suffering when it finds a purpose.” *Victor Frankl*

II. Jesus shortens our suffering:

- A. It is shortened by time if the actual time is reduced.
- B. It is shortened in its severity when God's grace is increased.
- C. “In as much that I have often said, were it lawful, I could pray for greater miseries for greater mercies' sake.” *John Bunyan*
- D. “It was strictly forbidden to preach to other prisoners, as it is in captive nations today. It was understood that whoever was caught doing this received a severe beating.”
Richard Wurmbrand

III. Jesus rewards our suffering:

- A. The reward of suffering is a crown of life. This crown is not eternal life but is given to those who persevere great trials and remain faithful.
- B. The reward of suffering is to those who overcome; they shall be spared any injury from the 2nd death.