

Thursday, April 4, 2024

Polycarp, the ancient Roman bishop of Smyrna, was mentored by the Apostle John. Unwavering in his commitment to Jesus Christ, he refused to bow before the empire. Polycarp was arrested and sentenced to death; he would soon be burned at the stake.

Polycarp was given a choice: curse the name of Jesus and worshiping Caesar, or die. He was told, "I will set you at liberty. Reproach Christ."

Polycarp replied, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" After the proconsul threatened him again, Polycarp added, "You threaten me with fire which awaits the wicked in judgment to come and in everlasting punishment. Why are you waiting? Come, do what you will."

They were about to tie him to the stake when he shouted, "Leave me as I am, for He who gives me power to endure the fire, will grant me to remain in the flames unmoved even without the security you will give by the nails." Loosely bound, with flames flashing about him, Polycarp prayed, "O Lord God Almighty, Father of Thy beloved Child, Jesus Christ... I bless Thee that Thou hast granted unto me this day and hour, that I may share, among the number of the martyrs, in the cup of Thy Christ, for the resurrection to eternal life."

Rev 2:10 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.'

On February 23, A.D. 155, Polycarp paid the ultimate price for his faith. To Polycarp, the reward was worth the price. The truth and hope of rising together with Jesus Christ one day puts all our earthy troubles into their proper perspective.