

CROSSWALK

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, COCOA, FLORIDA

Summer 2004

The Promise of Persecution

by Greg Laurie, www.oneplace.com

A period in church history from A.D. 100 to A.D. 314 was known as the Martyr Period, where literally thousands and thousands of courageous Christian men, women, and even children sealed their fate with their blood. Secular historians agree there were 10 great persecutions against the church. There were 10 major attempts to wipe out Christianity from the face of the earth, starting with the wicked Caesar Nero and ending with Diocletian. Believers were fed alive to wild animals. They were taken to Roman arenas for sport. They were torn apart, tortured, and burned at the stake.

But instead of this time of persecution weakening the church, it actually grew stronger. Persecution can have that effect. In a way, persecution will separate the real from the false, the genuine from the fake. If you are a true follower of Jesus, then you won't back down if a little persecution comes your way. If God allows persecution in your life, then He will give you the strength to face it.

We find this to be true in the case of Polycarp, a great hero of the Christian faith. The pastor of the church in Smyrna, he was martyred on February 23 in A.D. 155. On that day, the public games were taking place, and the crowds were whipped into a real frenzy. Someone cried out, "Let Polycarp be searched for!" Polycarp had a dream the night before in which the pillow under his head was on fire. He woke up and told his fellow believers, "I must be burned alive." When Polycarp was arrested, he asked for the privilege of having a final hour to spend with the Lord in prayer.

As Polycarp entered the Roman arena, God spoke to his heart and said, "Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man." The Roman proconsul gave

him the choice between cursing the name of Christ and making a sacrifice to Caesar, or dying. Polycarp said, "Eighty-six years I have served the Lord. He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who has saved me?"

When the proconsul threatened him with being burned at the stake, Polycarp replied, "You threaten me with the fire that burns for a time and is quickly quenched, but you do not know the fire that awaits the wicked and the judgment to come into everlasting punishment. Why are you waiting? Come and do what you will."

The crowds went crazy, pouring in with firewood and kindling from their woodshops. There Polycarp stood, and they set the wood around him on fire. Amazingly, the fire did not harm him. It came right up to him and would not burn him, while Polycarp sang praises to God. Finally, they couldn't wait any longer and thrust him through with spears. Polycarp showed true courage in the face of true persecution.

Sometimes we will whine a little about how hard it is to be a Christian. But maybe we need to stop for a moment and consider our experience in comparison to that of Polycarp's. Perhaps then we will understand what persecution really is.

Jesus said, "...the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you;" (John 15:20). If you are living a godly life, then you will be persecuted in some way, shape, or form. But persecution can actually help you grow stronger spiritually.

Persecution reminds us of two very important things. First, it reminds us



that we are children of God. Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12).

Second, persecution causes us to cling more tightly to Jesus and remember that this world is not our home. I do believe that persecution will intensify as we get closer to the Lord's return. Today it seems like you can believe anything but the gospel. Everything is fine, except the gospel. Do you know why? Because it really bothers people when you say, "Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father." But if you are a Bible-believing Christian, then you can say no less. Our Lord Himself said He was the way, the truth, and the life (see John 14:6). If we really believe it and really proclaim it, then we *will* face persecution.



Mission Minded

News and Information from the Mission Field

The Ludovic Louis Family, Missionaries to Haiti

MARCH 2004

Would I? Would You?

ACTS 7

Pastor Jay Frazier

In the Book of Acts, chapter 7:59-60, we find the first instance of Christian Martyrdom. Stephen's speech in this chapter was the first defense of Christianity. Stephen is called the "Proto-Martyr", the first of a long line of Martyrs for Jesus (Rev. 7:6). The Greek translation of Martyr, means "witness". It also means "one who testifies", and consists of the evidence of life as well as death.

While we naturally associate the term "Martyr" with death, we must never forget that it has a special reference to life. Stephen's life was one of divine common sense, dauntless courage, filled with deep conviction and devoted character. Thus, with faithfulness, faith, fellowship, and the fullness of the Spirit, Stephen lived his life and died his death glorifying God from beginning to end. And when with cruel stones they crushed his beautiful and gentle life, he prayed to the Father to forgive their ignorance and raging strife. Would I? Would you?

The same life may be ours if the same conditions are fulfilled. We may be true Martyrs or Witnesses for Christ by becoming a living evidence of Christianity, perhaps not to suffer or die, but to live our lives unnoticed in a world that has no need of Christ. If we remain true to God and His Grace, we shall have the same incomparable joy of being a testimony as Stephen did.

"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: Then the waters had over-whelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth." (Psalm 124:2-6)

Dear Praying Friends,

Greetings from Haiti in the most wonderful name of our Lord Jesus-Christ! The Psalmist is right when he wrote under God's guidance: "if it had not been the Lord..." Verily and truly, if it had not been the Lord, we don't know what we would have done back in February. We saw a neighbor police officer disarmed by an armed mob; his son slapped in the face by some of the men in that mob. Most of the homes in my

neighborhood were ransacked by armed robbers, violence was on the streets and highways, looting etc. Those events did affect my wife's blood pressure and caused severe stress damage on her body. Like the Psalmist says in verse 6, "Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth", we repeat the same thing after him.



Haiti News

The change that occurred in the political system in Haiti is truly an answer to prayers. It is a breathtaking pause. The economic system is even worse. The

country is sabotaged, not much left. Even rice, one of the main food staples is scarce and expensive to buy. The transition government has a lot to do with no way to do it. Democracy is not built overnight and that was the mistake by the national and the international communities back in 1986, 1994. This present moment can be another failure if the proper step is not taken.

Church and School News

The political turmoil did affect our church meetings. We could hardly meet on some Sunday mornings due to road-blocks and almost no evening services were held until the end of March. We



Calvary Candids

Lance Carpenter was our special musical guest during a Sunday in April.



▲ **Lance Carpenter** sings with **Carole Buckner** during an evening worship service.



▲ **Pastor Frazier** with Bro. Lance following the evening service.

Have an interesting church photo or event for the newsletter? We want to know! Email it to: info@calvarybaptistincocoa.org

have had several professions of faith. We are discipling the new converts and eight of them will be baptized in the city of Limbe and around fifteen will be baptized in Cap-Haitien. Jocelyn's wife passed away back in February and we had five other deaths in our church family. Jocelyn is one of the pastors who works with me. The two schools are doing okay but the financial challenge remains an obstacle to overcome.

Upcoming Event

Lord willing, I will be in the States from May 6-17 for a Sleep Study Test/oxygen titration.

Special "Thank you"

A special thank you to all of you who showed concern when lives were really threatened in Haiti by sending e-mails

asking if we were okay. E-mail was the only means of communication. Those who didn't have access to e-mail prayed. Thank you to all from the bottom of my heart.

Prayer Requests

- Please pray for a safe trip, financial provision for the Sleep Study Test
- God's daily protection as security is still a problem
- Spiritual, political and economical change in Haiti
- Workers are needed in different fields

Thank you for your prayers, your friendship and your monthly support. May the God of heaven keep on blessing you.

In Christ,

Ludovic Louis & Family



CROSSWALK

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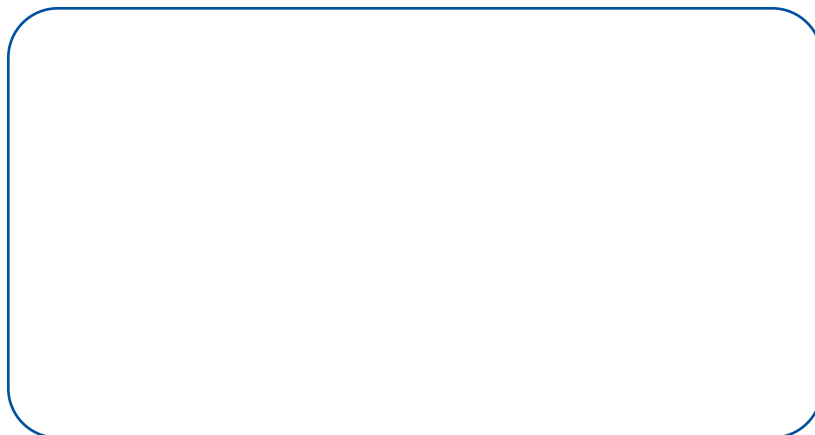
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JUNE

- 2...Abby Hamilton
- 2...Pastor & Claudia Frazier (*anniv.*)
- 2...Roy & Mary Pennington (*anniv.*)
- 15...Judy Hamilton
- 16...Neil Ladtkow, Darchy McAfee,
Alan Morrison
- 16...Ron & Sharon Gaver (*anniv.*)
- 17...Gary Hamilton
- 22...Megan Wardle
- 27...Wayne & Sandy Noble (*anniv.*)

JULY

- 2...Paul Anderson
- 10...Stephanie Belflower
- 11...Libby Hamilton
- 13...Fran Almond
- 13...Paul & Marjorie Collins (*anniv.*)
- 14...Cory Dotson
- 15...Billy Pennington
- 19...Thomas Morrison
- 24...Paul Collins
- 26...Mark & Laura Fuller (*anniv.*)
- 27...Gary & Doreen Belflower (*anniv.*)
- 28...Benjamin Hamilton
- 28...Roy Pennington

AUGUST

- 9...Chilton Fulmer
- 12...Sarah Randall, Fran & Carol Almond (*anniv.*)
- 17...Mark Fuller
- 22...Earl Searcy
- 25...Carole Buckner, Bradley Hamilton
- 26...Bonnie Rogers
- 31...Elizabeth Fulmer

Birthdays
and
ANNIVERSARIES