





# Luke 22

- **31 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,**
- **32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”**
- **33 Peter said to him, Lord, “I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.”**
- **34 Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.”**



# Christians and Persecution

- ▶ “According to strong anecdotal evidence, Christianity is spreading fastest in two countries: Iran and Afghanistan.” **(Source: Ben Hall)**
- ▶ In the first three centuries after the death of Christ, Christians were hunted down and murdered by the thousands.
  - ▶ The result?
  - ▶ Christianity spread throughout the known world, and the faithful became more faithful!

# Christians and Persecution

- ▶ <sup>18</sup> If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the words that I said to you: "A slave is not greater than his master." If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. (John 15:18-20)

**But Not in the U.S.A.!**

- ▶ "... through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22)
- ▶ "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12)



# Strengthen Your Brothers

- ▶ “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia ...” **(1 Peter 1:1)**
  - ▶ And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. **(Acts 8:1)**
  - ▶ Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. **(Acts 11:19)**
  - ▶ James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. **(James 1:1)**



Asia Minor in the First Century



# Strengthen Your Brothers

- ▶ How was the gospel first preached to these “exiles?”
  - ▶ After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. **(Acts 18:23)**
  - ▶ And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. **(Acts 19:26)**



# Peter's Message?

- ▶ *“In this [salvation] you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials ...” (1:6)*
- ▶ *19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and you are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. (2:19-23)*



# Peter's Message?

- ▶ *“Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.” (3:9)*
- ▶ *“But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled.” (3:14)*
- ▶ *“For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.” (3:17)*
- ▶ *“With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you.” (4:4)*



# Peter's Message?

- ▶ *12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. (4:12-16)*



# Peter's Message?

- *“Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” (4:19)*
- *<sup>9</sup> Resist him [Satan], firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. <sup>10</sup> And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (5:9-10)*



# Peter's Message?

## ***ENDURING SUFFERING!***

➔ 1:1

➔ 1:6

➔ 2:19-23

➔ 3:9

➔ 3:14

➔ 3:17

➔ 4:4

➔ 4:12-16

➔ 4:19

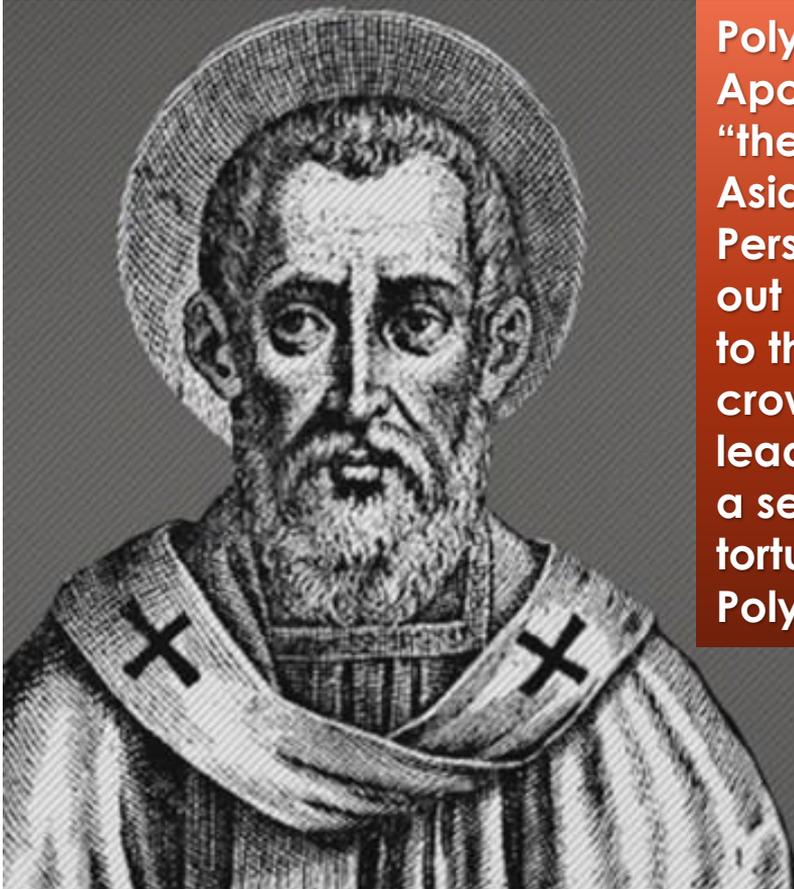
➔ 5:9-10

**Strengthen Your Brothers!**



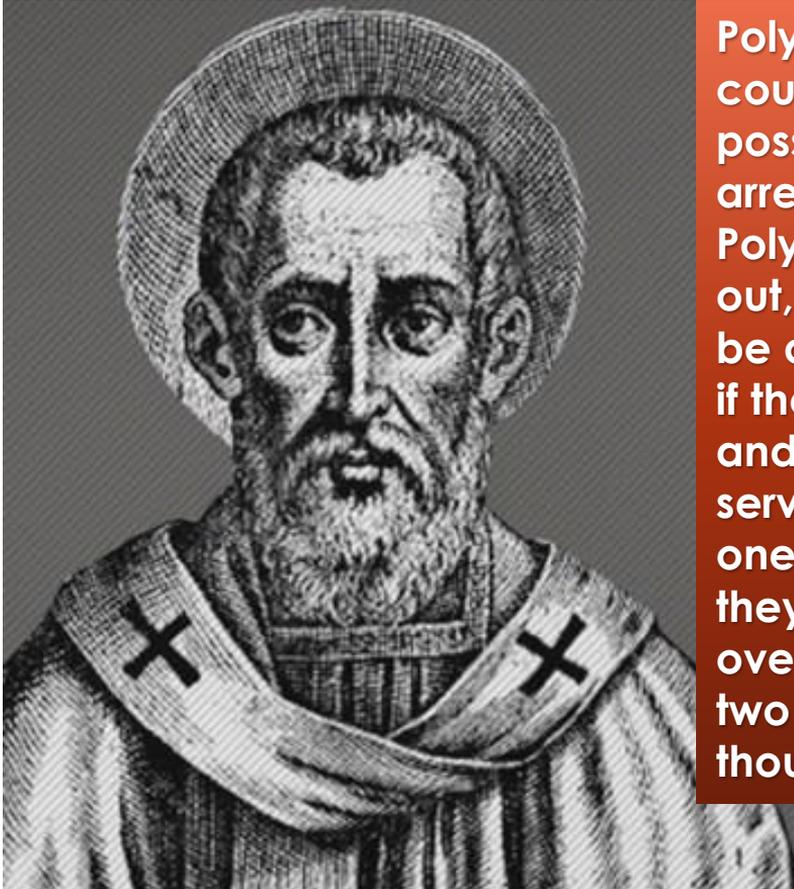
# How Will WE Respond to Persecution?

1. Learn to think for yourself! **(2 Timothy 2:15)**
2. Get as closely connected as possible with other Christians! **(cf. Hebrews 10:25)**
3. Love your neighbor as yourself!  
**(Mark 12:31)**
4. Get seriously busy practicing what you believe!



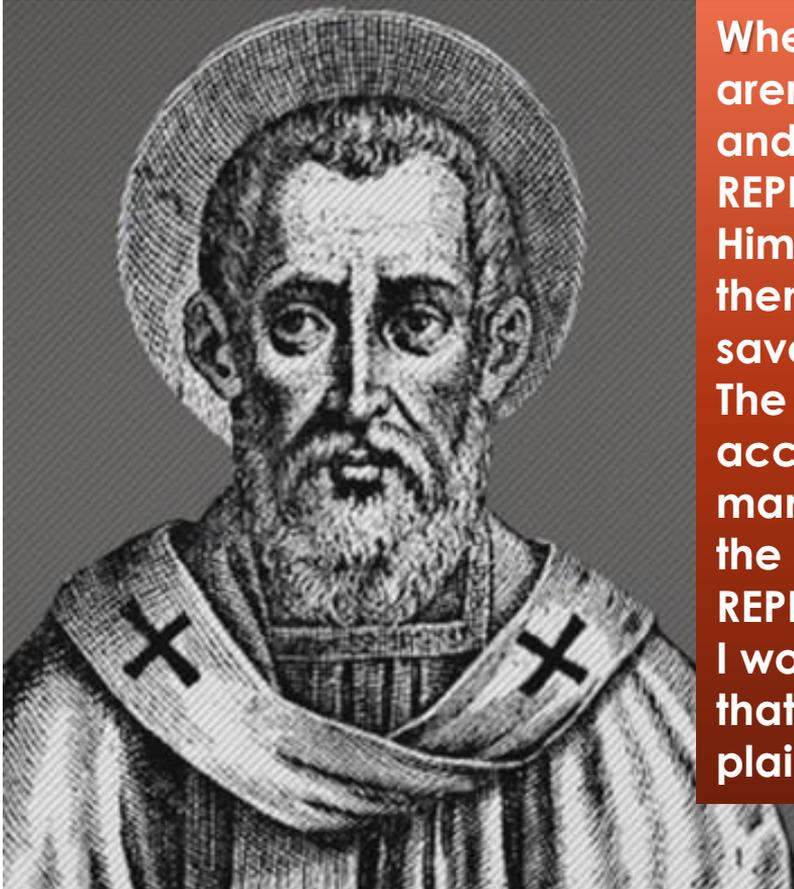
Polycarp was a personal disciple of the Apostle John. As an old man, he was “the” bishop of the Church at Smyrna in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). Persecution against the Christians broke out there and believers were being fed to the wild beasts in the arena. The crowd began to call for the Christians' leader Polycarp. The authorities sent out a search party to bring him in. They tortured two slave boys to reveal where Polycarp was being hidden.

**SOURCE:** Christianity.com



Polycarp was resting upstairs in a country home. They came in like a posse, fully armed as if they were arresting a dangerous criminal. Polycarp's friends wanted to sneak him out, but he refused, saying, "God's will be done." He welcomed his captors as if they were friends, talked with them and ordered that food and drink be served to them. Then Polycarp made one request: one hour to pray before they took him away. The officers overhearing his prayers (that went on for two hours) began to have second thoughts.

**SOURCE:** Christianity.com



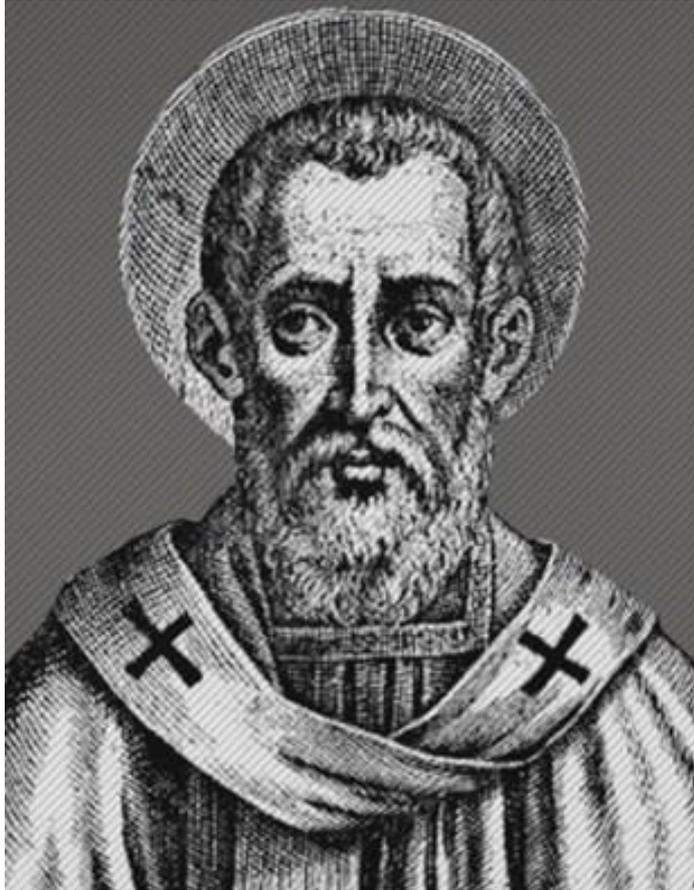
When Polycarp was brought into the arena, the proconsul said: "Curse Christ and I will release you."

REPLY: "Eighty-six years I have served Him. He has never done me wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who has saved me?"

The proconsul reached for an acceptable way out: "Then do this, old man. Just swear by the genius [spirit] of the emperor and that will be sufficient."

REPLY: "If you imagine for a moment that I would do that, then I think you pretend that you don't know who I am. Hear it plainly. I am a Christian!"

**SOURCE: Christianity.com**





# Blessings in Persecution?

- **David** – *“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies ...”*  
(Psalm 23:5; cf. 2 Samuel 17)
- **Paul** – In prison in Rome.  
(Philippians 1:12-14; Philemon)



# Blessings in Persecution?

- ▶ <sup>10</sup> *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake....* <sup>11</sup> *Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.* **(Matthew 5:10-12; cf. Luke 6:22-23)**
- ▶ *"Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name."* **(Acts 5:41)**
- ▶ *"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake ... I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions ..."* **(Colossians 1:24)**



# Strengthen Your Brothers!

*“Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.”*

**(1 Peter 4:16)**

