

# Church History - Session 2 (Persecution From Rome)

by Edgar F. Parkyns

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*This sermon explores the historical context and significance of persecution faced by early Christians in the Roman Empire and its impact on the growth of the church.*

**Duration:** 47:07

**Scripture:** Luke 21:12

**Topics:** "Church History"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the challenges and failures in Christian living. He emphasizes that Christianity in America is relatively easy compared to other countries, leading to complacency and a lack of fervor in faith. The preacher references Luke 21:12-19, where Jesus warns his disciples about persecution and the need to stand firm in their faith. He also highlights the importance of prayer and the power of the blood of Jesus in maintaining a close relationship with God. The sermon concludes with a reminder to submit to authority and do good, as rulers are appointed by God for the well-being of society.

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## Transcript

...that we find quite early in this period, that is, before Christmas time, is the tendency to pray to the saints, and to angels, and to Mary. Having failed to understand the Gospel for greater God, having a concept of Jesus as being so far off as not to be reachable, the idea of other intermediates as intercessors began to become increasingly popular. But now then, what did God have to purify the Church during this same period? His first agent for purity is, of course, the Lordship of the Holy Spirit.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. But you will know that the Holy Spirit is easily grieved. You know that in the Old Testament it is said that they so turned against God that he became their enemy.

The tender influences of the Holy Ghost, you will remember it in your own experience, are lost easily, almost imperceptibly. First of all you find that the desire to pray has grown less, and then a little while later your appreciation of the atoning power of the blood of Jesus has become dim. And before long you have left that very tender, very delicate protection of the presence of the Lord, the Holy Spirit.

In other words, if the sheep don't keep near their shepherd, and fail hearing his voice to follow him, he has to try other methods. In the Old Testament the shepherd had a sling and stones, and if the sheep refused to hear his voice and wandered away, then the shepherd would start dropping stones in front of the sheep's nose to bring him back. And that's how they learned to throw stones within a hare's breadth.

Because recalcitrant sheep wouldn't take any notice of a stone that was two or three feet away. They want it just right there. And the agency which God used to save his church from going altogether and hastily down into corruption, was the agency of persecution.

To those who were living at that time it seemed to be a terrible thing, and indeed it was. But to us who look back after the centuries, we can see the mercy of God in allowing persecution to break out from time to time against the church. So, 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2 and verse 14.

Paul describes the experience of the early church at Thessalonica. For ye brethren became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus. For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.

You see, already persecution was setting in within three months of the Thessalonian church coming into being. And this is why there is so much about sanctification in the Thessalonian epistle. Persecution would drive them close to Jesus.

Chapter 3. Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God and fellow laborer, to establish you and to comfort you concerning your faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions. For yourselves know that we are appointed thereto. For verily when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know.

For this cause where I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain. But now when Timotheus came from you to us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us as we to see you, therefore brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith. For now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord.

For what thanks can we render to God again for you? For all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before God, night and day, praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and my perfect path which is lacking in your faith. Now God himself, and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. The Lord make you to increase and abound in love, one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.

To the end ye may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." You see how in this dear affectionate letter there is persecution, there is love, there is faith, there is fellowship, and there is sanctification. One of the reasons why there is so much failure in our Christian living is that Christianity is very easy in America compared with many countries in the world. Look at Luke 21.

I'm reading from 12 to 19. But before all these they shall lay hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my namesake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer. For I will give you a mouth, Mark says, the Holy Ghost will be in you speaking for you. I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gain, say, nor resist.

Ye shall be betrayed by parents, brethren, kinsfolk, and friends. Some of you shall recourse to be put to death. Ye shall be hated of all for my namesake.

But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls. Then he describes the seed of Jerusalem.

When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let them which are in the midst of it depart out.

Let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these shall be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck.

In those days there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and be laid away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

You will see that verse 24 describes the present age. That is, the Jews scattered and suffering since the time of their dispersion. Therefore, verse 20 describes the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, doesn't it? Therefore, the previous verses describe the persecutions that the church would experience before A.D. 70.

Isn't that? You read Luke again, if you're not quite sure about it. And you will see that all this refers to first generation Christians. Verse 24, to the times of the Gentiles.

That is the church age. And from verse 25 onwards, the second coming of Christ. Now then, the great persecutions.

There are generally reckoned to be ten major persecutions under Rome against the church. And the first and best known of these is the persecution under the young emperor Nero in somewhere about A.D. 60. Nero died in his early thirties.

He tried to commit suicide, didn't succeed, and somebody else had to finish him off. He was a propagator, living in lust and selfish pleasure. A brute and a murderer.

Rome caught fire. The tightly packed, wooden, high-storied, tenement houses burned for many days. Burned for the best part of a month.

No one could hold back the conflagration. And there were rumours spreading around that men were actually firing Rome. Men were seen carrying torches from building to building to fire it.

And then Nero was already unpopular because of his utter selfishness and brutality. People began to say that Nero had been fiddling while Rome was burning. He made up a special piece of music and enjoyed it to the right of the pious.

Then the story began to go around that Nero himself had arranged for the fire, just for the fun of it. He used to like to have people killed in the arena and at the circuses, so why not have a full-scale

conflagration through Rome? He was in a difficult position, and in order to find someone to blame, he hit upon the happy idea to him of blaming the Christians. For Christians were already becoming unpopular.

They wouldn't join in the games, they wouldn't join in idol worship. Their manners were a condemnation to those who were round about them. And Nero saw that it would be fairly easy to fix the blame on the Christians.

Rapidly the rumour was spread through the city that the Christians had started the fire because they were called atheists, that is against the gods, atheists, and haters of all men, and so they were blamed for it. And then Nero had them arrested by the hundred, and many of the Christian leaders and pastors were committed to the flames. They say that around the great central arena, Christians covered with cloth and tar were tied to pillars and set ablaze to light the games, as Nero himself rode round in his chariot.

Others were tied up in animal skins and left for dogs to worry and destroy. Others were thrown to the lions. It was an era of persecution which lasted not only a month or two, but for several years, four years, did they suffer during the reign of Nero.

He himself became so unpopular that he had to flee from the angry mob and from insurrections, and he tried to kill himself and couldn't make up his mind to do so, and then someone else did it for him. Thirty years later, I scribbled these down on this sheet, so in case you can read my remarkable writing, you can dot them down if you want to. Thirty years later, Domitian, a fine, able ruler, turned against the Christians.

You will find in Roman history that some of those who most greatly persecuted the church were in themselves fine men and fine governors. The more dissolute rulers didn't waste time over such matters, but those who were seeking to integrate the empire often regarded the Christians as a threat to its unity, and time and again instigated persecutions against them. And during the time of Domitian there were six years of cruel persecution.

John, they say, was exiled to Patmos. Others were sent into slave labour and into galleys. Others were killed.

Six years' persecution. Trajan, another fine emperor a couple of years later, introduced more stringent laws against the Christians, and in Bithynia one of his generals, by the name of Clyney, wrought havoc among the Christian communities there. In A.D. 98 John was probably killed or died.

We're not quite sure how he finished under Trajan. It is said that they put him in boiling oil, but he was graciously preserved with God and came out unharmed. Then there was peace for a time, and in A.D. 167 Marcus Aurelius, a philosopher and a very wise man, also turned against the Christians.

In his day Justin Martyr wrote his magnificent apology, and the aged chronicler was brought to the test. I found his letter as he was being taken into captivity. No I haven't, I've lost it.

No, I've lost it I feel. Now I have Ignatius' words. Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, was accused of the capital offence of being a Christian.

Friends would have intervened to save him, and that's what he feared most of all. He dreaded not to be thrown among wild beasts, but to be saved by any help but God's. So he wrote this message.

I write to all the churches and charge them to know that I die willingly for God, if you hinder not. Let me belong to the wild beasts, that I may reach God. I am God's grain, and I am drowned by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found purebred.

He had his wish, and the night after the animals tore him to pieces, his friends dreamed they saw him. They seemed to see him dripping with sweat, as if he had just finished a work of great labour. Holycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was another.

Although an old man, he would do nothing to save himself from the flames. He said that he had lived ninety years serving Christ, and should he deny him now. When the fire that consumed him was at last burned out, the people of his congregation rescued his bones from the ashes, counting them more precious than diamonds or gold.

The honours did not belong to leaders alone. As slaves had sat beside rich folks at the love feasts, so they took their place among bishops in the rank of the martyrs. The mob in Spain had its way with a slave girl named Blandina, upon whom every kind of torture was inflicted.

Yet it was she who won the contest, for no agony could induce her to say anything except, I am a Christian, and there is no wickedness done amongst us. They made her watch her brother die, a boy of fifteen, who took courage from his sister's example, and suffered torture and gave up his life, rather than swear by the idols of the heathen. Blandina herself was whipped, placed upon a roasting chair, tied in a net, and gone to death by a bull.

Then she had peace at last, and with a good conscience, because she confessed Christ Jesus. These were called wrestlers, who wrestled against the temptation to deny their Lord. They were hailed as the athletes of the church, who ran a good race and won the crown of victory.

The more they were put to shame and suffering by the anger of the pagans, the more they were honored by all who believed in Christ. How many there were, no one knows. If there was any danger, it was not that too few would confess and die, but that too many would come forward to earn a martyr's fame.

Brave wrestlers and good athletes, they triumphed through a strength greater than their own. Asked if they were Christians, they said, yes, and died. And because they died, the church lived on.

In the reign of Severus, beginning of the 3rd century, Christianity was totally prohibited. So once again, there was a police search throughout the empire for Christians. Once again, they were put to the test to offer worship to the gods.

Particularly, the reigning emperor. Just before Christ's time, Augustus Caesar had taken that title. Augustus means God.

There's another Greek form of it, it's Sebaste. Sebaste, meaning God. It's the word used by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2. All that is called God, Sebaste, the name for Caesar.

Happily, this game of searching out everybody to find out if they were Christians or not, began to ease up. The test was, will you offer a pinch of incense to Caesar on his birthday? And it put a Christian in difficulty. What was he to do now? Many failed in the test and lapsed, and offered a little pinch of incense to Caesar, and they escaped.

Others had to suffer and die because they could not deny the Lord. Maximin, I can't tell you a lot about the persecution under him, it wasn't one of the great ones. But one of the very desperate ones was that under Decius 249.

He found that the empire was in danger of dissolution. He had the Goths on the northern border, he had the Persians rising on the east. He was in great trouble, and as he sought to pull his empire together, he felt that the real trouble was the Christians who were spreading everywhere.

And he decided the only way to rebuild the Roman Empire was to restore the allegiance to the Old Gods. So that there would be one in religion, worshipping Jupiter and Saturn and all the heavenly hosts again. In order to gain that unity, he had to wipe out Christianity.

And so in 250 he made an edict making Christianity utterly unlawful. On a certain day it would be the duty of every governor and every magistrate to see that no one failed to do his religious duty. On that day everyone within the Roman borders must sacrifice to the Gods and to Caesar.

It came as a shock, I'm reading from this little book now, it came as a shock to the Christian church. Almost 50 years before there had been an imperial decree forbidding Jews and Christians to spread their faiths. But the trouble had soon blown over, and for nearly half a century the church had grown and prospered peacefully.

The great centres of empire, Alexandria in Egypt, Antioch in Syria, Carthage in Africa, Rome itself, had also become great centres of Christianity. Christian scholars had written books, professors had lectured on Christian doctrine without interference. Conferences of church leaders met east and west.

No longer was it necessary to hold services in private homes. The church could have its own buildings, the sacred use, with a holy table set apart and a bishop presiding over his flock. Seldom did ignorant mobs seek to stir up riots.

No more was it said that Christians were atheists and cannibals. The church had earned the respect of the common people, and in drawing numbers they were being run to the Christian faith. But Theseus said the church must go.

Theseus had his ideals. He would restore the old religion throughout the empire, and in that way make Rome great again. It was not that he sought the death of any Christian.

All he asked was that Christians should give up their faith. If they should disobey there would of course be torture and prison, even the death penalty when extreme cases might require it. But how much better it would be if only the Christians would cooperate, if only they would turn back and share the emperor's dream of unity.

The shock was too great for many of the Christians. Unaccustomed for so many years to persecution, some actually sacrificed to the gods to escape the punishment. Others bribed officials to let them slip by the altar without making the sacrifice.

Others bought from the magistrates certificates which declared that they were faithful pagans. I have always sacrificed regularly to the gods, and now in your presence, in accordance with the edict, I have sacrificed, poured a drink offering, tasted the sacrifice. I request you to certify the same.

Farewell. Handed in by me, signature of applicant. I certify that I saw him sacrificing signature of magistrate.

A nice little official form. Pay enough money if you get one and escape persecution. Fare you nice.

But the worst of them all was the Diocletian persecution which I put at the end of the list. That was a ten years persecution. Thousands upon thousands suffered and died for their faith.

All through the empire, Diocletian sought to wipe out Christianity. And he ended a failure. He defeated himself.

He felt that everything he had tried to do had failed him. He was a great man, but he could not handle the problems of the empire. Soon after there was civil war, and a little while later, Constantine won the battle of Middle Bayon Bridge.

Took over the empire, and they say he had a dream about the sign of the cross. And that he put that sign on his banner and he won his battle. And became sympathetic to Christianity.

In 313 he issued the decree of toleration. And the persecutions under pagan Rome rapidly died away and ceased. Why these persecutions? Let me summarize some reasons I put down here.

The only persecutions were due to Jewish instigation. The Jews became so bitter against the gospel, that as you have found in Acts, they stirred up riots against the gospel. And were often the foremost in informing against Christians.

Then either worshippers and tradesmen were affected by the Christian testimony. You remember that case in Ephesus where the makers of the little shrines for the heathen goddess Artinus, Diana, roused up a riot. That kind of thing occurred again and again.

Christians were against the games that didn't attend them, especially that many of them were cruel games. Against the races that didn't attend them. Against gladiatorial shows in which it was the delight of the Roman populace to see men destroy each other in the arena.

Against infanticide in the Roman Empire. The father was reckoned to own his baby and if he didn't want it he could leave it out to die. And there was no complaint made.

The Christians said that's wrong. And so when there was a Christian wife and a heathen husband the family would be divided. The Christians were destroying homes.

They were against idols and against immorality. Against gluttony and against drunkenness. And so for all these things they were hated.

They would not worship Caesar as I have explained to you. They wouldn't offer a pinch of incense in his name. The church became the enemy of religion as it was in those days.

The Christians were called atheists. They were insulting the gods. They were blamed for floods, earthquakes, disasters and flames.

It was said that behind closed doors and in secret meetings they ate children alive. Of course their worship in homes was sinful, charismatic and charitable. And many were added to them.

They were a forbidden secret society. Meeting underground. In these days of persecution they began to dig out those vast catacombs.

Which criticsers to Rome can see today. There they would bury their dead. The sacred relics of the martyrs would be placed in their star-copper guise.

In the size of the passages dug under the great city. You might, if you were especially observant, watching a couple of men walking along a deserted road outside the city suddenly find that they had disappeared from view. And if you got near enough you would find a little hole somewhere in a quarry.

And if you got down there you would find a Christian guard. And away beyond would be a labyrinth of tunnels and passages. If you ever got permission to follow you would be blindfolded and you would lose your way.

Until eventually in the heart of the earth somewhere you would find a little group of Christians meeting in silence, meeting in secrecy rather. Worshipping the Lord quietly. Lifting up holy hands in prayer.

Praying for those who were suffering martyrdom. Worshipping the Lord together. Partaking of the Lord's suffer in a simple way.

Another little bit of poetry which some of you will know. The Son of God goes forth to war. A kingly crown to gain.

His blood-red banner streams afar. Who follows in his train? Who best can drink his cup of woe? Triumphant over pain. Who patient bears his cross below? He follows in his train.

The martyr first, whose eagle eye could pierce beyond the grave. Who saw his master in the sky and called on him to save. At the tyrant's brandished steel.

The lion's gory mane. They bowed their necks, the death to feel. Who follows in their train? A noble army.

Men and boys. The matron and the maid. Around the Saviour's throne.

Rejoice in robes of light arrayed. They climbed the steep ascent of heaven. Mid peril, toil and pain.

O God to us may grace be given. To follow in their train. Even though it means missing a church supper.

How different Christianity was in those days. How did all this keep the church pure? We have already seen from Paul and from John that the mystery of iniquity was already working in the church. There it was, the corruption beginning to spread right through the church.

But there was a hindering power. We have already seen that while the Holy Spirit can be a hindrance in your heart as long as you keep near to the Lord and obey Him. His voice quickly grows dim.

You know that, don't you? Not because He exactly withdraws, but because our hearing goes dull. And so God brought in persecution as His second means of purifying His church. For in the church already there were ambitious men like Diotrephes who loved to have the preeminence.

When the church was prosperous and growing, comfortable and rich like the church in Laodicea these men naturally were eager for office and would move up from being humble church members to being deacons to being elders, to being presbyters, to being bishops. Eager for office. And as they grew in

power so their distortions of the gospel would be spread.

But oh, when the neurotic persecutions broke out then these were the first men to have to face the judgment. And how fast they scattered. They were then no longer in the front rank carrying a cross they were tucked away in the back somewhere where nobody could find them.

And those who suffered and those who were near them began to return to something like true Christianity. And time and again when there was a lapse, as you have seen there are big lapses when the church could grow and prosper these kind of heresies and these heretical principles grew and flourished. The mystery of iniquity was already there evil men and seducers were growing worse and worse false prophets were arising but naturally they would only arise when circumstances were favorable.

Another persecution. They're gone. Disappeared again.

And moreover, as the church went through persecution after persecution they had to decide what to do with these lapsed brethren. Because they'll come back and say, please let's in and have dinner. They're the same now.

The trouble's over. And those who had suffered persecution and imprisonment and loss of property would have to say, what do we do with these people? Some were very strict. In some cases they were made to sign a declaration.

Once again I've lost it. And publicly confess their sin but they were never again allowed into office. Always had to sit back, having once lapsed.

So you see, the persecution was one of the great means of repressing the mystery of iniquity which was already working in the church. I think I'd better give you a bit of scripture to support that. Hold on to your seats very tightly.

2 Thessalonians 2. Paul finds that his Thessalonian Christians have been agitated by some false teaching. Now we beseech you brethren by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto him that ye be not soon shaken in mind or troubled either by spirit nor by word nor by letter as from us as that the day of Christ is at hand or maybe the day of the Lord is right on us. Let no man deceive you by any means for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first.

That's one of the things we've been talking about. And now verse 6 I'm missing it at the moment. And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time for the mystery of iniquity does already work only he who now hinders will hinder until he be taken out of the way.

We have seen in plain history that the great hinderer that God uses is the persecuting power in this case the persecuting power of Rome was the great hinderer to that mystery of iniquity rising up. Some people think that it's the Holy Spirit no they're wrong because when Jesus is talking about those days of tribulation he says when you stand before the judges it will not be you speaking but the Holy Ghost you see, that tribulation he speaks of is when the Holy Ghost is still here. The Holy Ghost does not hinder wickedness on a big scale.

Thus Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost but what did it do? It made them murder him. If he hadn't been full of the Holy Ghost they would have let him off. Who does the Bible say is God's minister for righteousness in the earth? It's very very plain.

Romans 13 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers for there is no power nor authority but of God the authorities that be are ordained of God whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation for rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?

Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same for he is the minister of God to thee for good but if thou do that which is evil be afraid for he beareth not the sword in vain he is the minister of God a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil So there you are, Paul says that God put the rulers of this world in place to limit evil when Paul was writing to the Thessalonians he didn't tell them who the hinderer was when Paul writes about the Holy Spirit he speaks of him plainly, doesn't he? everywhere so to guess that Paul is talking about the Holy Spirit when he speaks in such obscurity is to go against all that Paul is teaching now he had told them who it was he wouldn't put the matter down in writing no scripture contains any word against the Roman Empire pray for

those in authority says Paul and Peter no, he doesn't put that in writing but they know and in the testimony of the early church they all confess in fact, many of them confess when they were on trial that they prayed daily for the Roman Empire for they knew that when the emperor fell and the empire dissolved then the hindrances to Antichrist would have been removed the united testimony of the early church Paul said they knew they gave oath that they knew and there it was heresies let me run quickly through the heresies of this period I won't have time to go through them again so we've just got five minutes first of all, Gnosticism when Christians got comfortable when Greeks were being added to the church when the philosophers of Alexandria began to come in they diluted the gospel and

mixed it up with Gnosis special kind of knowledge an attempt to combine scientific thought, philosophy and Christianity they got all mixed up with astrology and every other science so called that was going mathematics came into the thing a bit they began to work out theories of triangles in association with religion and generally got away from the pure simplicity of the gospel one variation of Gnosticism was Docetism and these people even thought that Christ wasn't real he was just an appearance D O C E T I S M Docetism another variety of it was Marcionism the followers of Marcion he rejected the God of the Old Testament but accepted the God that Jesus knew and then he accepted the writings of Paul provided he could rewrite them a little while later Manicheism arriving from Persia Persia

had Manny was born in Babylonia but he was influenced by Zoroastrianism which is one of the religions dating from about the 6th century B.C. you needn't worry about all this I'm just sort of dashing through for anybody who likes to hear all the long names and like the Zoroastrians he believed in the duality of good and evil the whole universe under the control of two deities one good, one bad and they exactly balanced each other all the way through dualistic religion he was crucified in Persia in 276 I don't know who by but later on it is important because the term Manichee was plastered on all heretics from that day on and many people who were called in in recorded history Manichees were actually really Christians you know, it became a convenient label to stick on anybody who didn't

agree with the official church perhaps the worst heresy was the one which passed for orthodoxy and that was sacerdotalism sacerdotalism S-A-C-E-R-D-O-T-A-L-I-S-M sacerdotalism the introduction of unnecessary furniture vestments priesthood and all the complications of Old Testament worship brought into Christianity sacerdotalism that was the worst one of the lot Cyprian was one of those men in the early church who advocated it particularly and he insisted that there was no salvation except by the sacraments and by the priesthood of the church that was about the worst of the lot Cyprian, about 200 A.D. and of

course he was expressing a view which was already growing and which became rapidly established in the succeeding years you might note however, if you are taking note of names Orogen,

O-R-I-G-E-N a bishop of pure teaching he really taught the scriptures and he was exiled by the official church and died in Caesarea in exile you might also notice the Novatians who reacted against the slackness of the church and formed their own communities in Africa but they didn't understand the gospel and lastly a really important group Montanism the followers of Montanus who was excommunicated denounced as a heretic because he believed too much in the Holy Spirit in his meetings they spoke in tongues in his meetings they prophesied in his meetings there was liberty given to the gospel so of course he was a heretic and branded as such but he was so good a man that Tertullian of Carthage one of the church leaders joined him his followers were destroyed by the emperor Justinian in the

6th century so that brings us to the time of Constantine and the breakup of the pagan persecutions against the church what's going to happen to the church now? all right, that's what we look at next week

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