

# In the Fires of Persecution

by J.B. Galloway

---

*Perpetua's story is a powerful testament to the strength and courage of faith in the face of persecution and adversity.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 10:22, Philippians 1:21, Hebrews 12:1, 1 Peter 4:12, Revelation 2:10

**Topics:** "Persecution", "Martyrdom"

---

## Description

J.B. Galloway preaches on the inspiring story of Perpetua and Felicitas, two young Christian women who faced persecution and martyrdom in the Second century. Despite facing opposition from family and authorities, they stood firm in their faith, even in the face of death. Through visions and trials, they found strength and courage, ultimately receiving the crown of glory for their unwavering faith and commitment to Christ.

---

## Transcript

### The Story Of Perpetua And Felicitas

(Condensed from what is claimed to be the story begun by Perpetua herself and finished by Tertullian, an eyewitness. -- J. B. G.)

This beautiful story comes from the Second century and begins as follows:

If ancient illustrations of faith which both testify to God's grace and tend to man's edification are collected in writing, so by the perusal of them, as if by that reproduction of the facts, as well God may be honored, as man may be strengthened; why should not new instances be collected, that should be equally suitable for such purposes?

### Chapter 1. The Young Christians Thrust into a Dungeon

Five young catechumens from among the early Christians were apprehended. They were Saturnias, Secundulas, Revocatus, Felicitas, and Perpetua. The last two mentioned were respectable, educated, married young women. Perpetua had a father, mother, and two brothers, one of whom was a catechumen like herself. She was twenty-two years of age and had an infant son at her breast. While she was being taught the way of the Christians, her father tried to persuade her away from her faith, but she said to him, "Father, do you see this little vessel lying here to be a pitcher?" And he said, "I see it to be." And she answered him, "Can it be called by any other name but a pitcher?" He said, "No." "Neither can I be called

anything else than what I am, a Christian."

This provoked her father and he rushed toward her as if he would tear her eyes out. But he only distressed her and went away, and the Lord became a source of consolation to her. After a few days she was baptized, and shortly afterwards she was taken to the dungeon by her enemies with her fellow Christians. At first she was much frightened by the terrible darkness, the great heat, the soldiers, and the mob about her; and unusually disturbed for her infant. Christian friends came and ministered to her, arranged for some comforts, and brought to her her babe that was becoming feeble by hunger. Such solicitude she suffered many days, and her child was allowed to remain with her; and she says, "Forthwith I became strong and the dungeon became to me as it were a palace."

Soon afterwards her brother came to her and said, "You are already highly honored, and you may ask a vision that it may be known to you whether you are to be martyred or released." She said, "I will let you know tomorrow."

In the meanwhile she saw a golden ladder of marvelous height reaching up to heaven, so that anyone could ascend up to heaven on it one by one. There were swords, lances, hooks, and daggers; so that if anyone went up carelessly he would be torn, and caught on the cruel weapons of iron. A great and dreadful dragon was at the bottom to frighten anyone who would ascend away. Saturnias ascended to the top and cried to her, "Perpetua, I am waiting for you, but be careful that the dragon does not get you." Then she went up into a beautiful garden and saw a shepherd at the gate, who said, "Thou art welcome." And he gave her a little cake and she ate it, and all about her said, "Amen." When she told this to her brother and friends, they realized that she was to be martyred.

## Chapter 2. Perpetua Avows Herself a Christian and 18 Condemned with Her Fellow Christians to the Wild Beasts

A few days after her father heard the report, and he came to her and tried to persuade her away from the Christians. He said, "Have pity, my daughter, on my gray hairs. Have pity on thy father. With my own hands have I brought thee up to this, the flower of thy age. I have preferred thee above all thy brothers. Have regard for thy brothers, thy mother and aunts. Have regard for thy infant son, who will not be able to live without thee. Do not bring this destruction upon us all." These things said her father, and affectionately kissed her hands, throwing himself at her feet in bitter tears. She comforted him and said, "Whatever God wills shall happen." Then he departed in sorrow.

Sometime afterwards while she was at dinner she heard a great noise, and saw that great crowds were gathering to the town hall. At once a rumor spread through the neighborhood that the Christians were to be taken to the court platform and interrogated. She saw an immense crowd of people gathering. When she stepped out for the trial she saw her father with her little boy, and he tried to persuade her against the Christians, saying, "Have mercy upon thy child."

And Hilarianus, who had just received the power of life and death as a proconsul, said, "Spare the gray hairs of your father; spare thy son. Offer up sacrifices for the honor of the emperor." And she replied, "I will not do so." Hilarianus asked, "Are you a Christian?" And she said, "I am a Christian." Then her father tried to lead her from the platform, but he was ordered to be cast down and beaten with rods. She was greatly grieved for her father's misfortune and suffering, for he was old and feeble. Then the proconsul delivered judgment upon all the Christians, and pronounced that all should be condemned to the wild beasts. She sent and asked her father that her infant son might remain with her, but he would not. While

she yet remained in fetters, she had a vision of her brother who years ago, when he was seven years old, died. He appeared to her as bright and beautiful, and drinking from a vessel filled to the brim.

### Chapter 3. Perpetua Has Further Trials and Visions

After a few days Prudens, a soldier overseer of the prison, who had regard for and held her in high esteem, perceived that God was with her, and admitted her Christian friends to see her. As the day of her execution drew nigh, her father, worn with suffering, came again to her, and began to tear his beard, and throw himself to the ground, and reproach himself in such words that would move a heart of stone. She was greatly grieved.

The day before her execution she saw in a vision Pomponius, the deacon, come to her and knock at her door. He was clothed in a richly ornamented robe of white. He said to her, "Perpetua, we are waiting for you to come!" And he reached out his hand to help her over the rough places. When they reached the amphitheater, he led her breathlessly into the arena. Then he said, "Do not fear; I am with you," and disappeared. She marveled that the wild beasts did not appear; but soon she saw an Egyptian, terrible in appearance, come out to fight with her with backers. Then there came helpers to her and she seemed to be transformed into a soldier. Also she saw the tall trainer of the gladiators; he wore a loose tunic and had a purple robe between bands over his breast, and he carried a rod and a green branch upon which were apples of gold; who said, "If this Egyptian overcome this woman he shall be killed with a sword, and if she conquer she shall have this branch." They drew near together and began to deal out blows. She was victorious, and he fell upon his face. The branch was given to her and the people shouted and said, "Daughter, peace be unto thee." When she awoke she understood that her great fight was with Satan rather than the beasts.

Then Saturnias told his vision to Perpetua. He said he saw four angels floating upward, and they bore Perpetua through space to the pleasure-gardens where were roses of every kind blossoming. They were as tall as a cypress and leaves were falling incessantly. Other four angels, brighter than the previous ones, appeared; and they said to the rest of the angels, "Here they are! Here they are!" And the walls of the place were such as were built of light, and before the gates stood angels clothed in white robes, and their united voices said, "Holy! Holy! Holy!" And also he saw one in the midst with snowlike hair, and on his right hand and on his left were twenty-four elders. The elders said, "Go in and enjoy. Perpetua, you have your wish." All were nourished with an indescribable odor which satisfied all. And then he awoke.

### Chapter 4. The Arena and the Crown of Glory

The day of their victory shone forth brightly. The Christians proceeded from the prison cells into the amphitheater, as to an assembly, joyous and of brilliant countenances, with joy and without shrinking or fear. To Felicitas had been born a child just recently; yet she rejoiced that she was able to go forth with the other Christians to die for her faith. When they were brought to the gate the men were constrained to put on the garments of the priests of Saturn, and the women that which was consecrated to Ceres. Felicitas said, "We have thus far come of our own accord. And it has been agreed with you that we should come thus." So they were allowed to enter as they were. Then Perpetua sang psalms. When they came into sight of Hilarianus, the proconsul, Revocatus and Saturnias said of him, "Thou judgest us, but God will judge thee." To this the people shouted in exasperation that they should be tortured with scourges as they passed along the ranks. They rejoiced that they should thus suffer for the Lord.

Saturnias was thrown to the wild beasts. Revocatus was harassed by the bear and the leopard. But Saturnias was recalled unhurt. Then the wild boar was called and would not be enticed from his den; so he was recalled again.

When the young women were called, their enemies prepared a very fierce cow. So they were clothed in nets and led forth. The crowd shuddered when they saw these two young mothers, delicate and led away from their infants. Perpetua was led into the arena first. She was tossed and fell upon her side. When she saw that her garments were torn she wrapped them about her. She was called forth again and bound up her disheveled hair. This time as she raised up she saw Felicitas crushed. So she approached her and gave her her hand, and lifted her up; both stood together. Then Perpetua, as roused from sleep, being so much in the Spirit that she did not realize what had happened until she saw the signs of it in her body and garments; then she recognized another Christian addressing her, saying, "Stand fast in the faith."

At the same moment Saturnias, entering again, exhorted Prudens, the friendly soldier, saying, "Up to this moment I have felt no hurt, now believe with the whole heart. Lo, I am going forth to the beasts. I shall be destroyed with one bite." Prudens desired a token dipped in his blood, and he said to him, "Farewell, be mindful of thy faith." Thus the vision of Perpetua, that she saw of Saturnias ascending the ladder before her and waiting in spirit until she came, was fulfilled. But Perpetua, when she felt the pain of the sword, waved her hand to the youthful gladiator. Thus the brave martyrs entered in and took the crowns for their faith!

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jb-galloway/in-the-fires-of-persecution/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**