

# The Martyrdom of Polycarp - Part 1

by St. Polycarp of Smyrna

---

*The sermon recounts the martyrdom of Polycarp and emphasizes the importance of imitating Christ's example, true love, and patient endurance in the face of persecution.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:10, Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Peter 4:16, Revelation 2:10

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

---

## Description

St. Polycarp of Smyrna writes to various churches about the martyrdoms that have taken place, focusing on the example of the blessed Polycarp who endured persecution and martyrdom to inspire others to imitate his steadfast love and faith. The martyrs displayed incredible bravery and endurance, despising the tortures of the world for the promise of eternal rewards from Christ. Despite facing fearful punishments and temptations to deny their faith, they remained faithful, showing that God prevailed against all trials and tribulations.

---

## Transcript

The church of God which sojourneth at Smyrna to the Church of God which sojourneth in Philomelium and to all the brotherhoods of the holy and universal Church sojourning in every place; mercy and peace and love from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ be multiplied.

Polycarp 1:1

We write unto you, brethren, an account of what befell those that suffered martyrdom and especially the blessed Polycarp, who stayed the persecution, having as it were set his seal upon it by his martyrdom. For nearly all the foregoing events came to pass that the Lord might show us once more an example of martyrdom which is conformable to the Gospel

Polycarp 1:2

For he lingered that he might be delivered up, even as the Lord did, to the end that we too might be imitators of him, not looking only to that which concerneth ourselves, but also to that which concerneth our neighbors. For it is the office of true and steadfast love, not only to desire that oneself be saved, but all the brethren also.

Polycarp 2:1

Blessed therefore and noble are all the martyrdoms which have taken place according to the will of God (for it behoveth us to be very scrupulous and to assign to God the power over all things).

#### Polycarp 2:2

For who could fail to admire their nobleness and patient endurance and loyalty to the Master? seeing that when they were so torn by lashes that the mechanism of their flesh was visible even as far as the inward veins and arteries, they endured patiently, so that the very bystanders had pity and wept; while they themselves reached such a pitch of bravery that none of them uttered a cry or a groan, thus showing to us all that at that hour the martyrs of Christ being tortured were absent from the flesh, or rather that the Lord was standing by and conversing with them.

#### Polycarp 2:3

And giving heed unto the grace of Christ they despised the tortures of this world, purchasing at the cost of one hour a release from eternal punishment. And they found the fire of their inhuman torturers cold: for they set before their eyes the escape from the eternal fire which is never quenched; while with the eyes of their heart they gazed upon the good things which are reserved for those that endure patiently, things which neither ear hath heard nor eye hath seen, neither have they entered into the heart of man, but were shown by the Lord to them, for they were no longer men but angels already.

#### Polycarp 2:4

And in like manner also those that were condemned to the wild beasts endured fearful punishments, being made to lie on sharp shells and buffeted with other forms of manifold tortures, that the devil might, if possible, by the persistence of the punishment bring them to a denial; for he tried many wiles against them.

#### Polycarp 3:1

But thanks be to God; for He verily prevailed against all. For the right noble Germanicus encouraged their timorousness through the constancy which was in him; and he fought with the wild beasts in a signal way. For when the proconsul wished to prevail upon him and bade him have pity on his youth, he used violence and dragged the wild beast towards him, desiring the more speedily to obtain a release from their unrighteous and lawless life.

#### Polycarp 3:2

So after this all the multitude, marvelling at the bravery of the God-beloved and God-fearing people of the Christians, raised a cry, 'Away with the atheists; let search be made for Polycarp.'

#### Polycarp 4:1

But one man, Quintus by name, a Phrygian newly arrived from Phrygia, when he saw the wild beasts, turned coward. He it was who had forced himself and some others to come forward of their own free will. This man the proconsul by much entreaty persuaded to swear the oath and to offer incense. For this cause therefore, brethren, we praise not those who deliver themselves up, since the Gospel doth not so teach us.

#### Polycarp 5:1

Now the glorious Polycarp at the first, when he heard it, so far from being dismayed, was desirous of remaining in town; but the greater part persuaded him to withdraw. So he withdrew to a farm not far distant from the city; and there he stayed with a few companions, doing nothing else night and day but praying for all men and for the churches throughout the world; for this was his constant habit.

Polycarp 5:2

And while praying he falleth into a trance three days before his apprehension; and he saw his pillow burning with fire. And he turned and said unto those that were with him: 'It must needs be that I shall be burned alive.'

Polycarp 6:1

And as those that were in search of him persisted, he departed to another farm; and forthwith they that were in search of him came up; and not finding him, they seized two slave lads, one of whom confessed under torture;

Polycarp 6:2

for it was impossible for him to lie concealed, seeing that the very persons who betrayed him were people of his own household. And the captain of the police, who chanced to have the very name, being called Herod, was eager to bring him into the stadium, that he himself might fulfill his appointed lot, being made a partaker with Christ, while they--his betrayers--underwent the punishment of Judas himself.

Polycarp 7:1

So taking the lad with them, on the Friday about the supper hour, the gendarmes and horsemen went forth with their accustomed arms, hastening as against a robber. And coming up in a body late in the evening, they found the man himself in bed in an upper chamber in a certain cottage; and though he might have departed thence to another place, he would not, saying, The will of God be done.

Polycarp 7:2

So when he heard that they were come, he went down and conversed with them, the bystanders marvelling at his age and his constancy, and wondering how there should be so much eagerness for the apprehension of an old man like him. Thereupon forthwith he gave orders that a table should be spread for them to eat and drink at that hour, as much as they desired. And he persuaded them to grant him an hour that he might pray unmolested;

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-polycarp-of-smyrna/the-martyrdom-of-polycarp-part-1/>

# *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)**