

Anabaptist History - Part 4

by Walter Beachy

The speaker reflects on the persecution of Anabaptists in the 16th century, highlighting the government's fear of diversity and the resulting martyrdom and galley slavery.

Duration: 1:19:22

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Acts 2:38, Romans 10:17, 2 Timothy 3:12, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Anabaptist History"

Description

The video mentioned in the sermon transcript is titled 'And When They Shall Ask' and it focuses on the story of Israel entering the Jordan River and placing stones as memorials. The video starts by depicting the wealth and freedom enjoyed by the Russian Mennonite community. However, some young people studying in universities warned their parents about potential upheaval in Tsarist Russia, which the parents initially scoffed at. The video also includes a scene of a man being executed with a war axe, highlighting the unimaginable hardships faced by people in the past.

Transcript

Greetings to all of you and blessings to you for being here again. Again, if there's anyone here for the first time, I think the Myers would be, raise your hand and we'll get a copy of the outline to you. Okay, right, right here in the front and then there's one over here and back there, yes.

Okay, and in the outline, if you want to turn to that, by the way, for those just receiving it as a reminder to others, we will not have time in an abbreviated series like this to cover all the material, but I decided not to redo the outline, just give you the whole thing, and then we'll have to miss parts of it. We will be coming back to that section that we're skipping now. If you're, if you go to page four, you will find the, in the middle of the page there, you will find the title, Anabaptist Persecution, and that's what we'll deal with first this evening.

I was thinking today how that it's kind of decimated your numbers a bit with the chicken pox problem, and I understand the nature of that. We raised five children, so we know all about that, but our Anabaptist forefathers would have probably considered that a very, very small problem compared to what they faced, and frankly, and I mean this very seriously, the the most difficult part of talking about our history, as far as my own personal sense of just falling way short, comes when I discuss the persecution our forebears faced, because I ask myself, would I have hung tough like that? How would I have dealt with what they dealt with, and would my faith have carried me through? I keep hoping and praying that if we're faithful in a

time when we have it so easy, that God would give us grace to be faithful when we'd have it tough, you know, but the other side of it is, having it too easy does tend to make us soft, inside and out, you know. If it's too easy, we don't have muscles here.

We're not tough in that way, and if it's too easy spiritually, relationally, in our world, then we're soft on the inside as well, but I would say to you who, for the most part, I think for all of you, probably you are younger than I am, I think I'm safe in saying that, at least if you're older than I, it's going to be by a very small margin, but in any case, most of you, all of you here at the church are younger, and I don't want to be a prophet of doom. In fact, I don't consider myself a prophet, as far as foretelling, but I have seen awesome shifts in the public sentiment in regard to Bible-believing Christians, and I think in a case of major turmoil, were it economic, or political, or a combination of both, we could see in your lifetime, and maybe yet in mine, the kinds of things we would never have believed could happen in America. I'm reminded of a video that David Dueck, who is a cousin of Claire Schnipp's wife, Clara, from Winnipeg, he made a video, it was not a major movie production, although it was quite well done, he's into video photography, but anyway, he got the right to go back to Russia, that was his parents' roots, and he went back there, back in the late 70s, early 80s, I think it was the 80s, when they were still the USSR, so whatever that, it was just a bit before that collapsed, he went back to Russia and filmed on site some of the things, and they staged things to reproduce some of what the forefathers went through, and he titled that video, *And When They Shall Ask*, taken from when Israel went into Jordan, and they were told, God told them, you know, to put the stones there, and when your children ask, what do those mean, then you tell them, the whole idea of memorials and so on, and he wanted his own generation and children and grandchildren to know their story, and the whole video starts out with the wealth and freedom and just ease with which they were living, and a few of the Russian Mennonite young folks were in studying in universities and came home at breaks and warned their parents that the country faces potential tremendous upheaval, and the parents scoffed, that cannot happen in Tsarist Russia, but in 1917, it did, and it was a terrible nightmare beyond what we could imagine, really.

It was so bad, I remember one of my friends and colleagues, now deceased, Dan Yutzi, who was studying at The Ohio State University in Sociology, and one day he saw a name of one of the students, he was doing some part-time teaching, and he saw a name that he recognized as a Russian Mennonite name, which is really usually Dutch-Polish name. Anyway, he sought her out, it was a young woman, and found out that she was Russian Mennonite, and so he got all excited, he said, I'm a Mennonite too, in fact, he said, I'm a Mennonite preacher, and she didn't look at all enthralled about that, and the long, the short story of a long sad story is that when he tried to talk to her about our faith, his faith and hopefully hers, she shook her head and said, don't talk to me about God. She said, where was he when our families were, our men were hung and shot, and our women raped? Where was God then? Don't talk to me about God.

It's very sad. That's the other side of how to respond to a very bad situation. But our forebears left a kind of, would you say, a flaming testimony that it puts meaning, it puts meat to the words of Jesus there in Matthew 5. In the Beatitudes, some think it's still one of the Beatitudes, some say it isn't, I think it is, when he said, blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For so persecuted they the prophets, which were before you. I've never really faced persecution.

I've had people do this, you know, in German that means dummkopf, and shake their heads. And I've had even Christian people not understand why I believe some of the things I do. But I have never really faced persecution.

And I have wrestled with that passage in 2 Timothy when Paul was referring to his own persecutions and then said, yes, and all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. So aren't we living godly? Now it is true that America is a unique political experiment in all of human history. And I have told people in other countries where I've ministered that I thank God that I had the privilege to be born and to live in America.

And always when we're gone, especially into developing countries and especially into Muslim countries, it always feels so good to come back home. But they had no choice in that. I didn't choose where I would be born.

You know, that's as ridiculous as the first rule of success. One list of rules of success I read. First rule is choose your parents carefully.

Who does? No one. So I don't really know what to make of that. All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

I don't believe that's an imperative statement, meaning there are no exceptions to that. But I think he is articulating a principle there. And even though we may not know much about it now, that could change.

And last evening, we stopped at the point where I had just told you about the first meeting of the Anabaptists, where the first known, the first recorded adult baptism, believer's baptism service took place in the Reformation context. In other words, it was young men, at least five of the young men that were in the group of 14, would have been students at the School of Ministry at the Grossmunster and were headed toward the Reformed Church ministry. And in their studies, became convinced of the very things that became the bedrock theological positions of our Anabaptist movement.

And we'll want to start talking about those toward the end of tonight's session. But the greater part of this evening, we will be talking about the Anabaptist persecution. To keep me a bit online and away from too many rabbit trails so that my wife will be a little happier and more impressed, I will use the outline and try to stay on so you can follow there and have some idea of what's coming and what I'm talking about, and maybe later recall things just a bit better.

The sources of our persecution back in the 16th century, and it happened right from the start. I mean, it was not long. It was only a matter of about two or three weeks before they were looking for these men.

And it was a matter of months, only a few months before all three of the principal leaders, Grebel, Manz, and Blorock were in prison. And it was only less than a year from that first baptism in late 1525. Some of the magistrates, you know, in different areas where they had different magistrates in control, different political leadership, some of them, because of how quickly this spread, they made second baptism or re-baptism, they made that a capital offense, like murder.

If you are re-baptized, or if you re-baptize others, then you are subject to the death penalty. And they did begin to carry it out. Of those three, Grebel, Manz, and Blorock, Grebel died of the plague in the summer of 27.

And he was underground and hidden away for about six months prior to his death. So he had only about a year and a half from the time of the baptism and the beginning of the Anabaptist movement as we know it, until he was underground and out of circulation and then died. And we don't have any of his family as direct descendants of the, in the Mennonite Church.

His wife was not willing to go with him in his journey, his faith journey, and his parents neither. And so his parents, though they had not approved of her because she was a commoner and Grebel was highborn, uppity, and they didn't approve of her. But when Grebel went heretical, they said, then they took her in and the two children that they had.

Well, they had one child and then she was pregnant with another. And I think that child was born after his death. But in any case, that family stayed in the Reformed Church.

We had the unique privilege through some acquaintance that J.C. Wenger had made in Europe, that when we were in Europe for three months, the retired pastor of the Grossmunster Church was a 14th generation descendant of Conrad. And J.C. Wenger had made him aware of his roots. He didn't know that.

And he studied Anabaptist history. I'm quite sure by now he is deceased because he was like 70 in 1977, so he'd be over 100 now. But he told us then, we had, we called him and he said, he doesn't have real good health.

He'll meet us at the Grossmunster. He'll take us through the church and show us all the nooks and crannies. And he did.

And he said, I can give you at least a half to a three quarter hour. Well, he was the one who set the time and we had nearly two hours with him. And he spoke so highly and respectfully of Conrad Grebel and said how much he admires his faith and how much he wishes that the Reformed Church would be more like his great 12 greats grandfather was.

Because he admitted that in Switzerland at that time, about 10% of the membership actually attended church on any given Sunday. Now back to what happened to the larger group. It spread like wildfire.

They baptized thousands. One of our early leaders, Hans Huth, who was probably the most, well, that we think at this point from what we can tell that he probably baptized more than anyone else. But in just a little under two years, Hans Huth baptized 10,000 people.

That takes a lot of water, takes a lot of baptized, takes a lot of preaching. And others who didn't baptize that many were still out there winning people and baptizing them. And then by about the year 28, 29, 30, 15, 29, 30, many of the governments in the areas and the provinces made this deal with people.

They said, re-baptism is going to be punishable by death. But if you have been re-baptized and you see the error of your way and come back to the church, and that would be Catholic, Lutheran or Reformed, the state church of whatever it was in a given area. If you come back to the church, we will forgive you and you won't have to be jailed or anything.

But if you don't, we're going to hunt you down. And they did begin to hunt people down. It was a really, really sad and terrible time for our forebears.

And it was all three of the churches, though the Catholic church was definitely the most vicious. And I would say to their credit, don't blame the Catholics of today. You know, don't tell, if you have a Catholic friend or know someone who's Catholic, don't tell them your forebears killed my forebears, that sort of thing.

Be a little more gracious than that. And actually some years back when I was still president at Rosedale, someone gave us, wanted to give us the two or three volumes, big thick volumes of the Catholic church history. It was actually an encyclopedia, Catholic encyclopedia of history.

And the library committee felt like I should be the one to check it out because I was teaching history and was a bit of a history nut. And so that's when you're not a historian, you're a history nut. But anyway, they asked me to look it over and see if it should be placed in our library as a resource book, you know, as a resource material.

I said, well, let me go right off to the first thing. Let's see what is said in their own work. This was done by Catholic scholars.

What do they say about the inquisition that began in the 11th century, which was basically like the CIA of the Catholic church with authority to kill heretics if they didn't repent. And so I went to that section on the inquisition, the opening, and it was done by a Jesuit scholar, by the way. And that kind of scared me right off because the Jesuits are very Catholic, very loyal to the church.

But the very first statement went like this. The inquisition is one of the darkest and saddest blots on the history of the Catholic church. And then he went on to lament in a number of paragraphs how terribly misguided the church was to ever start the inquisition and use coercion force to try to make people Christian.

And I kept thinking to myself, what are all these Catholics and Protestants and some Mennonite educators who hail Augustine as such a wonderful theologian, what are they thinking if they read this man? Because Augustine said that, and he was an allegorist of the greatest sort, the deepest sort. He said, when the church was in its infancy, that's before Constantine on your timeline, 313, when the church was in its infancy, she could only invite people in and wield the sword of the spirit. But when she came of full age, and this is a quote translated, of course, from Latin, when she came of full age, she could yield not only the sword of the spirit, but also the sword of steel.

And if people would not voluntarily come into the church, they can be coerced to come into the church. And of course, after they are in the church, then they are free to roam at will. No, not really.

Because the inquisition had an inquisitor or two with several deputies or soldiers ride into town and get all the men together and would say to them, does anyone know of any heretic in this village? And if two men have bad blood against each other, you can guess the rest. It was a very sad time. And it was that kind of thing carried over into Lutheran and Reformed political circles and church circles that led to our terrible persecution.

In fairness to them, they really believed, I don't doubt, having read both Luther and Calvin on this subject, they really believed that it would destroy the culture if they allowed diversity of faith. They really believed it would. They felt like if you did not belong to the state church, the official religion, that you were a real threat to the viability, the ongoing life of the culture.

It would just destroy it. Well, it became obvious in history that they were wrong. And I think if those men could come back and assess history now, they would agree with us that they were wrong.

But their motivation may have been fairly good or the intentions were good. But for a Christian to give his blessing to killing others who claimed also to be Christian, simply because they wouldn't agree with them, is still pretty hard to defend and to feel good about. But that is the background for our persecution.

Just a few things there under extent. Let's just go down through that list. This is somewhat general, except for a few of these things.

In the first case, we don't know of any martyr before Bolt Eberle. And he was killed by the Catholics in the Swiss town of Schwitz, which means literally sweat. I don't know if it was warm there or if the men just worked hard, but that's quite a name for a town, sweat, Schwitz, Schwitz.

Anyway, Bolt Eberle was killed there as early as in May. And I see a typo there without a capital on May. But anyway, in May of 1525.

So that's only five months after the movement, four months after the movement was born, because it was January 21. There were about 2000 martyred between 1525 and 1540. That was the most vicious time.

But martyrdom kept going and finally ended in the early 1600s. Galley slavery, however, that's sentences to be oarsmen for strong men, to be oarsmen on the galley ships, you know, where they had this whole row of oarsmen rowing boats on the Mediterranean because the Mediterranean had a lot of calms that sailboats couldn't use. So they had sails and oars to keep going and to go faster.

But people were sold to galley slavery as late as 1750. In fact, I think it was 1749 in one case, 1747 or 49, don't hold me on that date. But there were about 92 or three men, some single men and husbands rounded up in a given area of Germany.

I don't recall the actual town now, but in South Germany. And they were sold to a buyer on the seacoast for galley slavery. And the local government, you know, collected the money.

They had them in prison, they had tried them and they sentenced them to galley slavery, to be sold as galley slaves. But they did at that later date, they did allow the families to come and say goodbye to them. The record of that says that even some of the magistrates and the soldiers or constables who guarded them, wept when they saw husbands and families saying goodbye.

I mean, yeah, husbands saying goodbye to families and vice versa and sons. And in some cases, young men who were probably planning to marry. They saw all of that terrible heartache, thinking they would never see each other again.

That the first day's march, they marched them by on foot to the seacoast. And that's a long way down through Switzerland and probably hit a part of France. But anyway, they on the first day's march, that first night, the guards didn't really guard them very well.

Someone was awake all night or woke up during the night and looked around. The guards were sleeping, paid no attention to them. And so they slowly, one by one, got up and slipped away from the camp.

And finally, they were all gone but the guards. And they took off and went back toward home. And they all made it back home.

And the sentiment in the community was so anti what the magistrates had done, that the magistrates didn't re-arrest them. So it did end with a good, in a good story and in a good way. The estimate of total martyrs is from two to four thousand.

No one knows for sure. And one of the reasons they don't know, some of the records were destroyed, some are still there. And the Martyrs' Mirror, of course, has record of, I forget how many, it's some in the twelve, thirteen hundred, I think, if you total them all up.

But in any case, they also had what at that point were called Teufeljäger. Teufel would be Baptist and Jäger in German means hunter. So they had the Anabaptist hunters, except they just used the word Teufel for us then.

And so the Anabaptist hunters were men that were deputized to watch for any suspicion of heresy. And they were authorized to use the sword, but to arrest people and bring them in to the jails and so on. And if they resisted arrest, they could actually kill.

They had that kind of deputized power and authority. So a good bit of that sort of thing happened and who knows how many, because you don't know if much of that was recorded, if any of it was recorded. We had the privilege in 77 as well to go to southern Austria, where we were told in the little city, a little town of Wald.

Wald in German means forest. In a little town called forest, there is a building standing yet that had been an inn where you could take your, leave your horse. It was like an old time motel.

You could leave your horse, you could get a room and you could get your meals, supper and breakfast. And there were, the story is told that there were some men from the area sitting there in the evening. So this thing of men going to the restaurant and sitting around chatting has an old history.

But there were these men sitting around from the community, one of whom was a Teufeljäger. And they saw two young men come in and when their meal came, they bowed their heads to pray and give thanks. And this Teufeljäger thought, hmm, I wonder.

He went over and interrupted their meal and said, are you Teufel? And they rejected that term because it was an inference of Anabaptists, re-baptizers, because the Anabaptists said infant baptism is no baptism at all. So they had decided to use the answer no. So they did.

They said no. But he knew that. He knew that they did answer like that under that reasoning.

So he kept pushing them to the point where they would have had to lie to keep themselves from being incriminated. And so they just went silent. That's all he needed.

He arrested them on the spot. They didn't even get to eat their meal. He took them about 16 kilometers, 10, 11 miles on west to a castle where there was a dungeon.

That castle today is still owned, I think, this last, yeah, just a few years back. We called them about staying there again. We had stayed there for about a week.

And when we first got there, I asked the manager, it's owned by the International Federation of Evangelical Students. And because I was a teacher at a Bible college, their Bible Institute, they said we could stay cheap. And it was so cheap, we could hardly afford to live out of the grocery stores and in the

tents that we were doing as a family.

So we stayed in that castle, which was built in the 12th century. And during the Reformation, it was the summer home of a Catholic bishop from over in Salzburg who spent his summers there. And then the area went Lutheran, and the men went over one summer, one winter when he was not there, and they burned the place down.

Well, a castle's built of stone, so it took the windows and doors and the roof, you know. But the Catholic militia fought the Lutheran militia, and they took control of it again. And so the Catholic bishop comes back and makes all the local men work there and rebuild the place.

So it was rebuilt in about 1540 some. And that's basically the way the thing is now, except of course they had to keep it maintained. And when we got there, I asked the manager, I said, where is the dungeon? Because we know of a case where two young men were brought here and were put in the dungeon overnight and then taken on to prison after that.

And we lose track of them. We don't know if they were killed or if they escaped or if they served a sentence and were freed. We don't know.

But in any case, he said, why don't you just look around, see if you can find it. So our three sons and I scoured the place and couldn't find it. We wanted to see what it looked like anyway.

And came back and said, can't find it. He said, well, it really wasn't fair. And he had said, we had agreed that we want to see the place anyway.

So he said, go to the main entry and there's a sleigh sitting there on a rug. Move the sleigh, roll up the rug, and you've found the the dungeon. So we got a little ladder and we took the big square stone lid off of it.

And we got down into that dungeon. And John Gleisteen, a Dutch Mennonite who studied a lot of history, said that at one point, there's one story that says there were 16 or 18 men in that dungeon. It was probably five feet because I can reach about six and I couldn't stretch out completely.

And the other way, it was about twice that big. And it was about this deep. You couldn't stand up.

How 16 or 18 men could get in there, I have no idea. And I was tempted, if there would have been enough men up above, to tell them for just a moment, put the lid on. But then I have claustrophobia and I was afraid I'd be the chicken.

So, but see, that's just the kind of thing that makes me ask myself, how would I have handled that kind of thing? It's a really humbling sort of thing to look at. Full toleration came in Switzerland in 1815 and in Holland in 1798, a bit earlier. And full toleration means that they no longer had to pay a tax to live in an area.

What in the German language they called the Teufeltoll, toll like we use it in English too, that's the word tax in German. Toll is tax. And Teufel, of course, has a reference to us Anabaptists.

To live in areas, many of them had to pay an annual tax per head in the household. Children, men, women and children. And also could not meet freely anywhere.

Now this is the information gathered by others, the research of others. But when I was in Switzerland, I talked to an older man by the name of Gerber, who was then in his 70s, back in 77. And he said he remembers his father telling about sitting on his grandfather's knee, which would have been, this Gerber I was talking to, would have been his great, great grandfather.

And hearing his, this father was hearing his great grandfather tell of the times when he was a boy back in the 1830s, when he could not, when they could not meet except in secret. So he said that date's wrong. It's got to be 1830 or later before Switzerland really freed people.

And up to 1942 or three during World War II, it was still on the books. And the first time it got violated, it went to court. It was still on the books that an Anabaptist could not own land or farmland under 1,000 meters, 3,000 feet.

In other words, they had the farm up on the tops of the Euro mountains and so on. And the good land down below, the Reformed and the Catholics had and the Lutherans, you know. But in 1941 or two, Samuel Gerber told me about that as well.

In 1942, there was a Reformed landowner who had a Lutheran farming for him. No, he was a Lutheran landowner with a Lutheran farming for him. And he didn't like the Lutheran farmer, didn't do a good job.

So he asked a Mennonite farmer who was on up the slopes of the Euro, the Euro mountains, and what is called the Sonnenberg also. Do you know about the Sonnenberg Church in Ohio, up at Kidron, Ohio? Yeah, the Sonnenberg Church comes from immigrants from that area. But anyway, he asked this Mennonite to farm his land, and he didn't realize that it was still on the books that they couldn't farm down that low.

Neither one of them realized it. And the Mennonites said, well, I don't want to take it away from this Lutheran. They knew each other.

Well, he said, you're not taking it away from him. He will not farm it anymore. So I want you to farm it.

So he did agree to take it. But the Lutheran farmer knew that this was still on the books. So he ran to town and reported this.

And sure enough, they went to court. And the city fathers and the judge ruled that it's an antiquated law that should be stricken from the books. So the Mennonites now own land and farmland at a lower level, although they still are more in the upper regions than the lower ones.

Now the methods of persecution. And this is the really sad part to talk about. Many of them faced banishment from their areas, along with the confiscation of their property.

And a lot of areas had signs around. See, the printing press was already in vogue and used widely. So they would have handbills and signs and so on, advertising the fact that if you turn in someone on suspicion of heresy, which in that case meant anabaptism, or in a Catholic area, it could have been any one of the other Protestant groups.

But anyway, if you turn someone in on the suspicion of heresy, and they are convicted, and their property is confiscated, which was common, then the one who turned them in would get a percentage of the property. Can you imagine the motivation for that? But we know very few cases where neighbors turned in

anabaptists. We know of a lot of cases where they helped hide them and warned them that the authorities were looking for them and things like that.

But we don't know of cases where they actually turned them in. It probably happened, but it was not frequent. The common people were not usually with the authorities on these issues.

But can you imagine what it would be like in some of our churches, where many of our people, and I don't say this disparagingly, I'm not the kind of preacher that rants at people who have money, and then when the church needs money, go to them and ask them for it. I'm not that kind of preacher. I think that there are people given the gift to make money.

Others are given money by their parents, and if they're responsible, good stewards, and don't squander their money for riotous living or just living high on the hog, then I think that can be a blessing to the church. But in any case, can you imagine what would happen in our churches, where in many cases there are at least some moneyed people, if all of a sudden you'd have to give up everything and move out? Unbelievable, you know? But it may happen. It really could happen again.

Imprisonment was very common. Jacob Riedman, who was the first main bishop of the Hutterite movement, which in the early generations was a very spiritual movement, even though I don't agree with their assumption about Christian communism. I don't think that's a normative thing.

They take the words of Jesus to the rich young ruler, sell what you have and give it to the poor. They take that as normative. But in their colonies, they don't give their money to the poor, you know? And some of them are very wealthy and not very spiritual.

Just last weekend, we talked, and there was in that church where I was last weekend, a family from one of the Hutterite colonies, and he said there was very little spiritual life until a revival hit their community, their colony. They then as a family left, but his father is one of the preachers in that colony yet. But if we would have to face that kind of thing, it would certainly be a different thing.

And what I was starting to say, Riedman lived for 24 years after his conversion, and he became an Anabaptist, became a preacher, and one of their main theologians and leaders. But of those 24 years, he spent 16 of them in prison. Amazing thing.

But he wrote their first confession of faith, which the more conservative Hutterites still use as their confession of faith. He wrote that while he was in prison. Next is a list of the ways that they tortured people to try to get them to confess where the people are meeting, implicate other people, tell who their leaders are, and things of that nature.

These are the kinds of things they used. Many of these were tools that were present in the larger cities that had been designed by and used by the Catholic Inquisition. So if an area went Lutheran or reformed, they still had those tools, and they used them to bring people to, hopefully, to repentance from their quotes, heresy.

So these are the ways that they would torture them. The rack is like a cot, just a table, with a drum and a ratchet on the end, with ropes that would be brought up. Usually the ratchet was at the foot end, and they would put cuffs around the ankles and cuffs around the wrists.

And then they would tighten that up, notch at a time, until it was real, real tight. And you'd hang on, you know, to keep your joints in place. But then they'd warn you, if you don't recant, we're going to stretch you until your joints go out.

And people would actually pass out from the trauma of having like their hips go out. And I don't know if you've ever had a dislocated joint, but they are painful. They are really painful.

And people would often pass out on the, on the rack. If they didn't have a rack, and there is a picture of this in the, in the martyr's mirror. And by the way, if you don't have a martyr's mirror for your family, you really ought to get one.

And don't let the size of it scare you, because you can read stories, or your children can read stories out of it. You know, a story at a time, and they don't have to read all of it. But expose them to it.

But in the martyr's mirror is a story, is a picture of two guards playing dice, while an Anabaptist is hanging there, suspended by his wrists, and they tied weights to his ankles. And they just waited, waited until he couldn't hang on anymore. And usually either the shoulder or the hip went out, a joint.

And then they'd cut them down, if they passed out, especially, if they wouldn't repent. Well, they'd cut them down, and sometimes just leave them lying where they fell, and later come to, without any medical treatment to help them with the pain they had. Hanging is what I'm referring to.

They're not hanging by the neck. You don't torture people by hanging by the neck. That's fatal.

And then beating, they simply beat, sometimes with chains, other times with rods, and so on. The block was intended to be a torture, but it often became a martyrdom, because it was a huge log that was flat on top, and had arms on the side, where the arms would be put out at an angle, something like that, and strapped down. And then they were strapped down at the ankles, and a belt across the tummy, and they had a huge mallet.

They looked like a big croquet mallet, but twice as big as a croquet mallet. And they would warn them, we're going to break your bones unless you recant. And they would usually start at the shins, and they'd break the bones in the lower leg, both legs.

They still didn't recant, they'd break the large bone in the upper leg. They still didn't recant, they'd break the bones in the lower arm, and then the upper arm. If they didn't recant, they usually passed out.

And some of them went into shock, because of all the trauma. They didn't understand shock back then. Of course, wouldn't have been too concerned if they did, as to treating it.

And quite a few would have died, or did die on the block. So it was both a form of torture, and a form of martyrdom. They would use red hot tongs, the kind of blacksmith's tools.

They would take a pliers, and pull a tongue of a preacher, way out, as far as they could. And then they'd slip one of these wide tongs, that they used to hold horseshoes, and things like that, that they were working on the anvil with. They would take one of those, make them red hot, and then just slide it in across the tongue, and just squeeze down on it, and literally burn the tongue off.

And it would cauterize the tongue, so it wouldn't bleed much. And then you couldn't speak after that. They would also take a huge awl, and make it red hot, and stick it through both cheeks, and just roll it, and twirl

it, and slide it back and forth, until they had burned big holes into the cheek.

And then you couldn't speak loudly. It's amazing how that affects our ability to speak, that kind of thing. In some cases, where they didn't have any tools handy, and they wanted to torture someone, they'd tie their hands down real tight, and take screws, and put them right under their fingernails.

Doesn't take much of a tool to make a lot of pain. I was going to say, try that sometime, but no, don't try that. That is a terribly painful area under the nails.

So they did that sometimes. And cutting, especially at times they would delight in cutting the genitals, and so on. And sometimes just hunger.

They would put them in prison, and give them little more than water, and some crusty moldy bread, and see how long they'd hang in there. There were numbers of times when they tried to get Anabaptists to be immoral, by taking, putting a man in a cell, naked, and then bringing a lewd woman in. And she would try to entice them, and people would watch to see if there was any indiscretion.

There is no known case of moral failure in that kind of situation, on the part of the Anabaptists, which is a commendable record, when you stop and think about it. One of the saddest instances that I became aware of in my research, was when a young couple with a new baby, a young baby, was arrested, and they were imprisoned, not even in the same cell, and of course they took the baby away. And a few days later, they had a woman impersonate the wife.

She talked to her, and learned her voice, and so on. And this woman took the baby, and made the baby cry, and then she called the husband, and begged the husband to recant, because she said, she had recanted. All you have to do is renounce your rebaptism, and come back to the church, and we can go home.

And she begged him. He thought all the time that it was his wife, but he wouldn't do it. Can you imagine that kind of pressure? Again, just kind of unbelievable, that kind of tension and pressure put on by that kind of of temptation, and torture.

Execution was mostly by fire, at least among the Catholics. That was their treasured way of killing heretics, is to burn them. But there were some of the other state churches that used some, some of the magistrates used that as well.

They would also use drowning and beheading. There's an account in the Reader's Digest. I should have checked this out again before, but I've forgotten the names.

But a 15-year-old son and his father were arrested. The son was already baptized as a 15-year-old. So he was an Anabaptist in his own right, by commitment.

And he was very well, both of these men, the man and his son, were from the aristocracy, the upper level people. The son was being educated in music, because he had good musical tendencies and gifts. He was being educated to be a court musician, which was a common thing back there.

The people who played musical instruments and sang for political leaders. He was being trained as a court musician, but became an Anabaptist. And so the magistrates wanted to save the young man.

But he wouldn't recant. The father wouldn't recant either. So they sentenced him to death.

And the local executioner, usually the executioners were kind of the scum of the town, because nobody really wanted to kill other people for money. But they were paid by the head. So some of the lower class people in town, men, would take on that kind of task.

But this man was a poor man, the executioner, who had at times eaten at this man's table that he was now supposed to kill. And he had been nice to him, even when he was in the state church. But now he was an Anabaptist.

And the authorities said, you have to behead him. He said, I can't do that. He's a good man.

And he's been kind to me. And they said, remember your oath, which meant he would be killed if he didn't keep his oath. So he drank a good bit to fortify his nerves, came to the execution drunk, and they made the son tied to a chair, sit there and watch his father's execution.

And they threatened him with execution. And the son encouraged the father, and the father encouraged the son. And the executioner begged forgiveness of the father.

The father said, the greater sin is on the magistrates who stood by. He said, the greater sin is theirs. Do what you must do.

And he laid, they had him tied, of course. They had him kneel, lay his head on a block. And the executioner had one of those old Middle Ages war axes, you know, the ones that have this flared axe head.

And the thing is heavy and unwieldy, and he was drunk. The account says that it was the fourth blow before he actually hit the neck and ended the man's life. Those kinds of things are just really hard for us to believe today.

They use the sword and of course the block. Let me just give, for want of time, one account of Michael Sattler, who's quite well known in our circles as one of our early leaders. And his greatest contribution was that when he came on the scene as a former Catholic monk, he came on the Anabaptist scene, and he was a very well educated man.

And he knew some of the Reformed leaders who were former Catholic priests, actually spent some time in Zurich with several of the Lutheran leaders there, pardon me, the Reformed leaders there, and tried to persuade them to be Anabaptists, but they didn't become Anabaptists. But they didn't arrest him. He went on into Germany then, into South Germany, and he called a meeting of Anabaptist preachers for the purpose of bringing some stability to the movement as early as 1527.

Because as you can understand, people coming out of Catholicism, or if they came out of Protestant circles also, but it was Catholicism very recently, coming out of Catholicism knowing very little scripture, and now some of them already had Luther's Bible, but many did not yet in 1527. And so they were trying to find their way. And so you had some really wide differences on issues among Anabaptists.

And I don't have time to go into that, but we had some crackpot ideas in the Anabaptist movement, meaning Anabaptists because they were rebaptized, but they were not in the mainstream. And Sattler saw that there was a need to come together on some of these issues. And he wrote on the seven issues that you find now in the Schleithem Confession of Faith.

It's not so much a confession of faith as it is a statement of belief on these seven issues. But anyway, there were 60-some men who met on the border. Sometimes if you read about it, they'll refer to it as Schlotte am Rande.

Rande is border. It was right on the German-Swiss border. In fact, if they had lookouts out, if the magistrates from Germany approached the house from one side, they could run out of this house and get into Switzerland.

And if the Swiss magistrates came, they could get out and get into the German side. And they met there anyway and hammered out agreement. They did some editing of Sattler's work and that became what we know as the seven articles of the Schleithem.

The little town was called Schleithem. And then on the way home and his wife was with him, they were arrested and they had the copy of the Schleithem on his person. And so he spent about three months in prison and there were about eight other men with him.

In fact, of those 66 or seven men, two years later, about 50-some of them were dead, martyred. It's an awesome, it's kind of a meeting of martyrs. But Sattler was sentenced to die, to be tortured by hot tongs and so on, on the way to execution.

And they took them outside of the city of Rotenberg and there were like five or six women, his wife and five or six others, and then about eight men besides Sattler. The day they killed the men, they just built a big bonfire and tied the men to posts. They laid them down and tied them to posts and then they would just put the foot end of the post toward the fire, you know, and then two or three men would push them over and pole vault them face down into the fire.

There are two eyewitness accounts written of that. And the one that's considered to be probably the most accurate and detailed said that some of the men were weeping before they were actually, anyone was pole vaulted in yet. And Sattler with joy on his countenance said to them, be encouraged men, by eventide we shall be in the presence of the Lord.

This was in the afternoon. And he said, I will lift my hand to bear testimony to the grace of God to die in the fire. But his hands were tied behind his back and he was pole vaulted face down into the fire.

And they heard him pray for quite a while in the fire. But his hand didn't come up and it didn't come up and didn't come up. A good while after his voice was stilled, all of a sudden in the midst of that fire, his hand went up.

Whether it was just a miracle and he might already have been unconscious or whether he was still conscious, no one will know in this side of eternity. But all the men were pole vaulted in and died that day. Two days later, they took the women to the bridge.

We were at the bridge, but it's been replaced a couple of times over the, not in Zurich, that's the Limat. I'm trying to think of the name of the river, but I can't recall it in Rotenberg. But anyway, this river, the bridge, it's about as long as from here back to that back wall.

They had a low, low wall there now yet too. And they said at that time there was, and they had large gunny sacks, you know, burlap bags that they used for shipments on rivers and, and ocean going vessels as well. And they had these women step up into a bag that was just collapsed down.

And then they put rocks in there. They tied their ankles and tied their wrists behind them, pulled the bag up over their heads and tied it. And then they pushed them off the bridge.

And of course the rocks would have taken them down and they were tied to where they couldn't do anything anyway. And they would die by, by drowning. If we get the impression today that men are no longer that inhumane, don't kid yourselves.

We still are that inhumane. I wish I could give you a happier report. But some years ago, a young man who grew up in Beechy Amish circles, but rebelled against his parents and his church, wound up lying about his age and went into the Vietnam War back during that era in the late sixties, came out of that war all messed up, having seen things that man shouldn't see.

But he heard me lecture on Anabaptist history for a while. He walked with the Lord, but he's not walking with the Lord today. And that's the sad part.

But he told me with tears one time, that sounds terribly gruesome. But he said, we are just as bad, if not worse today than what they were then. In fact, he said, we've got better tools than they had.

And he was talking about what he saw in Vietnam. And then I asked him, though I had read enough to know better. I said, are you talking about what the Vietnamese and the Viet Cong did? Yeah.

And the Americans, he said. It was both. Very, very sad.

I just feel led to just take a moment to pray. And maybe you want to just make sure your toes won't get gangrene and stand up at this time with me. And we'll pray together and then we'll shift gears.

We've only got 10 minutes, but let's pray together. Father, we thank you for the heritage of faith that you've given us as Anabaptists. We pray that it would not distract or that we would give it undue honor and would not distract from our love for you and our commitment to you, but that it would help us and challenge us to be faithful in our time and in our generation.

And Lord, I pray that if in my lifetime or in the lifetime of anyone here tonight, conditions of similar stress and test would come, that you would give us grace to be faithful even unto death. So give us that grace, we pray, that we need for now and the grace we need for each day at a time. And we give you thanks for it in the name of Jesus.

Amen. God bless you. I am just about out of time.

So let me at least introduce and begin some discussion of the four basic issues. So in your outline, you'd flip over to, oh, it would be page five. Yes.

Flip over to page five, the four basic issues in Anabaptism. And I'm referring to the 16th century. You see these four issues noted on your timeline as well.

But let me hasten to say these four issues are still issues. Meaning that within Christendom and now in my lifetime within the Mennonite Church, we have moved away from our biblicism, our belief that the Bible really is God's word. And for want of a better term, I've asked for some help on that.

And I'm not real good with words, but for want of a better term, I've used the terms simple, literal biblicism to describe this, that our forefathers rejected the idea that you had to have a certain level of

theological education to be able to understand the word of God. Their conviction was that every born again Christian could substantially understand the word of God. And I've been amazed in the different cultures that I've moved in, where you have first generation Christians.

And the really exciting one for me presently is where Muslims in Sudan are coming to faith. It is amazing. They come out of a Muslim tradition that has a high view of the book of the called the Quran.

And what we know is the Old Testament, which is a part of the Quran, most of it with some changes that are unfortunate, but they have a high view of that. In fact, you would not find a Muslim who would put one little note within his Quran. And when they see Christians with Bibles that are marked up, they think we're irreverent.

Well, I don't think we are. I think it's, I think our idea is better than theirs, but the point is these young Muslim Christians share our basic faith. Yasser, who is a member at United Bethel, he's from Sudan, and I don't have time to go into that except just to say he came to faith in Sudan, came to the U.S. to study and returned seven years ago.

In fact, he's speaking tonight in Columbus, Ohio. He was hoping I could be there and I said, he can't make it. He goes back to Sudan tomorrow.

But he asked me to do some teaching back in 2007 when I was there for the first time. I went over these four things. I told them about our roots because their idea of Christians was that in the Western world, we're mostly Christian and we are very immoral.

We're very wealthy. We're very worldly. We're very arrogant and we're very militaristic.

So I told him some of us aren't. And that I told him, and he had told him too, that there are Christians in America who take the teachings of Jesus very seriously and very literally. When he said, resist not evil, we take that literally.

And I said, we would die before we would kill. Well, they grew up with jihad in their worldview, and yet in their heart of hearts, they knew it was wrong. I've heard a few of them say that, that they knew it was wrong.

It just doesn't make sense to the human conscience to kill someone who believes differently than I do. But in any case, when I would share these kinds of things with them, they were nodding their heads and so on. And I'll have to tell you women, well, maybe you men should listen too.

Yasser said, you've got to do some teaching about the roles of men and women and how men ought to treat women because women are so mistreated in the Muslim cultures. They're just a good notch above goats in their minds, or at least the way they treat them. And so I did some teaching on that, just read some scriptures and explained what that means and so on.

And about three times during the time I was teaching, all of a sudden when Yasser would translate what I said, you could see the lights going on in the women and the men were kind of sitting there with their mouths open and the women actually clapped, you know, they started clapping because they were so happy to hear that. And Yasser said, in their hearts, they know it's not right to be for the men to treat them as they have. And the men know it's not right, but it's their culture.

So if we have a high view of the Bible, if it really is God's Word, then we have a lot of common faith. It's when we have a different view of the Bible that we get way, way apart on the basic issues of our faith. Any questions before we close tonight? All right.

I'm sorry, the percentage of Oh, that's a good question. What percentage of people did recant under persecution? It was very low. The ones who would recant under torture.

There were areas where when the magistrates gave a period of time for people to come back, if they were rebaptized, that quite a number of them went back. But it led to a real problem. There was in the first generation, there was a real difficult issue among the Anabaptists.

And that was what to do with what they called the half believers, the half believers. And they gave them that name because they were ones who had been baptized, but then started going back to the state church to avoid persecution, but would keep coming to the Anabaptist meetings when they could without getting caught, you know, when they thought it was safe. And some groups tolerated them.

Others said, you've got to make a decision. You can't be on the fence on this issue. So it was a, it was a difficult, somewhat divisive issue in the first generation, because there were enough people who did that.

There's one funny story of a Catholic, former Catholic who was rebaptized, but then went back to the Catholic church regularly enough to avoid detection. But then he would keep coming to the Anabaptist meetings. And one time in the Anabaptist meeting, he wanted the opportunity to make a confession.

And he confessed the sin of swallowing the Eucharist, the little wafer in the Catholic mass. He said his habit was to take the Eucharist, the priest would put it on their tongues, you know, he would take the Eucharist, but he wouldn't eat it. He would just leave it in his mouth until he got outside of the church.

Then he'd spit it out. But one time he let it get back too far. And he actually wound up swallowing it.

So he felt guilt and he made a confession. And I was thinking, man, your problem was you were going back to the church. It wasn't the problem of swallowing the Eucharist.

I don't know what they said to him either. But the the number of actual recantations recorded is very low, very low. But a goodly number did, percentages we don't know, did go back to the state churches and some of them remained on the fence, half believers.

I'll take one more if there's a pressing question quick like anyone. All right, if not, let's stand to pray. And we'll consider ourselves dismissed then.

Father again, we say thank you for so great a salvation as you've given to us in Jesus and pray for grace to be faithful. We pray that grace upon each other, grace, mercy and peace in the name of Jesus. Amen.

God bless you.

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