

March 6, 2016

BEING FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH

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In the year 155 A.D., an eighty six year old believer, Polycarp, was burned at the stake for refusing to denounce Jesus and say, "Caesar is Lord." When threatened with death, he said, "Eighty-six years I have served Christ, and he has done me no wrong; how, then, can I blaspheme my king who saved me?"

It is said that he refused to be tied to the stake, believing that Jesus would help him endure his execution. Polycarp was a member of the church of Smyrna; and when Revelation was written in about 95 A.D., he was a young man when his congregation received the letter from Jesus through John in Revelation 2:8-11. It is no coincidence that this is the passage where we find Jesus promising his followers that if we will be "faithful until death" then He "will give us the crown of life."

The reference to the be "faithful until death", meaning remaining faithful even if being faithful results in our death, was appropriate given the account of Polycarp and perhaps others. Also, the reference to a "crown of life" was appropriate to Smyrna. Encompassing the base of Mount Pagos were golden temples that made the mountain look as if it were wearing a crown.

Smyrna was called, "the lovely", the ornament of Asia", "the flower of Asia" because of its beauty. It was physically beautiful and spiritually beautiful as well, being one of two churches of Asia that did not receive any condemnation in the Lords letters. May we as individuals look to Polycarp and as a congregation look to Smyrna for examples of faithfulness to our Lord!