

Hold Fast: Called to Persevere by Life or by Death

Hebrews 2.1-4

Hebrews 3.1-14

Hebrews 4.6-11, 14-16

Hebrews 6.4-12

Hebrews 10.23-39

Hebrews 12.25-29

2 Peter 2.20-22

Matthew 24.9-13

Polycarp was the Bishop of the church at Smyrna and was martyred in a.d. 156.

Polycarp called for by the mob when Germanicus was being devoured by wild beasts, "Away with the Atheists; let Polycarp be sought out!" (Martyrdom of Polycarp 3.2)

At first when Polycarp heard he was a wanted man did not flee the city of Smyrna

However after the urging of many he finally agreed to hide out in a country house (not too far from the city)

His pursuers found out where he was living and just before they got there Polycarp fled to another dwelling

However, once they tortured the people there one of the youths betrayed the location of Polycarp

When they got to the little house that Polycarp was at, rather than fleeing, which he could easily have done, he greeted them at the door

When they saw him, they marveled at his age and his fortitude they said, "Was so much effort made to capture such a venerable man?"

Since it was dinner time, Polycarp ordered that these men be given something to eat and drink

During this time he asked for an hour to go and pray without disturbance, which they granted

After praying they put him on a donkey and brought him to the city

When the Irenarch Herod and his father Nicetes met Polycarp they brought him up into the chariot between them

They said, "What harm is there in saying, Lord Caesar, and in sacrificing, with the other ceremonies observed on such occasions, and so make sure of safety?"

Polycarp did not respond

They continued to urge him

Polycarp said, "I will not do as you advise me."

Thus, they spoke bitter words to him and threw him out of the chariot with such violence that when Polycarp hit the ground he dislocated his leg

He was immediately brought to the stadium

When the people in the stadium heard it was Polycarp they began shouting

He was brought straight to the proconsul who asked him if he was Polycarp.

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Polycarp stood there filled with confidence

The Proconsul was astonished

He sent a herald through the crowds saying, "Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian."

Upon hearing this, the crowds broke out in a fury saying that they should let loose a lion on Polycarp

This was denied because the shows of the wild beasts were already finished

So they cried out that Polycarp should be burnt alive

The multitude began carrying sticks and gathering wood from the shops and baths

In record speed a funeral pile was ready and Polycarp was stripped of his clothes

They were going to nail him to the wood but he told them that God would empower him to stay in the fire without being nailed, so they bound him with ropes

And he prayed:

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Then they set fire to him but the fire swirled around him and he didn't burn

Therefore he was ordered to be stabbed by a sword

His blood is said to have extinguished the fire

Sanctus was the deacon of the church at Vienne and was martyred some time after the year a.d. 177.

Hebrews 11.32-12.4

2 Timothy 2.11-13