

The Courageous Faith of Antipas

John M. Buttrey II

Tucked away in the mysterious pages of the book of Revelation, is a brother in Christ too often ignored. His name is Antipas. Have you ever heard of him? I would venture to say that most Christians have not. This is a shame, for Antipas presents to us a very impressive picture of courageous faith. His name only appears in one verse of Scripture. Yet, this one verse speaks volumes on faith. Take a look at the verse. In it, Jesus is addressing the church at Pergamum.

I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast my name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells (Rev. 2:13).

What a testimony! Jesus Himself refers to Antipas as “My witness” and “My faithful one.” Is there any of us who would not like the Lord to speak so admiringly of us?

At a time of great persecution, when it would perhaps have been easy to justify denying the Lord in one's mind, Antipas stood strong. Even though it cost him his life, this man refused to denounce his Savior.

Such faith is inspiring, challenging, and instructional. However, Antipas is certainly not alone. Throughout the centuries, many faithful men and women of God have stood strong against persecution. They became martyrs for the God of the Bible and His truth.

John Foxe, in his well-known Book of Martyrs, writes of some of the extreme persecution and suffering experienced by our brethren of the first century, during the reign of Rome's Emperor Nero:

...the barbarities exercised on the Christians were such as even excited the commiseration of the Romans themselves. Nero even refined upon cruelty, and contrived all manner of punishments for the Christians that the most infernal imagination could design. In particular he had some sewed up in skins of wild beasts, and then worried by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axletrees, and set on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them. This persecution was general throughout the whole Roman Empire, but it rather increased than diminished the spirit of Christianity (Foxes' Book of Martyrs: The First Persecution, Under Nero, A.D. 67).

That last line is most interesting. Rather than bringing an end to the Christianity, the persecution of the first-century Christians, due to their courageous faith, inspired others in their faith. We read of the same in the New Testament:

Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and

dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word (Acts 8:1-4 Emphasis Mine).

Courageous faith is inspiring. It challenges and instructs us to be stronger and more dedicated to the cause of Christ.

Enjoying the freedoms and conveniences that are so much a part of our lives today, and being free from mass physical persecution in this country (though certainly not completely free of persecution for our beliefs), let us strive to be inspiring examples of faith. Inspire the brother or sister who is discouraged. Inspire the neighbor or coworker who does not know the Lord. Like Antipas, let us live in such a way that the Lord would refer to us as, "My witness" and "My faithful one."