

GLEANINGS — May 24, A.D. 2015

Wait For It

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Thus wrote church father Tertullian. Tertullian was a teenager when (*in A.D. 167 under the reign of Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius*) another eminent church father, Polycarp, was bound and burned at a stake for standing strong for Jesus, then stabbed to death when the flames didn't do their job.

Tens if not hundreds of thousands of "Polycarps" are being cruelly persecuted and killed in Iraq and elsewhere in Middle East RIGHT NOW. Today's world leaders, like Pilate, Nero, and Aurelius before them, ignore the plight of these brave martyrs, or let political expediency guide their stewardship of authority, or share satan's raging malice against them, thus serving as his pawns.

Tertullian was spot on. Therefore we expect that this vast field where those costly seeds are being sown in such abundance will yield a crop...but in God's time. Let us learn from the Biblical farmer:

"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." (James 5:7,8)

A hideous and worthless toadstool can grow up overnight, but the maturing of the valuable crop of the whole body of God's elect is something that has taken many centuries so far, and might require many more.

When Stephen was martyred, the disciples scattered (Acts 11). The "dark ages" preceded the Reformation. Religious persecution drove pilgrims to found a new nation, out of which much good fruit has come. And at other times during the last two millenia of history, periods of intense persecution have led some almost to despair. But the God of Joseph son of Jacob has always brought good out of all the malice which satan and his servants have aimed at the Church. Those hard times have yielded to joyful seasons of ingathering and peace.

For Your salvation we wait, O Lord! In light of the intense wave of persecution many Christians are now experiencing, let us pray for the greatest Gospel revival the world has ever seen, effected by the almighty power of the Holy Spirit. Let the followers of the Lamb triumph as a false prophet is exposed and the false god Allah tumbles down like Dagon (1 Samuel 5:3,4). Let us marvel with joy as a place of savagery and darkness is transformed into a province of the Prince of peace, and a land made bright by the Father of lights.

So bring on your scimitars and swords...your "dhimmitude" and prison cells, poor deluded fools! Your victims will pray for you fervently and sincerely in love as they imitate their Lord Jesus in suffering and death. Be amazed like those before you who stoned Stephen when he saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

Do your worst...you can't beat the Nazarene!