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Justin Polycarp and Martyr.

(Some Chapters from the History of the Early Centuries, retold by Lucy Taylor, in the 'Sunday at Home,' from 'The Story of the Faith.')

While Ignatius was rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Jesus, and boldly meeting a cruel death for love to that Divine Master, a little heathen lad was growing up in the land of Samaria, the child of Greek parents who knew nothing of that

great teachers had not made his life any better, or touched his heart. Justin knew this to be true, and he listened very eagerly as his companion told him that long before these Greek philosophers, 'there lived righteous Hebrews, the friends of God; they spoke by his Spirit; they were called prophets, and they told men that which they learned from the Holy Spirit; they worshipped the great Creator and Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.' Then the old man bid Justin to pray that 'the gates of life' might be opened to him also, for no man, said

last found it in Jesus Christ alone, and accepted him as his Saviour.

The Prefect asked what the Christian faith was, and Justin explained it, and told him how Jesus met with his people wherever they gathered together to pray to him, and that one day he would go to dwell with his Lord on high. 'If I scourge you from head to foot, and then cut off your head, will you go to heaven?' scoffed Rusticus; but Justin was not to be moved from his faith, and declared that he was ready to suffer, and that his Lord would receive him. The judge then asked all six of the captives if they were Christians, and one by one each declared his faith in Jesus, and refused to sacrifice to idols. One of them, who was a poor slave, said, 'I am the slave of Caesar, but Jesus Christ has made me free, and I have the same hope of glory as my companions.'

Rusticus threatened the prisoners with torture, but he could not shake their devotion to their Lord, and they were all led away to prison, cruelly scourged, and at last beheaded, parted from each other by but a few moments on earth, to meet for ever round the throne of the King, who was waiting to give his faithful servants the crown of life.

When Ignatius passed through Smyrna on his way to Rome, and bade farewell to the bishop there, Polycarp was much younger than he, and for long years after Ignatius was martyred, Polycarp lived in that eastern city, telling his people of the words he had heard from the Apostle John, and boldly professing the Name of Jesus. He was Bishop of Smyrna for a very long time, and it is even thought that he may have been that 'Angel of the Church' when John wrote his letters to the seven churches of Asia, in which we find this message to Smyrna, 'Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.'

But the things that Polycarp was to suffer did not come upon him till very late in life. He seems to have escaped all the persecution which swept away thousands of Christians during the reigns of Domitian, Trajan, and Antoninus Pius, and though some of his own flock were tortured and killed, Polycarp was not taken prisoner till the year 167, when Marcus Aurelius was emperor. Polycarp did not desire death so eagerly as Ignatius had done. He did what he could to save his life, though he was quite ready to suffer when his Master called him to do so. When his persecutors sought for him he took refuge for a time, by the wish of his friends, at a farmhouse a little way from the city, and while there is said to have dreamed that his pillow was on fire, and to have understood that Christ intended him to die in the flames for his sake. He fled to a village near, but when his enemies discovered his hiding-place he came down to them from an upper room quite calmly, ready, he said, to accept the will of God, whatever it might be. He set a meal before the soldiers who had come to seize him, and then begged them to let him have an hour for prayer, which they granted; and they were so astonished at his peaceful face, and his courageous manner, that they were half afraid to lay hands on him, and ashamed, too, that they



POLYCARP SETS A MEAL BEFORE THE SOLDIERS WHO HAVE COME TO SEIZE HIM

Holy Name, except to treat it with scorn and contempt.

Justin Martyr was born in 103, and when he reached eighteen or twenty years of age, he began to think a great deal about the various teachings of the wise men of the nation to which he belonged. His father and mother were Pagans, and had taught him to worship idols; but Justin was not satisfied; he wanted God, not troops of Greek deities, and he did not know where to find him, nor which way to turn in the search after truth, for he had no New Testament, nor Christian friends, yet he set out on the search without any guide, and his Father in heaven was watching him all the time, and after a while led him into the light.

Justin went from one learned philosopher to another, but none of them could give him the Bread of Life for which his soul was hungering. The followers of Plato he admired most, but he did not find what he wanted even from them, and he turned away once more disappointed. One day when he was walking alone by the water-side very sad and very perplexed, an old man overtook him and began to talk; he was as grave and wise-looking as one of the Greek philosophers, but his face was not stern and hard, but sweet and kind, and Justin liked to hear him speak. The old man was a Christian, and he told the youth that he was sure all he had learned from the

he could understand these things without the teaching of Christ himself.

When once more alone, a bright glimmer of light sprang up in Justin's heart. He watched the Christians, and listened to what they had to say. He saw them living holy lives and patiently suffering cruel persecutions; he learned more about their Lord and Master, the Holy Spirit taught him of Jesus, and soon he became a Christian. 'I have cast aside,' says he, 'all the vain desires of men; I glory now only in being a Christian, and desire to appear as a Christian in the face of the world.'

Justin afterwards wrote a book in defence of the Christians, and sent it to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, entreating him not to persecute them, and showing what cruel lies had been told about their conduct. Later, he wrote a second book and sent it to the next Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, hoping to save two Christians who were condemned to death; but his efforts were fruitless, and very soon he was himself taken prisoner, and brought, with six others, before Rusticus, the Prefect of Rome. He was accused of dishonoring the gods, and replied that Christ was his Master, and that he must worship and obey him. Then Rusticus enquired if he had been led away by the teaching of the Nazarene. Justin told him how he had tried in vain to find truth or rest among the Greek philosophers, and that he had at