

The Faith



Worth Dying For

Lamp and Light Bible Correspondence Course

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The Faith Worth Dying For

Dallas Witmer

Illustrations: Jan Luyken

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“Holding forth the word of life” Philippians 2:16

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Cover Illustration: William White was a Catholic priest in Norfolk, England. By reading the Bible he became convinced of the truth. He then renounced the Roman Catholic faith and began preaching the true Gospel of Christ.

When arrested for the first time, William recanted. But he repented of his apostasy and once more began preaching the Gospel. He was arrested again and this time remained true to the Lord.

William was burned for his faith in Norwich in the year 1428.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 345–347

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The Persecuted Believers

The prophets persecuted in the Old Testament by apostate Jews	The crucifixion of Jesus Christ	The believers persecuted by the Jews	The believers persecuted by the pagans	The believers persecuted by the Catholic churches (Roman and Greek)	The believers persecuted by the Catholic church and the Protestants	The believers persecuted in Moslem and Communist countries
		A.D. 30	313	1525	1920	

The World and the Faith

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

Throughout the history of the world, faithfulness to God has cost men dearly (Hebrews 11:36–38). In Old Testament times, the prophets that spoke in the name of the Lord were persecuted. In the Christian era, many thousands of Christians have been killed for their faith. All of the Lord’s apostles except John died as martyrs.

First the Jews persecuted the Christians. Then the pagans in the Roman Empire persecuted them. And when the Romans embraced Catholicism, a new wave of persecution began. For more than one thousand years it raged, directed by the popes of Rome.

Beginning around 1574, some countries permitted freedom of conscience. But it was not until the eighteenth century that various countries began to include religious freedom in their constitutions.

Although many parts of our world today enjoy complete religious freedom, there are countries where true Christianity is prohibited.

The different persecutions of the faithful are shown on the time line on page 4. The time line begins with the persecution of the prophets and continues until today, showing who persecuted the faithful.

—Dallas Witmer

Introduction

The faith worth dying for . . . is a faith that saves.

In Noah's day, everyone was wicked. All were sinners going to festivals, getting drunk, and living in great immorality. No one paid any attention to God. No one even tried to keep God's commandments. No one . . . except Noah.

Noah was a good man. God spoke to Noah because He knew Noah would listen and believe what He said. "By faith Noah, being warned of God . . . prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7).

The world was wicked and full of darkness.

But Noah believed God and was saved.

After the flood, many of Noah's descendants returned to idol worship. They made gods of stone and clay. These idol worshipers gathered in the plain of Shinar (modern-day Iraq) until God scattered them "upon the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:9). But in the midst of all the idolatry of Shinar lived an upright man: Abraham.

God spoke to Abraham because He knew Abraham would listen and believe what He said. By faith Abraham obeyed God. By faith he lived as a stranger in the promised land (Hebrews 11:8–9). "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3).

The world was wicked and full of darkness.

But Abraham believed God and was saved.

Abraham's descendants became the children of Israel. At times the Israelites believed God and walked in His ways. But more often they showed their unbelief by sinful, rebellious living. Wickedness, witchcraft, disputes, and greed governed their lives until God Himself (in the person of Jesus) came to earth to speak with them.

A few of them, those that followed Jesus, paid attention to what God said. They believed God, and because of their faith, God adopted them into His family (Galatians 3:26). By faith they became children of God and as children, heirs; "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:16–17).

The world was wicked and full of darkness.

But Jesus' followers (the early Christians) believed God and were saved.

When the church of Jesus was still young, many of her members forsook their faith and fell back into sin. In the Name of Jesus, millions of

false Christians killed their enemies, stole from the poor, persecuted the true Christians, blasphemed the truth, and finally plunged Europe into the Dark Ages.

During this dark time there were a few who kept their faith in God. There were a few who passed the light of the Gospel from generation to generation.

At the time of the Reformation, the church of Jesus grew and flourished again. Those who believed God during the Reformation also obeyed Him. They lived holy lives and baptized with water those who believed on Jesus. Because of this, they were nicknamed *Anabaptists* (rebaptizers).

The Anabaptists were faithful in the midst of great persecution. Because of their faith, many of these brethren were beheaded, burned alive, and cut in pieces. The faithful sisters were drowned and buried alive by the enemies of the faith. But by faith these martyrs were freed from “the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Faith opened their eyes (Acts 26:18). Faith gave them an inheritance among the sanctified (Acts 26:18). Because of their faith, they did not draw back unto perdition but received the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls (Hebrews 10:38–39 and 1 Peter 1:9).

The world was wicked and full of darkness.

But the Anabaptists believed God and were saved.

More than four hundred years have passed since the Reformation. Many of the Anabaptists’ descendants, along with the descendants of the reformers, have become lukewarm and indifferent about their religion.

We live in a “Dark Age,” in a very evil and sinful time. Our generation is bound for hell. But God is still speaking. Do we actually believe what He is saying? Are we paying attention to it?

Do not forget this:

Noah believed God and was saved.

Abraham believed God and was saved.

The early Christians believed God and were saved.

The Anabaptists believed God and were saved.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

How can we show that we believe God?

The faith worth dying for . . . is a faith that produces works.

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3). But Abraham not only believed. He showed his faith

by his works (James 2:21–22). If we believe God, we are the children of Abraham and heirs with him (Romans 4:13; Galatians 3:28–29). Like Abraham, we show our faith by the works that we do.

Many people think that if we believe God we can continue to live in sin and be saved. But this is a lie from the devil. God has said that all who sin are going to hell. If we believe in God, we will not continue in sin.

The Bible says that our good works will not save us (Ephesians 2:8–9). But the Bible also says that we are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? . . . Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? . . . Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. . . . For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:14, 21–22, 24, 26).

Noah showed his faith in God by building the ark.

Abraham showed his faith in God by giving up his son.

The early Christians showed their faith in God by evangelizing the world.

The Anabaptists showed their faith in God by choosing death instead of disobeying God.

How do we show our faith in God?

The faith worth dying for . . . is a faith worth living for.

In our day it is easy to say, “I believe.” Because of this, there are many false believers with a dead faith (James 2:26).

Four centuries ago it was not easy to believe in God. Anyone who believed in God and obeyed Him was likely to lose his life. In those days no one ventured to say he believed unless he really did. True believers lived by their faith and died for their faith. Even though the faithful faced persecution, many believed in God, and the church of Jesus blossomed in the midst of persecution.

In the following lessons, we are going to examine the faith of those believers. The faith, that for them was worth dying for, is worth living for in our world today.

Map of Europe

ENGLAND

North Sea



William White

Norwich

London



Pieter Pieters



Dirk Willems

Amsterdam

Rotterdam

NETHERLANDS

Münster



Hans Bret



Maeyken Wens

BELGIUM



Anneken Hendriks

FRANCE

Paris



Jacob de Keersgieter



Mattheus Mair

Strasbourg



The Waldensians

Zurich



Swiss Brethren

SWITZERLAND

ITALY

Scenes from the history of the Anabaptists

William White	Cover
Two girls	Lesson 4
Jacob de Keersgieter	Lesson 5
Swiss Brethren	Lesson 5
Pieter Pieters	Lesson 6
Dirk Willems	Lesson 7
Mattheus Mair	Lesson 8
Maeyken Wens	Lesson 9
Leonhard Keyser	Lesson 10
The Waldensians	Lesson 11
Hans Bret	Lesson 12
Anneken Hendriks	Lesson 13



DENMARK

SWEDEN

Baltic Sea

Hamburg

Gdansk

Berlin

POLAND

GERMANY

Prague

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Two Girls

Bamberg

Munich

SLOVAKIA

Vienna

Leonhard Keyser

AUSTRIA

HUNGARY

SLOVENIA

Venice

The Faith of Jesus and the Apostles



The apostle James (the greater) the son of Zebedee beheaded in Jerusalem, A.D. 45.

- *Lesson purpose:* to teach how Jesus and the apostles died for their faith.
- *Memory verse:* “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:19–20).

14 The Faith of Jesus and the Apostles

• *Study this Scripture:*

Hebrews 11—List how the faithful of the Old Testament gave their lives for the faith (verses 36–38)._____

When Adam and Eve sinned, their sin separated them from God. Our heavenly Father no longer walks with us “in the cool of the day” like He did in the Garden of Eden. But we are convinced, just as much as Adam and Eve, that God exists and that we will see Him after death.

How do we know there is a God when we cannot even see Him? The Bible says that faith is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). By faith we believe in God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Ever since Creation, the children of God have lived by faith. By faith they “subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Hebrews 11:33–34). “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. . . . By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death” (Hebrews 11:4–5). By faith Noah prepared an ark. By faith Abraham attained the righteousness of God and received the promise of a Savior.

Many prophets and faithful believers in God died for their faith before the coming of Jesus Christ, “the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). But in this lesson we will study only the examples of Jesus and His first followers.

Jesus Christ, an example of faithfulness. Even though Jesus was God the Son, He lived on this earth as a man. He needed great faith, firmly based in the works of God, His Father, to bear the temptations and insults He faced here. But He never sinned. His own family and His own people rejected Him. The Jewish leaders hated and persecuted Him throughout His ministry. In the end they incited the Romans to condemn Him to death and to nail Him to the cross.

But Jesus never doubted. By faith He fixed His eyes on “the joy that was set before him.” By faith He brought eternal salvation for us and “is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

Stephen, the deacon. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, died full of faith and the Holy Ghost. His powerful message convinced the unbelieving

Jews of their sin. They became enraged and gnashed on him with their teeth. They yelled. Finally they cast him out of the city to stone him. But Stephen saw the heavens opened. He saw Jesus Christ standing on the right hand of God. Like Jesus, Stephen forgave his murderers. Read Acts 7:54-60. What were Stephen's last words? _____

The apostle James the son of Zebedee. Shortly after the founding of the church, King Herod beheaded James (Acts 12:1-2).

The apostle Philip. Philip received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost with James and the other apostles, and helped establish the church at Jerusalem. After this the Lord called him to preach the Gospel in Syria and the Middle East. He planted the seed of faith in many cities. In Hierapolis (in Turkey) he clashed with an anti-Christian sect called the Ebionites. These folks tied his neck to a column and stoned him in the year A.D. 54.

James, the brother of Jesus. This James was bishop of the church at Jerusalem for thirty years. He was called "The Just" because of his character and example. He was a man of much prayer. By the order of Ananias the high priest, he was thrown down from the pinnacle of the temple. Then he was stoned and beaten to death with sticks.

Barnabas, Paul's companion. After serving faithfully with Paul, Barnabas returned to his homeland, the island of Cyprus, to encourage the church there. Because of his faithful testimony and the evangelistic work he was doing on the island, he was dragged from the city where he lived, and burned alive at the stake.

Mark, the Gospel writer. Mark not only helped Paul on various occasions but also went to prison with the apostle. He was also Peter's friend and wrote the Gospel of Mark according to what Peter told him. Peter sent him to Egypt where he preached until pagans dragged him through the streets of Alexandria with hooks and ropes until he died.

The apostle Peter. Peter appears to have been the most outspoken apostle. He was very active in the early church. By his mouth came the powerful, heart-gripping sermon on the day of Pentecost. Though at first he preached primarily to the Jews, the Holy Spirit revealed to him that the Gospel was for the Gentiles also. After faithfully preaching the Word for thirty-seven years, Peter was sentenced by Emperor Nero to be crucified. Feeling unworthy of dying like his Lord, he requested to be crucified upside down. Thus he died a very painful death at seventy years of age.

The apostle Paul. Paul was an educated Jew, a strict Pharisee, and a persecutor of the church. He was converted when he was traveling toward



In what is now Turkey, the apostle Philip was stoned by the Ebionites, a sect that denied the divinity of Christ. His body was buried in the city of Hierapolis. His spirit rests with God.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 73–74

Damascus to capture some Christians. He founded many churches. He was probably persecuted more than any of the other apostles. Roman government officials beheaded him at Rome by command of Emperor Nero.

Some of Paul's companions. Although we do not know for sure how each of these died, we do know that the following were killed for the cause of Christ: Epaphras, Aquila and Priscilla, Andronicus, Junias, and Silas. Aristarchus was put to death by the Roman emperor Nero. Onesiphorus and his co-worker Porphyrius were tied to wild horses and dragged to death.

The apostle Andrew. Andrew preached in many places. As an apostle he did many notable signs. He was finally crucified in the city of Patras, Greece. He hung three days on the cross exhorting the believers.

The apostle Bartholomew. Bartholomew carried the Gospel of Matthew to India where he taught it to the Indians in their native language. He brought many idolaters to Christ through his life of faithful service.

The pagans tortured him, beat him with rods, nailed him to a cross upside down, and flayed him. They finally cut off his head with an axe.

The apostle Thomas. Thomas preached in Iran, India, Ethiopia, and many other countries. He dreaded taking the Gospel to the savage peoples of the eastern part of India, but God strengthened him. In that strength he went, and many were converted to God. His preaching angered the priests and the king of those savage tribes. They tortured Thomas with red-hot plates, then cast him into a glowing furnace where they pierced him with spears until he died.

The apostle Matthew (Levi), the Gospel writer. After writing his Gospel, Matthew traveled to Ethiopia, a country in Africa. Although he was a Jew and ministered to the Jews of that place, God helped him present the same message to the native Africans as well. Aeglippus, an Ethiopian king, protected Matthew. But when Aeglippus died, Hytacus, a cruel tyrant, took his place. Hytacus persecuted the church and killed Matthew. He was first nailed to the ground and then beheaded.

The apostle Simon Zelotes and his brother Judas Thaddeus. Simon Zelotes traveled and preached in Egypt, Lybia, and Mauritania. Some historians think he may have reached some of the islands of Great Britain. He was crucified by a Syrian governor.

Judas Thaddeus wrote the epistle of Jude to comfort and admonish the believers. He traveled and preached in Mesopotamia, Syria, Arabia, and Turkey. Finally, when he denounced paganism in Persia (Iran), he was beaten to death by idolatrous priests.

Matthias, the apostle who took Judas' place. After spending some time in Judea, Matthias traveled to the interior of Africa, where many were converted to the truth. He then returned to preach in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Here he was crucified, stoned, and beheaded.

Luke, the writer of a Gospel and the Book of Acts. Luke was a Syrian doctor and a faithful companion of Paul. He suffered many of the same persecutions as Paul. Finally, after he had preached many years in Greece, the ungodly hanged him from an olive tree.

Antipas. Christ recognized the faithful testimony of Antipas when He told the angel of the church of Pergamos, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was *my faithful martyr* [italics ours], who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth" (Revelation 2:13).

Some ancient writers maintain that Antipas was enclosed in a red-hot, brazen ox, where he was burned alive.

18 The Faith of Jesus and the Apostles

The apostle John. As an evangelist to the Roman provinces, John faced much tribulation. Once he was thrown into a vat of boiling oil, but God preserved his life. He was banished to the isle of Patmos but was later brought back to the mainland. Then he was compelled to drink poison, but remained unharmed. He died a natural death at Ephesus when he was more than eighty years old.

Study Questions

1. How is the church built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets? _____

2. How can we know that God exists even though we cannot see Him? _____

3. What did the apostles' faith do for them? _____

4. Which apostles died in Judea? _____

5. Which apostles died in foreign countries? _____

6. Why did the apostles move out of Judea? _____

The Faith Separates the Two Kingdoms



The Christians suffered greatly under the emperors Diocletian and Maximian, A.D. 301–302.

The Romans threw many Christians to the wild beasts and had them destroyed in other ways, because as children of God they did not join in the political, social, or religious life of the world around them.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 172–174

- *Lesson purpose:* to show how the faith separates Christians from the kingdoms of this world.

20 The Faith Separates the Two Kingdoms

- *Memory verse:* “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).
- *Study these Scriptures:*
 1. John 17:9–16; 1 John 2:15–17; 3:1, 13—Do Christians love the world? ____ Explain. _____

 2. Acts 4:18–20; 5:29—Why is there a conflict between the world and Christianity? _____

 3. Romans 12–13—Compare the Christian’s duty with that of the civil government.

The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms

Jesus is a King. He said so Himself. But He also told us that “the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.” Christ’s kingdom here on earth is in the believers’ hearts (Luke 17:20–21).

If we are faithful believers, we actually belong to two kingdoms. First of all we obey Christ, our immortal King. Secondly we obey the earthly government that God has set over us. When we receive conflicting commands from these two kingdoms, we always support and obey Jesus. He is our highest King. Our citizenship in His kingdom is more precious than any citizenship we might be given here on earth.

Someday we will inherit the new heaven and the new earth, where we will reign with Jesus forever. But while we live here on earth, we can expect persecution. Just as the world mistreated Jesus, our King, so we, His subjects, will be mistreated.

Notice the difference between the kingdoms.

The earthly kingdom

- is governed by the civil authorities of this world
- is under the wicked one; is known for its corruption, partiality, and inability to fulfill its promises

The eternal kingdom

- is governed by Christ and by the Bible
- is in God’s hand; is known for honesty, justice, and faithfulness

- is wicked, carnal, and material
- we become citizens by natural birth
- rules saint and sinner alike
- is ruled by carnal passions and the law of sin and death
- rejects the Gospel and the cross and at times persecutes the followers of Jesus
- is spiritual, good, virtuous, and holy
- we become citizens by the new birth
- rules only the lives of faithful Christians
- is ruled by the law of Christ; produces the fruits of righteousness
- rejects the world's temptations and renounces all of its seductions



In A.D. 172 Blandina was arrested in what is now France for her faith in Christ. The pagans tortured her for one whole day, but she did not give up her faith. Often she repeated these words: "I am a Christian." Each time she repeated them, she seemed to receive strength from God. The executioner roasted her on a gridiron and then threw her to some enraged bulls.

Another prisoner for the faith, a young man fifteen years old, witnessed the suffering of Blandina. When the authorities saw that he would not deny his faith in Jesus, they began to torture him also. He stood for his faith, but his body could not stand the wounds, burns, and stripes. He died.

Shortly afterward the executioners noticed that Blandina was still breathing. They cut her throat and thus she died.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, page 116

War Against the Saints

Daniel 7:21 and Revelation 13:7 speak of a war against the saints. This warfare has already begun, even though many are not aware of it.

At times the world has felt threatened to see the kingdom of heaven growing rapidly. But God's people are not a threat to world governments, because they do not aspire to political power. Such ambitions are found exclusively in the kingdom of this world.

Since olden times, many government leaders believed that they could maintain firm political control only when everyone thought and practiced the same thing. For many centuries this idea moved governments to impose state religion in many places. Through the ritual of baptism, the European governments gave children citizenship in their country and membership in the state church. True Christians who refused to bring their children to be baptized incurred the fierce wrath of the government. Terrible waves of persecution and terror beat over them during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In some way or another, the world has been at war against true saints from the beginning of the Christian era until now.

The Two Kingdoms in the Twentieth Century

We thank God that many countries now guarantee freedom of conscience and religion. Maybe you think the relationship between the world and Christians is getting better. Do not be deceived. Even though few Christians today are martyred for their faith, other dangers surround us. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. . .)" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

The war against Christians continues. In some Eastern countries, open persecution of Christians continues; in the West, social and cultural issues such as worldly education and patriotism pressure the Christians. Satan walks as a roaring lion in some areas. At the same time in another place, he appears as an angel of light. Are you prepared for the war? You will lose eternal life if you are not a good soldier in the army of Christ, our King.

The world would like to win you to its side in the following areas:

- military or police service.
- voting in political elections. Democracy and great political leaders are idols of the people. The Christian does not participate in politics because he cannot endorse all that is connected with this earthly kingdom.
- the educational system of the country. When God's people become preoccupied with government certification and accreditation, instead of trying to prepare themselves for a life of useful service to God, they are caught in the idolatry trap.
- government aid—medical services, job security, economic help, or any other handouts. The Christian does not look to worldly governments for these things. Rather, he looks to God, asking for them in prayer according to His will.

How will the two-kingdom doctrine affect Christians in our day?

- Christians are nonresistant. They do not serve in the military, nor do they harm anyone. They do not sue at law.
- Christians maintain separation from the state. The church does not get involved in politics. Christians do not work for the state in any way that violates Bible principles.
- Christians do not conform to the world's standards in any aspect of life, not even in their personal appearance. Rather, they submit themselves to the commands of the Scriptures in everything.
- Christians do not become unequally yoked in clubs, labor unions, associations, companies, or cooperatives.
- Christians have nothing to do with the false religions of this world.
- Christians educate their children in a godly environment in a way that will help them serve effectively in the kingdom of God.
- Christians do not seek the world's entertainment, or take part in its festivities.

Study Questions

1. Why is Christ's kingdom invisible to the world? _____

2. How is the Christian a part of both kingdoms? _____

3. Why is there enmity between the two kingdoms? _____

4. How does one become a part of the eternal kingdom? _____

5. Why did the state churches at one time baptize infants? _____

6. Why were those who refused to have their children baptized persecuted during the Reformation? _____

7. In what way does the kingdom of this world threaten us today? _____

8. How does the church keep herself separate from the world in our time? _____

The Faith Establishes the Christian Brotherhood



At times, when Christians were assembled in their churches, the emperor Maximin sent soldiers to pile wood around the buildings and burn them with the Christians inside. Before lighting the fire, the soldiers would proclaim that anyone who would come out and sacrifice to the god Jupiter would be saved. The Christians answered that they knew nothing of Jupiter, that Christ was Lord and God, and that for Him they would live or die. It was a miracle of grace that among the thousands of Christians threatened in this way, not one forsook his God to sacrifice to Jupiter. Together they sang and praised God while the smoke of their sacrifice ascended like a cloud to heaven.

This happened around the year A.D. 237.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 131–132

26 The Faith Establishes the Christian Brotherhood

- *Lesson purpose:* to show that those who have been saved by faith are made sons of God and brothers and sisters of each other.
- *Memory verse:* “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (1 Peter 3:8).
- *Study these Scriptures:*

What do the following Scriptures say about the Christian brotherhood?

1. Matthew 18:15–20 _____

2. Acts 4:32 _____

3. 1 Corinthians 8 _____

4. 1 Thessalonians 5:26 _____

5. 1 Peter 5:5 _____

6. 1 John 3:16 _____

Here is one martyr’s admonition. “Always associate with the saints of the Lord; for among the holy, one becomes holy” (Hans Symons, 1567, *Martyrs Mirror*, page 710).

Is the Brotherhood Necessary?

The Bible never suggests that it is possible to be a Christian outside the church, the congregation of believers. If we receive the Lord Jesus Christ, we also accept those who are His. All true Christians become brothers and sisters in God’s family. We cannot survive spiritually without the brotherhood. We cannot endure the trials of the Christian life without the help of spiritual brethren. In 1 Corinthians 12:13–31, the Bible describes the church as a body. No member of this spiritual body can say, “I don’t need the rest of the body. I can take care of myself.”

In the Christian brotherhood, sincere, brotherly love flows from each pure heart (1 Peter 1:22). “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:8). This is one reason we need the brotherhood. We all need to love and be loved.

The Brotherhood and Mutual Admonition

If the church we belong to is a brotherhood of true Christians, we will not be surprised if a brother gives us counsel or admonition. Paul wrote to the Romans, “And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Romans 15:14). We should feel secure in the knowledge that our brethren, moved by love, feel free to admonish us. It should not annoy us when they are interested in how we speak, how we conduct ourselves, how we feel, how we use our money, how we dress, how we spend time in recreation, and how we conduct other areas of our lives.

Sincere brethren are thankful for the spiritual help they receive. They always show interest in the spiritual well-being of others, acting on the basis of Matthew 18:15–19. In the Christian brotherhood, the leaders as well as the rest of the members submit to the counsel of other faithful brethren.



Pelagius, a Spanish youth, was martyred by the Moslems at Cordova in the year A.D. 925. Habdarrhaghman IV was king of the Arabs. He lived in the city of Cordova while the Arabs occupied Spain.

Cordova, the most beautiful city in southern Spain, was also the home of some Christians.

The king hated Christians. To trouble the pastor, Ermoigus, he arrested the pastor's nephew, a young boy named Pelagius, whom he held hostage in his palace.

Pelagius was held in the king's palace for three years. He was a believer and a well-mannered and handsome lad. The king liked Pelagius, but he did not want him to be a Christian.

One day, when Pelagius was around thirteen years old, the Moslems decided to make him abandon the faith. They tempted him to commit an immoral sin. They even promised him special privileges if he would yield. They offered him an important position in the royal court. But Pelagius would not yield.

"I am a Christian," he said, "and will remain a Christian, and obey only Christ's commands all the days of my life."

When the king saw that the lad would not deny his faith, he became angry. He commanded his men to torture Pelagius with red-hot tongs. When Pelagius still refused to deny his faith, the king commanded his soldiers to cut him in pieces and throw him into the river.

The soldiers cut off his arms, then his legs, and finally his head. When this was done, they threw him into the river Guadalquivir.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, Pages 256–257

The Brotherhood and Personal Possessions

When the persecutors of the church saw how Christians shared among themselves, they accused them of practicing a "community of goods" and conspiring to form a communistic society.

But the majority of early Christians did not practice or teach the need for a "community of goods." They did teach the following Bible principles regarding possession of earthly things.

1. The accumulation of this world's goods for selfish purposes is sin (Matthew 6:19).
2. Every person is responsible to share what he has with those who are in need (1 John 3:17).

In several Christian churches of the sixteenth century, applicants for baptism were asked whether they would devote all their possessions to the service of the brotherhood and whether they would not refuse any member that was in need, if they were able to render aid.¹

¹ *The Anabaptist Vision*, p. 30, Harold S. Bender

Even though there were widows and orphans in the churches of the Netherlands because of persecution, Menno Simons wrote to his persecutors,

All those who are born of God, who are gifted with the Spirit of the Lord, who are, according to the Scriptures, called into one body and love in Christ Jesus, are prepared by such love to serve their neighbors, not only with money and goods, but also after the example of their Lord and Head, Jesus Christ, in an evangelical manner, with life and blood. They show mercy and love, as much as they can. No one among them is allowed to beg. They take to heart the need of the saints. They entertain those in distress. They take the stranger into their houses. They comfort the afflicted; assist the needy; clothe the naked; feed the hungry; do not turn their face from the poor; do not despise their own flesh.²

Then pointing to his Catholic accusers, he added,

Is it not sad and intolerable hypocrisy that these poor people boast of having the Word of God, of being the true, Christian church, never remembering that they have entirely lost their sign of true Christianity? For although many of them have plenty of everything, go about in silk and velvet, gold and silver, and in all manner of pomp and splendor; ornament their houses with all manner of costly furniture; have their coffers filled, and live in luxury and splendor, yet they suffer many of their own poor, afflicted members (notwithstanding their fellow believers have received one baptism and partaken of the same bread with them) to ask alms; and poor, hungry, suffering, old, lame, blind, and sick people to beg their bread at their doors. . . . Shame on you for the easygoing gospel and barren bread-breaking, you who have in so many years been unable to effect enough with your gospel and sacraments so as to remove your needy and distressed members from the streets, even though the Scripture plainly teaches and says, Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?³

Some Anabaptists, the Hutterites, practiced a "community of goods." For them it was not enough to say you were willing to give all for the brotherhood; you had to do it. Their testimony shone brightly throughout many years of persecution.

² *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, p. 558, Herald Press

³ *Ibid.* p. 559

Study Questions

1. Why do we call fellow Christians brothers and sisters? _____

2. What does it mean to be “of one mind”? _____

3. What happens to the Christian who refuses to associate with other true Christians? _____

4. How is the church of Jesus like a human body? _____

5. How does brotherly admonition edify the brotherhood? _____

6. What attitude should we have toward our possessions? _____

7. What did the Hutterite brethren practice concerning material goods? _____

The Faith Makes Disciples



To mock these young girls as they led them to their execution, the persecutors made crowns of straw and placed them on their heads.

Then one girl said to the other, "Since the Lord Christ wore a crown of thorns for us, why should not we wear these crowns of straw in honor of Him? The faithful God shall for this place a beautiful golden crown and glorious wreath upon our heads."

Thus these young disciples armed themselves with the patience of the saints. They remained faithful till death and by grace obtained the glorious crown from God in heaven in 1550.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 500–501

- *Lesson purpose:* to teach that sincere believers desire to be disciples of Jesus.

32 The Faith Makes Disciples

- *Memory verse:* “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me”(Luke 9:23).
- *Study these Scriptures:*
 1. Matthew 4:19–22—How long did it take these men to respond to the call to follow Jesus? _____

 2. Mark 10:28–30; Luke 14:33—List some things we may need to leave to follow Jesus. _____

 3. Luke 9:57–62—List the two excuses to God’s call given in this passage. _____

 4. 2 Timothy 3:12—All who live godly shall _____

Read *He Had a Heavenly Mansion* on page 88.

Disciples Are Persecuted

Sixteenth century believers could easily understand the cost of being a disciple of Jesus. They felt it in all their life. Every time they assembled for worship they risked their lives. For missing mass they received punishments and fines. Preaching without a license (something the state would not give to an Anabaptist) was punishable by death. Some persons lost their lives because they sheltered an Anabaptist evangelist. Those who refused to have their children baptized by the Catholic priest did so under a death threat.

God’s people throughout most of history have been considered the offscouring of this world. At times Christians have been hunted like animals. During the Reformation there was a special police force whose sole purpose was to capture Anabaptists. Their work was easy because when they asked an Anabaptist if he were an Anabaptist, he never denied it. Sometimes the police took their prisoners to the authorities. They killed some right where they were captured.

Disciples Deny Themselves

Because of his faith, Menno Simons lost his luxurious lifestyle as a Catholic priest. The Catholic leaders of his day lived more luxuriously than the common people. They had huge houses, servants, delicate foods, high salaries, wines, and games. They delighted themselves in vices. Menno Simons knew that to be a disciple of Christ, he had to forsake all this and live as he later described it,

Because of this, I with my poor, weak wife and children have for eighteen years endured excessive anxiety, oppression, affliction, misery, and persecution. At the peril of my life I have been compelled everywhere to drag out an existence in fear. Yes, when the preachers repose on easy beds and soft pillows, we generally have to hide ourselves in out-of-the-way corners. When they at weddings and baptismal banquets revel with pipe, trumpet, and lute; we have to be on our guard when a dog barks for fear the arresting officer has arrived. When they are greeted as doctors, lords, and teachers by everyone, we have to hear that we are Anabaptists, bootleg preachers, deceivers, and heretics, and be saluted in the devil's name. In short, while they are gloriously rewarded for their services with large incomes and good times, our recompense and portion must be fire, sword, and death.⁴

Denying ourselves means crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires. The Christian chooses the hardest, the most difficult, the least pleasing, if it be the will of God. The life of the Christian disciple is not always easy, but for all we have forsaken here, God will give us back a hundredfold in the world to come, and eternal life (Matthew 19:29).

Disciples Take Up Their Cross

The martyrs took up their cross with joy; some of them even carried one literally, the one on which they were to die. When the apostle Andrew neared the cross on which he was to die, he exclaimed,

O beloved cross! I have greatly longed for thee. I rejoice to see thee erected here. I come to thee with a peaceful conscience and with cheerfulness, desiring that I, who am a disciple of Him who hung on the cross, may also be crucified. The nearer I come to the cross, the nearer I come to God; and the farther I am from the cross, the farther I remain from God.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, page 88

Polycarp, a Christian leader whom the apostle John had instructed, was a very old man when they took him to his death. They pleaded with him to deny Christ and thereby save his own life. But he replied,

⁴ *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, p. 674, Herald Press

I have now served my Lord Christ Jesus eighty-six years, and He has never done me any harm. How can I deny my King, who hath hitherto preserved me from all evil, and so faithfully redeemed me?

—*Martyrs Mirror*, page 113

How can we take up our cross today if we are not willing to suffer in the body for our faith?

When we follow Jesus' example, we come face to face with the true cross of the Christian life. While Jesus walked on this earth, He suffered ridicule, shame, and mockery from His adversaries. These things are a cross that we too need to bear.

As Christians we cannot keep silent. We feel our responsibility and the urgency of telling the world the message of salvation. But many people in our world do not want to hear, so they mock us. What should we do then? Jesus tells us, "Take up [your] cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). By doing this we become God's witnesses "unto the _____ of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

When we decide to take up the cross, we have made an important step toward winning the battle. If we are willing to endure all things by God's grace, He will give us the strength we need for the trial.

Disciple, take up your cross and bear it, and you will receive the crown of glory.

Do you suppose God will accept halfhearted self-denial from you? _____ Is there something you need to give up in order to be accepted of God? _____ If so, what is it? _____

Disciples Follow

The martyrs obeyed Jesus' command, "Follow me." To them this meant a life completely surrendered to God. It meant belonging to a Biblical brotherhood. It meant following all the Bible teachings. "Only the Bible" was their defense in the courts. Thus they stopped the mouths of the Roman Catholics who freely added to and took from the Scriptures.

True disciples still follow Jesus. But not all are called to follow Him in the same way. In the past some were burned; some were drowned; some were beheaded. Some are still testifying to the Gospel in various parts of the world—in beautiful buildings in big cities as well as in dusty shops on narrow streets. We cannot tell where the Lord will call us to serve, but we know that if we follow Jesus faithfully we will someday experience the glories of heaven. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). Are you willing to follow Jesus regardless what He asks of you?

Study Questions

1. What is a disciple? _____

2. How do we show that we are Jesus' disciples? _____

3. How did the Anabaptists prove that they were Jesus' disciples?

- 4 What does it mean to follow Jesus? _____

5. How do we deny ourselves? _____

6. How can we be sure that we are Jesus' disciples? _____

7. What does Jesus promise to His disciples? _____



At the age of twenty-four, Anna of Rotterdam was baptized with her husband, Arent Jans. Because of the persecution in the Netherlands, in 1536 they fled to England. There Arent died.

With her fourteen-month-old child, Isaiah, Anna returned to the Netherlands in 1538. One day Anna and a companion, Christina, were ready to board a boat going to Delft. They were singing. Because of that the Catholics recognized them, arrested them, and put them in prison in Rotterdam. One month later Anna was sentenced to death. Christina was to die with her.

Though Anna was from a rich family, she was leaving everything to follow Jesus. On the way to her death, Anna said to the multitude that had gathered, "Here is my fifteen-month-old son. Who wants him? I'll give all my money to whomever gives him a home."

A baker with six children of his own took the child, together with the bag of money. In the bag he found a letter that she had written to her son that morning. In the letter she admonished her son to flee the world and follow Jesus.

This is part of the letter.

"My son, hear the instruction of your mother; open your ears to hear the words of my mouth. Prov. 1:8. Behold, I go today the way of the prophets, apostles and martyrs, and drink of

the cup of which they all have drank. Matt. 20:23. I go, I say, the way which Christ Jesus . . . Himself went . . .

“See, my son, here you can hear that no one can come unto life, except through this way. Therefore enter in through the strait gate, receive the chastisement and instruction of the Lord, bow your shoulders under His yoke, and cheerfully bear it from your youth, with thanksgiving, rejoicing and honor; for He accepts or receives no son, whom He does not chasten. Hebrews 12:6. . .

“See, my son, this way has no retreats; there are no roundabouts or crooked little paths; whosoever departs to the right or to the left, inherits death. Behold, this is the way which is found by so few, and walked by a still far smaller number; for there are some who well perceive that this is the way to life; but it is too severe for them; it pains their flesh.

“Therefore, my child, do not regard the great number, nor walk in their ways. Remove thy foot far from their paths, for they go to hell, as sheep unto death: . . . But where you hear of a poor, simple, cast-off little flock (Luke 12:32), which is despised and rejected by the world, join them; for where you hear of the cross, there is Christ; from there do not depart. Flee the shadow of this world; become united with God; fear Him alone, keep His commandments, observe all His words, to do them; write them upon the table of your heart, bind them upon your forehead, speak day and night of His law and you will be a pleasant tree and a sprout in the courts of the Lord, a beloved plant growing up in Zion. Ps. 92:13. . .

“May the Lord cause you to grow up in His fear, and fill your understanding with His Spirit. II Peter 3:18. Sanctify yourself to the Lord, my son; sanctify your whole conduct in the fear of your God. Lev. 20:7. Whatever you do, do it all to the praise of His name. Honor the Lord in the works of your hands, and let the light of the Gospel shine through you. Love your neighbor. Deal with an open, warm heart thy bread to the hungry, clothe the naked, and suffer not to have anything twofold; for there are always some who lack. Matt. 26:11. . . O my son, let your life be conformed to the Gospel, and the God of peace, sanctify your soul and body, to His praise. Amen. Phil. 1:27; I Thess. 5:23.

“O holy Father, sanctify the son of Thy handmaiden in Thy truth, and keep him from the evil, for Thy name’s sake, O Lord.”

A few hours after writing this, Anna was drowned by the Catholic authorities in the Maas River. This was on January 24, 1539. She was twenty-eight years old.

—Martyrs Mirror, pages 453–454

The Faith Rebuilds the Church of Jesus



Jacob de Keersgieter was a weaver from the city of Bruges, Belgium. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, he was converted and left the Roman Catholic Church in 1551. Nine years later he was ordained minister. He traveled much, working faithfully as an evangelist through the Netherlands. He had a strong desire to build the true church of Jesus and preached in the congregations at Armentières, Kortrijk, Meenen, Wervik, Poperinge, Ruesselare, Ieper, Thielt, Gent, St. Andries, and Bruges. In April of 1569 he was arrested and imprisoned for his activity. While in prison he disputed several days with a Franciscan, Friar Cornelis. These discussions are recorded in the *Martyrs Mirror*, along with some long letters he wrote to his family and the Belgian churches.

Jacob de Keersgieter was burned alive on June 10, 1569 in Bruges, with Herman van Vlekwijk, another Anabaptist brother.
—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 774–818

- *Lesson purpose:* to show how the faith moves sincere Christians to build the church today, just as it did in the Reformation.
- *Memory verse:* “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11).
- *Study these Scriptures:*
 1. Matthew 18:18–20—What is the requirement for having Christ’s presence with us? _____
 2. Ephesians 4:1–16—What virtues build the church and her members? _____
 3. Revelation 3:17–20—What does Christ want the fallen church to do? _____

The Foundations of the Church of Jesus Christ

Truth. Read John 8:31–32. What proves that we are Jesus’ disciples? Christians believe that the whole Bible is true, and they accept the teachings of the New Testament as the rule for the church. Every teaching, commandment, discipline, and practice of the church must be based on New Testament truth.

Obedience. The church consists of Christians who obey the New Testament. Those who disobey cannot be members of the body of Jesus. Jesus Himself asked the question “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Purity. Study Ephesians 5:25–27. When a member of Christ’s church falls into sin, the rest of the members strive to restore him. If he continues in sin, the church deals with him without partiality (James 2:8–9). Read 1 Peter 1:15–16. God requires holiness because _____

Liberty. Read Acts 2:41. The church is a voluntary organization of true

believers. Each member voluntarily chooses whether he wants to be a part of her (Revelation 22:17). The church of Jesus Christ never turns to violence or social pressure to gain members.

A Step of Faith

On the night of January 21, 1525, a group of men, concerned about the fallen condition of the state church, gathered at Felix Manz's house in Zurich, Switzerland.

And it came to pass that they were together until anxious fear came upon them, yea, they were moved in their hearts. Then they began to bow their knees to the Most High God in heaven, and called upon Him the Knower of hearts, imploring Him to enable them to do His divine will, and to manifest His mercy to them. For flesh and blood and human forwardness did not motivate them, since they well knew what they would have to bear and suffer on account of it.

After the prayer George of the house of Jacob arose and asked Conrad Grebel to baptize him, for God's sake, with the true Christian baptism upon his faith and knowledge. And when he knelt down with that request and desire, Conrad baptized him, since at that time there was no ordained minister to perform such work.⁵

After he was baptized by Conrad Grebel, George baptized the rest of those present. Then these men, so recently baptized, promised

- that they would be faithful disciples of Christ,
- that they would live lives separated from the world,
- that they would teach the Gospel and preserve the faith that had brought them to this monumental occasion.

Shortly after the beginning of this Scriptural brotherhood in Switzerland, Christians in many other parts of Europe established similar groups. This movement, known by the name *Anabaptist* (because they rebaptized those who had been baptized as infants), was not the beginning of a new religion but a rebuilding of the church of Jesus Christ.

The Anabaptist movement grew remarkably. Many, many Christians were moved by faith to leave the fallen state churches and re-establish Biblical brotherhoods. Thousands of these Christians paid dearly for this decision. They were cruelly martyred.

God has always had His people. Since the time of the apostles, even during the centuries of apostasy and confusion, the church of Jesus Christ has survived as the brotherhood of *faithful* believers. In these brotherhoods we find the church of Jesus Christ in our day also.

⁵*Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine*, pp. 24–25, J. C. Wenger

The Church of Jesus Christ in the Twentieth Century

The faithful Christian is willing to give his life for Bible truth. The church of Jesus Christ is made up of believers who have determined to practice what God commands.

Those who have religious freedom find it easy to say “Yes, I would be willing to die for Jesus.” The proof of this declaration is being willing to *live* for Him. There are many believers and many churches, but not all churches are part of the New Testament church of Jesus Christ. If a church is really a New Testament church, it will obey the New Testament carefully. When a true church discovers that it is disobeying in some way, it will change its doctrine or practice to conform to the New Testament standard.

When a church finds itself based on a man-made foundation, it must return to Bible truth. Any group of Christians who are completely dedicated to Jesus can return to the Bible. God has given them this privilege and obligation. If they live according to the pattern, doctrine, discipline, and practical teaching of the New Testament, the Spirit of God will guide and bless their work.

The Anabaptists’ faith was instrumental in rebuilding the Christian brotherhood in the sixteenth century. It was perhaps the purest, most Biblical, most powerful church since the time of the apostles. If we walk in the same faith, we will also build the church.

Every believer has a place to fill in building the New Testament church. Christ Himself “gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:11–16).

Study Questions

1. What makes a church Christian? _____

2. What are some things which are not a solid foundation on which to build the church? _____

3. Describe what happened on January 21, 1525. _____

4. The Anabaptist movement was not a new religion. What was it? _____

5. How can we tell if a church is truly a New Testament church? _____

6. How can we help to build the church of Jesus Christ? _____

Baptism: The Seal of Faith



Pieter Pieters was a boatman from the Dutch village of Asperen. He was arrested in Amsterdam for the “crime” of permitting services in his boat, “the reprobate and prohibited assemblies, . . . of the Mennonites.”

When he refused to have his infant child baptized, the Catholic authorities tortured him and burned him alive on February 26, 1569, at Amsterdam. Brother Pieter was faithful to the end.

While our brother Pieter was on his way to the place of execution, one of his friends, Willem Jans, called to him with a loud voice saying, “Contend valiantly, dear brother.”

For this Willem was arrested and burned alive two weeks later. Both men are now with Jesus (Revelation 20:4).

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 738–740, 831–832

46 Baptism: The Seal of Faith

- *Lesson purpose:* to show that baptism is the seal of faith administered only to adult believers.
- *Memory verse:* “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- *Study these Scriptures:*
 1. Titus 3:4–7—What is it that washes us when we turn to Jesus?

 2. Acts 2:38—According to this verse, what must precede baptism?

 3. Matthew 28:18–20—What are the newly baptized to be taught?

 4. 1 Peter 3:21—According to this verse, what is one thing that baptism does not do? _____

The Purpose of Baptism

Anabaptist believers understood the meaning of baptism. They baptized with water only those who had previously been baptized “with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matthew 3:11). They understood that water baptism alone does not save, but that it is a sign of what has taken place in the heart.

The Catholic and Protestant leaders of the sixteenth century did not agree with this view of baptism. They insisted that it was necessary to baptize each newborn baby. Through baptism they wanted to ensure that all would belong to the state church and would be loyal citizens. Both the civil and the religious leaders of that time considered it treason not to baptize the babies.

Today children are generally given citizenship in an earthly kingdom without baptism. They are also in Jesus’ kingdom because they are innocent of sin (Matthew 19:14). When they reach maturity, they must decide if they are going to devote themselves to Jesus’ kingdom or if they will serve the kingdom of darkness. Only if they choose to serve Christ does baptism have value.

Baptism: An Adult Ceremony

Baptism signifies at least three things:

1. identification with Christ and all His teachings, as well as with His people, the true church.
2. cleansing from sin. “The baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” symbolizes what the blood of Christ actually does. He who is baptized renounces sin forever.

3. baptism of the Holy Spirit. “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9). To baptize persons who have not received the Holy Spirit has no value whatsoever.

It is clear that these things pertain to adults. Children do not need to identify with Christ; Jesus affirmed that all children are already part of His kingdom. Children do not need cleansing from sin; the sacrifice of Christ justifies them all. Children do not need to receive the Holy Spirit until they reach the age where they understand that they are sinners before God.

Today there are many who evangelize and baptize innocent children. But we understand that “except a man be born of water, *and of the Spirit*, [italics ours] he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). No pressure that we put on a child’s mind will bring him to new birth.

Parents need to discipline and teach their children to help them develop moral and godly character. They need to show them Christ’s law and surround them with a Christian atmosphere. But they should never burden their children with premature guilt. When parents see their children maturing into young adults and experiencing conviction by the Holy Spirit, they can help them to the Savior. When these young people are washed from sin and made holy by Jesus’ blood, it becomes necessary for them to identify with Jesus and His church through water baptism.

Should Baptism Be Kept Secret?

Because of persecution, the Anabaptists held services in Pieter Pieters’s boat. Many other Anabaptists in his time gathered in secret in other places to worship God and baptize.

New converts were baptized in stables, in workshops, or at night in the woods far from the villages. Because of this they were accused of practicing secret, criminal rites.

However, the sixteenth century believers did not hide the Gospel light. Even though they worshiped in secret, they lived blamelessly “in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom [they shone] as lights” (Philippians 2:15). To them baptism meant leaving the old life to walk in the light. Their lives, even according to Catholic historians, were perfect examples in conduct, speech, and morality. Everyone, even their persecutors, had to admit that the evangelical Anabaptists lived more pious, holy, and humble lives than the people around them.

A life that is truly changed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit cannot remain hidden. Like a city on a hilltop, the church of Jesus Christ shines brightly in the midst of the darkest sins. Everyone sees her good works, and her testimony glorifies the Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14–16).

Study Questions

1. According to the Bible, what is the purpose of water baptism?

2. What was the purpose of water baptism in the state churches of the sixteenth century? _____

3. Why is baptism only for adults? _____

4. Why is God not pleased if we pressure children to be converted?

5. Why do we believe that children are not lost? _____

6. When is a person lost? _____

7. When is a person saved? _____

The Faith Returns Good for Evil



A faithful brother and follower of Jesus Christ, Dirk Willems lived by the commandment "Love your enemies, . . .do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which . . . persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

The Dutch authorities ordered the capture of this Anabaptist brother in 1569. When Dirk saw the thief catcher, he tried to escape by crossing a frozen river. When the thief catcher tried to cross the river in pursuit of Dirk, the ice broke and he fell into the freezing water. Seeing his persecutor about to drown, Dirk returned and rescued him from the icy water. The thief catcher, deeply moved by this demonstration of love, wanted to let him go free. But from the other bank the burgomaster commanded him to capture Dirk.

Several weeks later, when the day of Dirk’s execution arrived, a strong east wind blew over the plains. Dirk was tied to a stake to be burned alive, but because of the wind, the fire was driven away from the upper part of his body. He suffered terribly as the flames burned his legs. In the nearby town of Leerdam, the people heard him exclaim over seventy times, “O my Lord; my God.”

Finally the judge, on horseback, told the executioner, “Dispatch the man with a quick death.”

Dirk faithfully endured this last suffering of his life and has surely received the crown of eternal glory.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 741–742

- *Lesson purpose:* to teach that faith in the life of the believer produces love for his enemies.
- *Memory verse:* “Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good”(Romans 12:20–21).
- *Study these Scriptures:*
 1. Matthew 53–48—How does Christ command us to relate to our enemies? _____
 2. Romans 12:14, 17–21—For Christians, love replaces_____.
 3. James 5:6—How do the just respond to mistreatment? _____
 4. 1 Peter 2:21–25—How is Jesus our perfect example in responding to unjust suffering?_____

Love From the Heart

Brother Dirk Willems had the faith worth dying for. This faith taught him not to rejoice in his enemy’s suffering. When Dirk saw what had happened to his enemy, he did what Jesus would have done. He knew that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

Dirk Willems's heart was also filled with the love of Christ. He saw his enemy sinking in the freezing water of the river and knew that within minutes the soul of this sinner would be suffering hell fire. The love that filled Dirk could not let the thief catcher die. Even through the terrible suffering Dirk experienced at the stake, he was not sorry for having saved the life of the person who later captured him.

Love, the product of faith in the believer's heart, is the basis for Christian nonresistance. Only when we have the love of Christ can we forgive and love as Jesus loved us (1 John 4:19).

Christians and Nonresistance

It is easy to say we love our enemies. When we live a peaceful life, it is even easy to say we would rather die than defend ourselves.

The believers of the sixteenth century had to do more than say it. Many of them, like Dirk, were nonresistant even in great trials of their faith. In the list of martyrs are stories of many who died because they would not defend themselves against their persecutors.

In some places the authorities feared a revolution. But when they came to know the Anabaptists well, they found that these Christians had no rebellious ideas. Many of their persecutors even admitted that the Anabaptists posed no threat to the welfare of the state.

In the time of the Anabaptists, men carried a short sword, but the Anabaptists never carried more than a staff. This made it easy for the Anabaptist catchers to identify their victims. The brethren could have thought *We would never kill anyone, but we can surely carry a short sword as a camouflage*. They did not do it. To the evangelical Anabaptists, it was more important to protect their faith than to protect their lives.

During the American Civil War, both the Northern and the Southern armies raided each other's territory. There were nonresistant Christians both in the North and in the South, who did not back either side. They were hated by both sides. Some suffered persecution because of it. But when either army stopped at the homes of these Christians, they were given a warm welcome, food, and provisions—just like the Bible commands. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink" (Romans 12:20).

The nonresistant faith of many brethren is also being tested in our world today. Some countries are torn by civil wars and revolutions. Because faithful brethren do not take sides in these conflicts, they become suspect, and their governments sometimes accuse them of aiding subversive factions.

Let us pray that Christians today would not fail the test of their faith (James 1:3), even though they may live in countries where military service is compulsory. Let us pray that God would give us the courage to die for our enemies if it becomes necessary, like our brother Dirk Willems did in the sixteenth century.

Study Questions

1. Why did Dirk Willems turn back to save his enemy’s life? _____

2. What is the Bible definition of *nonresistance*? _____

3. What is the basis for Christian nonresistance? _____

4. Why did the Anabaptists not carry a sword? _____

5. How might we be faced with a decision similar to what the Anabaptists faced regarding the sword? _____

6. How can the true Christian be a good citizen in time of war? _____

The Faith Before World Governments



Mattheus Mair was drowned for his faith on July 29, 1592. The executioner thrust him into the water three or four times. Each time he drew him out, he asked Mattheus whether he was not by now ready to recant. But he stood firm and was at last drowned, and the soul of Mattheus Mair fled to eternal glory.

The man with a wooden cross in the picture is a priest, a representative of the church, who worked closely with government authorities on this occasion. Throughout much of the Christian era, the Catholic Church and world governments have worked together to reach their goals.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 1089–1090

- *Lesson purpose:* to show how the Christian's faith separates him from the state.
- *Memory verse:* "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36).
- *Study these Scriptures:*
 1. John 18:36—Why should Christians not take part in politics?

 2. Acts 5:27–32—Why did the apostles not always obey the authorities?

 3. Romans 13—In what areas should the Christian obey the authorities?

Read *A Brave Sister* on page 86.

The Christian Church

We see much corruption in the history of the Christian religion. Some false religions have united with this world's governments to gain power and wealth. It may be that some persons believe that by this union they will become stronger, more effective in evangelization, or more capable of helping others.

The opposite is true.

When the government starts to help direct the church, the Holy Spirit leaves, and the church loses the greatest power source it has.

The fallen church that affiliates with this world's governments is not walking in the liberty she has been called to but is again subject to the slavery of human laws (Galatians 5:1, 13). Besides this, when the church unites with one country's government, she loses her world-wide character. And in times of war, "Christians" of one country may even kill "Christians" of another.

The church of Jesus Christ cannot be limited by national boundaries. She knows no borders. She has not only one language nor only one culture. Neither is she made up of one certain race. The church is *a glorious body* of innumerable believers from every nation, tribe, people, and language on the earth (Revelation 7:9).

Before Jesus' birth, it was announced that Christianity would be universal. Jesus was the blessing promised to Abraham. "In thy seed shall *all the nations* [italics ours] of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). Jesus is the salvation that Isaiah talked about. "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). And finally, Jesus Himself sent His disciples to all nations (Matthew 28:19).

Both the early Christians and the persecuted brethren of the Reformation understood that Christianity was for everyone. They did not even try to correlate with any government.

The church of Jesus Christ recognizes the same fact today. She does not seek political power. The church that is separated from the government is a free church that can spread throughout the whole earth.

The Church and Today's Governments

As we have seen, many times throughout history governments have interfered with the church's affairs. They often have tried to control the Christian's conscience. Fallen churches have united with the government to gain "better" control over their members.

Today we see something different. Fallen churches are interfering with the affairs of the government. These churches would like to control the consciences of government officials, not to convert them but to influence their political decisions. Some churches vote at election time. Others organize political campaigns. Some support anti-government demonstrations. These churches, preoccupied with politics, have less time to evangelize the world. They are not living according to the New Testament. They are not keeping the faith.

But, thanks to God, the church of Jesus Christ is not like that! God is still preserving a faithful people without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27)—a people with no ties to worldly governments. So let us make use of the freedoms we have now to take the Gospel to every person (Mark 16:15–16).

Study Questions

- 1. Why did apostate churches and European governments work together during the Reformation? _____

- 2. When was it first prophesied that Christianity would be for all the world? _____

- 3. Why cannot the church of Jesus Christ be limited to a certain nation? _____

- 4. To what extent should the church try to influence the decisions of the government? _____

- 5. How does joining hands with the government bring spots and wrinkles to the church of Jesus Christ? _____

The Faith Produces Zealous Evangelists



Maeyken Wens, the wife of an evangelical preacher of the sixteenth century, was burned alive at the stake. Her tongue was screwed fast so that she could not sing or testify during her execution.

Adriaen, a fifteen-year-old son of Maeyken, was present at her death. With his little brother in his arms, Adriaen stayed to one side of the multitude of spectators. Upon seeing his mother brought to the stake, he fainted and remained unconscious until after the execution. Then he searched for the screw that had held fast Maeyken's tongue. He kept the screw as a remembrance of the faithful and pious testimony of his mother, martyred in Antwerp, Belgium, in October of 1573.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 979–981

58 The Faith Produces Zealous Evangelists

- *Lesson purpose:* to show how faith and the Spirit give true Christians the strength to evangelize the world, even in times of persecution.
- *Memory verse:* “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
- *Study these Scriptures:*
 1. Luke 19:41–44—What was Christ’s response as He looked upon the lost city of Jerusalem? _____

 2. John 3:16—What moved God to send Jesus to die for our sins? _____

 3. Acts 1:8—What is the Christian’s power for witnessing? _____

 4. Romans 9:1–3—How should we respond when we see the lost? _____

Spiritual Zeal

Many times on the way to their execution, the Anabaptist martyrs sang and praised God. They spoke of salvation to the multitudes that came to witness their death. The testimony of these valiant Christians worked in such a way that the authorities finally said, “Look. The more we kill; the more they multiply.”

To hinder the testifying of the martyrs, sometimes the executioners would fasten their tongues with screws, as they did with Maeyken Wens. But the martyrs still made signs with their hands that they were happy and constant in the faith. What zeal. What enthusiasm. What courage! What was it that made the martyrs testify of their faith even in the face of death?

The Christian receives the Holy Spirit when he is saved by his faith in God. **Because the Holy Spirit is within, the Christian cannot keep silent concerning the truth.** The Spirit fills him and moves him to go, preaching the Gospel to every person (Mark 16:15–16).

Like the martyrs, we can testify of our faith with our life as much as with our words.

The Evangelizing Church

Jesus gave the church the responsibility to evangelize the whole world. The church of Jesus has always been noted for her zeal in carrying out

this work. As soon as the Swiss Brethren started Biblical congregations in 1525, they appointed many evangelists. These traveled through many towns of Europe establishing congregations of believers.

According to history, in the first century the apostles of Jesus Christ purposed to evangelize the whole world. On one occasion, the evangelical Anabaptist leaders met to divide Europe among themselves with the purpose of evangelizing the continent.

The Anabaptists, like the first apostles, were persecuted and often had no homes. But the Spirit of God led them to gloriously testify of the faith.

Do we today possess this same Spirit and faith?

“Ye Shall Receive Power”

The last thing that Jesus said before returning to heaven was “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:7–8).

Menno Simons, an Anabaptist leader of the sixteenth century, wrote the following:

I have served you all with this small talent as I have received it from my God. I could wish that I could at some time do it with greater and richer grace to the praise of the Lord. For these things I have renounced name and fame, honor and ease, and all, and have willingly assumed the heavy cross of my Lord Jesus Christ which at times assails my poor weak flesh quite grievously. I seek neither gold nor silver (the Lord knows) but am ready with faithful Moses to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. I also esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for I know what the Scriptures have promised us. This is my only joy and heart’s desire: to extend the kingdom of God, reveal the truth, reprove sin, teach righteousness, feed hungry souls with the Word of the Lord, lead the straying sheep into the right path, and gain many souls to the Lord through His Spirit, power, and grace.⁶

Protestant reformers in the time of Menno Simons resisted these “vagabond” missionaries. Because the Protestant reformers were of the state church, they limited their teaching to their own nation. They did not understand why the Anabaptists wandered about, ignoring national borders to preach the Gospel everywhere.

⁶ *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, p. 189, J.C. Wenger

Missionary Zeal Today

In our day we have seen that when Christian congregations revive spiritually, they feel a great desire to evangelize. Christians, with the true faith in their hearts, feel moved to win the souls of their neighbors to Christ.

We cannot explain in this lesson the best way to evangelize. We only say as Christ said, “Ye shall receive power [authority, direction, and the necessary gifts], after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8). In order for the Spirit to come, we need to submit ourselves completely to God’s will. We should be praying for a growing zeal in ourselves and in our congregations. We should be doing the work that we already understand the Lord has for us. By yielding to Jesus, by praying, and by working, the church will evangelize the world, even in our day.

Study Questions

- 1. Why did the authorities want to silence many Anabaptists that were condemned to die publicly?_____
- 2. Why cannot the true Christian be silent concerning the truth? _____
- 3. What gives the Christian power to evangelize even in the face of persecution? _____
- 4. Why does a spiritually alive church feel the need to evangelize? _____
- 5. What must we do so our church can evangelize effectively today? _____

True Faith Is Based on the Bible, Not on Miracles



On the way to his execution, Brother Leonhard Keyser plucked a flower and said, "Lord judge, here I pluck a flower; if you can burn this flower and me, you have justly condemned me; but, on the other hand, if you cannot burn me and this flower in my hand, consider what you have done and repent."

The executioners piled up an extra amount of firewood, and placing the brother on top, they set it on fire. But when all the wood was burned, the brother's body was uninjured, and the flower not withered. So they prepared another pile of wood, but when they burned it, the same thing happened.

Finally they cut the brother's body in pieces and put it in another fire. But still his body would not burn.

Upon seeing this, they took Leonhard's body pieces and threw them into the Inn River.

The judge was so frightened that he quit his job and moved to a distant town. His chief servant went to Moravia where he joined the Anabaptist brethren. There he lived as a faithful servant of Jesus until death.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 420–422

- *Lesson purpose:* to show that the faith worth dying for is founded on the Bible and not on miracles.
- *Memory verse:* “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king”(Daniel 3:17).
- *Study these Scriptures:*
 1. Daniel 3:16–18—In what did these youth place their confidence?

 2. Matthew 7:21–23—What will be the test of our salvation on the Judgment Day?_____
 3. Matthew 12:39–42—What sign was there in Christ's death to verify who He was?_____

The Martyrs and Miracles

The *Martyrs Mirror* contains records of around four thousand martyred believers. We know that many more died of whom we have no record. Many were burned alive. Others were beheaded, drowned, crucified, or cut to pieces for Jesus' sake. Christians are still persecuted and even martyred in some countries.

God could put an end, once and for all, to this persecution. He could miraculously deliver His children from this danger.

The martyrs did not usually expect a miraculous delivery. They thought about 2 Timothy 3:12. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” They did not consider their own lives of great value. Many, such as Anneken van den Hove, were very willing to die because they knew that the Lord, the righteous Judge, would very soon

give them the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8). Their faith and strength were based on the promises of God, not on earthly miracles.

Nevertheless, for a testimony to the unbelievers, God on certain occasions did perform miracles for His afflicted children. The *Martyrs Mirror* records how some escaped from prison when angels opened the doors. It tells of others who were able to pass by their enemies without being recognized. When Brother Hans Haslibacher was beheaded in Haslibach, Switzerland, his head fell into his hat and laughed, the sun became red, and the public well shed a crimson flood—just as he had said would happen if he indeed were innocent. Read the story for yourself on pages 1128–1130 of the *Martyrs Mirror*.



Anneken van den Hove was a believer. She worked in Brussels, Belgium, for two ladies who also were believers. One day the two women, together with Anneken, were arrested by the Catholic authorities. The two women denied the faith and were released, but Anneken remained faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In July of 1597, a few Jesuits took her about half a mile out of the city of Brussels. There they caused her to be buried alive.

Anneken was forty-eight years old and single when she died.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 1093-1095

Miracles and Faith

Since the beginning of the Christian era, people have wanted to see miracles. To some the desire to see something spectacular was far greater than the desire to hear sound doctrine. Herod expected to see a sign from Jesus (Luke 23:8). The Pharisees and Sadducees also wanted to see miracles. Finally Jesus told them, “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas” (Matthew 16:4).

Even though miracles have their rightful place, Paul says that faith comes “by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Faith that is worth dying for is based on the Bible, not on miraculous happenings. An enduring faith is based on the truth, not on human experiences. Faith remains immovable upon the foundation of sound doctrine. It is not based on speaking in tongues, working great miracles, or having supernatural revelations.

A man whose faith is based on happenings does not have the faith that preserves the soul (Hebrews 10:39). He will not last when persecutions come. He walks by natural sight.

The man who insists that some false doctrine is truth because the Holy Spirit told Him so is deceived. He may be speaking according to Satan because Satan also has spirits that teach and work miracles. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:8–9.

“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:23–24).

The Christian believes Jesus more than his own experiences. He is not concerned about miracles performed by worldly evangelists, even though some people come away from their campaigns saying “I saw a miracle with my own eyes!” The true Christian knows that faith that is based on signs will fail and will change with every new wind of doctrine. The faithful Christian, with all the past martyrs of faith, places his trust in the Word of God. That Word is as solid as the God that inspired it.

Study Questions

1. On what is the Christian's faith based? _____

2. Why did the martyrs not expect to be miraculously delivered from their persecutors? _____

3. Why did God on some occasions perform miracles for His persecuted children? _____

4. What did Jesus say about those who seek signs? _____

5. Who besides God performs miracles? _____
Why does that make us very careful? _____

6. Why does faith that is based on miracles fail sooner or later? _____

Faith Overcomes Heresy



Around eighty Waldensians were burned alive for their supposed heresy at Strasbourg in the year 1215. These martyrs died for their faith and obedience to the commands of Jesus and the apostles.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, page 313

- *Lesson purpose:* to show how we can keep the true doctrines and standards of the New Testament.
- *Memory verse:* “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1).

• *Study these Scriptures:*

1. Matthew 24:21–28—How were the early Christians to recognize the pending destruction of Jerusalem? _____

2. 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12—What is the end of all deceived persons?
3. 1 Timothy 4:1–5—When one departs from the faith he follows _____ (deceiving) spirits and doctrines of _____.
4. 2 Timothy 4:14–18—Who can keep us from deception and evil?

Evangelization of the Netherlands

The evangelist Melchior Hofmann was one of the first evangelical preachers in the Netherlands. Hofmann had an ardent zeal. In his first work at Emden in 1530, approximately 300 persons were converted and baptized—rich, poor, countrymen, property owners, and servants. Immediately afterward he had to flee because of persecution from the Catholics, but he left Jan Volkertz Trijpmaker in charge as pastor.

From that beginning the Scriptural church spread throughout all the Netherlands—Holland, Flanders, Friesland, Zeeland, and the northern parts of Germany. Among the first leaders in the group of new believers were two brothers, Obbe and Dirk Philips.

Heresy Begins

Within three years, Melchior Hofmann came to believe that the kingdom of God was going to manifest itself on earth, with the city of Strasbourg as the New Jerusalem. He believed that he himself would be the new Elijah, the forerunner of Christ. He believed that Christ was going to take the godless and persecutors off the face of the earth. Then the poor afflicted Anabaptists would rise to power and reign with Christ one thousand years.

Obbe and Dirk Philips recognized the fallacy of this prophecy. They saw that what Hofmann said was based on a fragile foundation—visions that did not agree with the Bible. With much patience, but with little success, Obbe and Dirk warned the brethren of this error. Finally Melchior Hofmann was put into prison, but sad to say there arose in his stead men more fanatical than he. Supernatural visions and revelations abounded.

Heresy Grows

A man by the name of Jan Matthijsz (Matthys) started calling himself Enoch, and Jan van Leiden called himself King David. They declared Münster to be the New Jerusalem instead of Strasbourg. A Protestant, Bernhard Rothman, was denouncing the errors of Catholicism in the churches at Münster. Bernhard, Jan Matthijsz, and Jan van Leiden agreed together to preach the baptism of adult believers. For that reason they became known as Anabaptists. These three men took the city of Münster by armed force—something very contrary to what other Anabaptists taught in those days.

These Anabaptists of Münster sent “apostles” to the surrounding territory, inviting everyone to come to Münster and participate in the manifestation of the kingdom of God. They promised the people that in Münster they would receive ten times more than they had left behind. They did not tell them until they got to Münster that they would have to serve as soldiers in the army of that city.

These false teachers exercised power in Münster a few years. But finally the army of the Catholic bishop of Waldeck overcame them and destroyed them completely.

The Fruit of Heresy

The revolt that these false prophets promoted spread to other cities. Many Anabaptists, faint from the persecution, were glad to hear that the hour had come to defend themselves with the sword and bring the kingdom of God to this earth.

We know that the Münster movement was not a part of the church of Jesus Christ even though it was known as Anabaptist. The false church did much damage to the new church in the Netherlands, though the true Anabaptist church never accepted the Münster movement (*Martyrs Mirror*, page 17).

For many years after that tragedy, the true church of Jesus, directed by evangelical Anabaptists like Dirk Philips, suffered much scorn because of the bad reputation of the Anabaptists at Münster.

Menno Simons Is Converted

At the time the Münster Anabaptists were propagating heresy, Menno Simons was a Catholic priest. But Menno began to read the Bible.

From the Bible, Menno understood that the Münster Anabaptists were in error. At the same time, he knew that many evangelical Anabaptists in



Hans Misel, a young man, was converted in the district of Württemberg, Germany. He was arrested for his faith in God and beheaded at Warthausen on December 13, 1571. He died joyfully. His executioner said, "This man is bolder than we all."

Many witnessed his death.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 893–894

the Netherlands were as sheep without a shepherd. Every time an Anabaptist suffered martyrdom, Menno's conscience bothered him. He was reminded that his life as a priest was luxurious and carnal.

Finally, Menno could stand such hypocrisy no longer. He believed God with all his heart and was saved. He identified with the church of the evangelical Anabaptists even at the cost of severe persecution. He gave himself without reservation to combating the errors of the Münster Anabaptists.

The first book that Menno Simons wrote was *A Clear and Indisputable Proof From the Holy Scriptures Against the Great Abominable Blasphemy of Jan van Leiden*.

If it had not been for the untiring work of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, very possibly the Anabaptists would have become extinct in the Netherlands. But, thanks be to God, the Gospel light kept shining. Because of the work of good leaders, the believers' faith received new strength. In a few years, even the authorities recognized the big difference between the Anabaptists and the heretics. The people named the Anabaptists Men-nonites and the heretics Münsterites.

How can we avoid such tragedies as that of Münster? Let us examine the situation and the characteristics of that movement so that we can be warned of how heresies begin.

1. All of the Anabaptists could clearly see the errors of Catholicism. Be careful brethren! Many times when we resist one evil with all of our attention, another evil enters—maybe even through “brethren” that deceive us.
2. The Anabaptists were persecuted and afflicted. When we are wearied from trials that we face in the Christian life, Satan tries to show us an easier “Christianity.”
3. The Münsterites placed their faith on dreams and revelations. If we believe and obey all of the Word of God, we escape the errors of heresy. We do not need any further revelation on which to base our faith. And if any revelation contradicts the Bible, we can know that it comes from Satan, not God.

We have seen how much damage the heresy of Münster did to evangelical Anabaptism in the Netherlands and Germany. Catholics and Protestants alike took advantage of that tragedy to justify their hatred against the believers. Nevertheless, the church of Jesus continued to grow. Neither sword nor fire nor water nor gallows nor heresy could stop it.

We lament the bad reputation that the Münsterites gave to Anabaptism. But as we see the church of Jesus rising to victory and growing again, we remember that Jesus said the gates of hell could not prevail against her (Matthew 16:18). Jesus will not allow the enemies from within or without to destroy His church.

There will always be heresies. Paul wrote, “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (1 Corinthians 1:9). We shall always lament those heresies, and we shall always warn against them. But heresies will never overcome the church of Jesus.

Study Questions

1. What is a heretic? _____

2. How did the heresy at Münster begin? _____

3. What happened to the heretics of Münster? _____

4. What was the result of the heresy of Münster? _____

5. How can we overcome heresy? _____

6. What reason did Paul give when he said that there would be heresies at Corinth? _____

7. Why will heresy never overcome the church of Jesus? _____

The Faith Endures Suffering



Hans Bret worked at a bakery. He was the son of an Englishman, Thomas Bret. Hans gave Bible classes to the newly converted in Antwerp, Belgium, the city where he lived.

On May 6, 1576, the Catholic authorities arrested him and put him in the dungeon of the castle at Antwerp. There they questioned him many times.

During the eight months that he was in prison, Hans Bret wrote letters to his family, to the church at Antwerp, and to his unconverted brother, David, who lived in England. Hans liked to read, and he had read various books. But in prison they did not allow him the privilege of keeping books. Hans said in his letters that it was difficult for him to find paper to write on. The Anabaptist prisoners there did not even have the privilege of singing hymns.

On the day of his execution, the executioner came to him and “commanded him to put out his tongue, which he . . . willingly did, since he had not a member on his body, which he was not willing to deliver up to suffering for the name of Christ, being well assured that all the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the joy and glory which God has promised them that overcome. . . .

“And when he put out his tongue, the executioner fastened it with a piece of iron, and screwed it very tight with a vise or screw, and then touched the end of the tongue with a hot iron, that swelling, the screw might not slip off or become loose.”

They chained him to the stake and burned him alive in the city of Antwerp on January 4, 1577.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 1037–1054

- *Lesson purpose:* to show that true believers can endure suffering and persecution.
- *Memory verse:* “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).
- *Study these Scriptures:*
 1. Acts 5:40–42—What was the apostles’ view of suffering for Christ?

 2. Acts 7:54–60—How did Stephen respond to suffering? _____

 3. 1 Corinthians 9:27—How does this verse say we are to relate to our physical desires? _____

 4. 1 Peter 4:1—According to this verse, what kind of life did Christ live? _____

 5. 1 Peter 4:12–19—How should Christians expect to be treated in this life? _____

When the wife of Paul of Dresden was martyred in Germany, she exclaimed with a loud voice, “O Lord, enlighten those that are inflicting

upon us such great suffering, that they might understand what they are doing. I thank Thee, O God, that Thou hast considered me worthy to suffer for Thy name's sake."



Ignatius, who had learned much from the apostle John, was a zealous, God-fearing man. He openly rebuked the emperor Trajan for giving credit to the gods for his victories in battle. This infuriated the emperor, and he sent him to Rome for punishment. As Ignatius anticipated suffering and death for Christ, he wrote to the church at Rome, "Let the devil and evil men afflict me with all manner of pain and torment, with fire, with cross, with fighting against wild beasts, with scattering of the members and bones of my body; all this I esteem very little, if I but enjoy Christ."

Once in Rome, the soldiers delivered Ignatius and the letters containing his death sentence to the governor. Following the orders of the emperor, the governor brought Ignatius to the amphitheater on a feast day and tormented him. But pain could not move him from his love and loyalty for Christ.

In the amphitheater, two hungry lions devoured him, leaving little even of his bones. Now, happy in the Lord, he rests from suffering.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 105–107

Some historians say the martyrs in the sixteenth century received a supernatural power to endure with calmness that which they suffered. This is undoubtedly true. But it is also true that this same supernatural power is still working in the church of Jesus today. It is the power of the Holy Spirit in those that have a living faith in Jesus.

If our faith has justified us and saved us, if God has made us new creatures, and if we walk in the Spirit, we have the same capacity to suffer martyrdom as did that woman of Dresden and many others.



Joost Joosten was converted in the Netherland province of Zeeland. He was arrested at eighteen years of age. The Catholic authorities tortured him on the rack (stretching his limbs till they pulled apart at the joints) and pierced his legs with hot irons. Finally they burned him alive in the city of Veere, on the Monday before Christmas in 1560.

As he entered the straw hut in which he was to be burnt, Joost sang with a joyful voice the last stanza of a hymn that he himself had composed: "Oh Lord, thou art forever in my thoughts."

Now Joost is forever with the Lord.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, page 651

What has your faith done for you? Would you be willing to leave your brethren, your parents, your wife, your house, and your land for the name of the Lord? If by faith you do this when God asks it of you, you will receive a hundred times more and inherit eternal life!

So let us be faithful disciples in our homes, in our work, and in the brotherhood of believers. And if persecution should suddenly overtake us, then God will give us the necessary grace to overcome, yes, even unto martyrdom. For we know that if God be for us, nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ—neither tribulation nor distress nor persecution nor famine nor nakedness nor peril nor sword. “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Romans 8:37).

Most Christians today suffer very little for their faith. Some have needed to separate themselves from worldly families. Others have needed to leave a good-paying job for the sake of their Biblical beliefs. But most of us have suffered very little for Jesus, the One who bought us with His blood (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Why do we not suffer more persecution?

It has always been the active Christians that have been persecuted. Why was John the Baptist beheaded? Was it because he quietly hid himself in the desert? No. He had reprov'd the king for his adultery. Why did the apostles and the sixteenth century martyrs suffer persecution? Because they preached salvation without apology. They preached in the cities, in the forests, in the prisons, in the country . . . wherever God led them.

Christians that hide themselves and are quiet may be treated well by the world. What the world cannot stand is to be challenged with truth by the church of Jesus Christ.

Could it be, brethren, that we have been preaching a weak Gospel, thereby avoiding persecution? “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3).

Study Questions

- 1. What did the martyrs see beyond their sufferings? _____

- 2. What gives us the power to endure suffering? _____

- 3. How were the Anabaptists more than conquerors? _____

- 4. Why will Christians suffer persecution? _____

- 5. What might be wrong if we do not suffer any persecution? _____

You . . . and Your Faith



Anneken Hendriks was a common woman of Amsterdam, Holland. She was fifty-three years old and married. She could not read or write. When the Catholics arrested her, they tortured her severely to get the names of other believers in the city. But Anneken did not tell them any. So the Catholics tied her to a ladder. They filled her mouth with gunpowder and in this way cast her into the fire to burn her alive. This took place on November 10, 1571, in the main square of Amsterdam.

—*Martyrs Mirror*, pages 872–874

- *Lesson purpose:* to show how faith changes us today.
- *Memory verse:* “I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I

live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

What does this memory verse mean to you? _____

• *Study these Scriptures:*

Consider how your life relates to the following Scriptures.

1. Acts 7:54–60—Do you think Stephen’s sufferings in the flesh were worth enduring in comparison to what he received? _____ Would you suffer as he did for the truth? _____
2. Acts 26:18—Has God cleansed you from sin? _____
3. Galatians 3:14—Has the Spirit of God come to dwell in your heart? _____
4. Galatians 5:24—Have you met the conditions to be Christ’s child as stated here? _____
5. Ephesians 3:11–12—Have you put your confidence in God? _____
6. Ephesians 4:11–16—Is your church having this effect on you? _____
7. Ephesians 6:16—Do you resist the temptations that you face? _____
8. Colossians 1:21–23—Are you holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable before God? _____
9. Hebrews 6:12—Are you following the faith of the martyrs? _____
10. James 2:21–22—Are you perfecting your faith with works? _____
11. 1 Peter 1:8–9—Are you with joy waiting for the coming of the Lord when you will inherit eternal life? _____
12. 1 John 3:3—Are your conscience and mind clean? _____
13. 1 John 5:4—Are you overcoming the world? _____

If you can answer yes to these questions, then you know that your faith has saved you. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; . . . not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). You have received “the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ” (Romans 3:22) and you are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24).

“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith” (Romans 3:27).

The Bible speaks of two ways in which people try to be saved—by works, and by faith. Those that try to be saved by their works are those

that trust in what they are doing. Galatians 3:10–11 tells us that those who try to find salvation through the works of the law are _____. This implies that they are lost and bound for hell.

Those who live by faith are those who will be saved. These people know their good works will not save them. But they also know that if they sin, they are showing by their works that they do not believe God, and consequently they will lose their salvation. Open your Bible to James 2:18. How do saved people prove their faith?_____

“There is therefore now no _____ to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the _____, but after the _____. For the law of the _____ of _____ in _____ hath made me free from the law of _____ and _____” (Romans 8:1–2).

If you want to know if your works show your faith, examine yourself in the light of the following Gospel test. Put an “X” in the blanks where you do not meet the Gospel standard.

The Gospel Test

1. Believe in God

- ___ Believe that Jesus died for your sins (John 3:14–18; 6:47).
- ___ Repent and confess your sins (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15; 1 John 1:9).
- ___ Confess that Jesus is your Lord (Romans 10:9–10).
- ___ Receive God’s forgiveness and the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–17; Acts 5:30–32).
- ___ Be saved by faith (Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 3:5).

2. Show your faith by your works

- ___ Obey God’s laws, be baptized (John 14:15, 23–24; Acts 2:38).
- ___ Serve God only (Matthew 4:10; 1 John 5:21).
- ___ Pray to God (Matthew 6:5–15; 7:7–12).
- ___ Do not worry (Matthew 6:25–34).
- ___ Do not set your heart upon earthly things (Matthew 6:19–24; Colossians 3:1–4).
- ___ Worship God (John 4:23–24).

3. Works of virtue

- ___ Be humble and associate with the humble (Matthew 20:25–28; Mark 9:35; Romans 12:16; Galatians 5:26).
- ___ Be merciful like God is (Luke 6:36).

- ___ Be calm and patient in afflictions (Romans 12:12; Galatians 5:22–23; Ephesians 4:2, 26–27).
 - ___ Be joyful, even in persecutions (Matthew 5:11–12; 1 Thessalonians 5:16).
 - ___ Thank God in every situation (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18).
 - ___ Be content with what you have (1 Timothy 6:6–10).
 - ___ Be hospitable (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2).
 - ___ Be firm in your decision to serve God (Matthew 10:22; Luke 9:62; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Hebrews 12:4–11; James 1:2–4, 12).
 - ___ Do not be ashamed to share the Gospel (Matthew 5:16; Romans 1:16).
4. Works of self-denial
- ___ Separate yourself from sinners and temptation (Mark 9:43–48; Romans 13:14; 1 Corinthians 5; 15:33; 2 Timothy 3:1–5).
 - ___ Keep your body from vices that corrupt it (1 Corinthians 6:15–20; Galatians 5:19–21; Ephesians 5:18).
 - ___ Do not use immodest or costly clothes or jewelry (1 Timothy 2:9; 1 Peter 3:3).
 - ___ Do not have anything to do with occultism (Acts 19:18–20; Ephesians 5:11–12; 1 Timothy 4:7).
 - ___ Do not steal (Matthew 19:18; Ephesians 4:28).
5. Works of thought and speech
- ___ Do not think immoral thoughts (Matthew 5:27–28; 2 Timothy 2:22).
 - ___ Do not think of committing suicide or homicide (1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 1 John 3:15).
 - ___ Think on things that are pure, lovely, and of good report (Philippians 4:8).
 - ___ Do not speak bad or unnecessary words (Matthew 12:36; Ephesians 4:29; 5:4; James 3:1–12).
 - ___ Do not slander anyone (Titus 3:2; James 4:11; 1 Peter 2:1).
 - ___ Do not swear (Matthew 5:33–37).
 - ___ Always speak the truth (Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9).
6. Works of a peaceful life
- ___ Obey your parents in all things unless they tell you to disobey God (Ephesians 6:1–2; Colossians 3:20).

- ___ Respect old people (1 Timothy 5:1–2; 1 Peter 5:5).
 - ___ Never teach children to do evil (Mark 9:42).
 - ___ Love and respect all people alike (Matthew 23:8–12; 1 Timothy 5:21; James 2:1–13).
 - ___ Help your neighbors (Matthew 5:42; Luke 10:30–37; Romans 15:1; Galatians 6:1–2; 1 Thessalonians 5:14–15).
 - ___ Do not be a busybody in other men’s matters (1 Peter 4:15).
 - ___ Do not have racial prejudices (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:9–11).
 - ___ Love everybody and hate no one (Matthew 5:43–48; Luke 6:27–35).
 - ___ Never use self-defense (Matthew 5:38–40; Romans 12:19–21).
 - ___ Always forgive those that offend you (Matthew 18:21–22; Mark 11:25–26).
7. Works that maintain the order that God has established
- ___ Obey the authorities in the fear of God (Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1–7; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13–14).
 - ___ Never divorce your spouse, or marry anyone that is divorced (Matthew 5:31–32; Mark 10:2–12).
 - ___ Do not provoke your children, but teach them the right way (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).
 - ___ Man: Behave like a man, love and honor your wife, cut your hair, and pray with your head uncovered (1 Corinthians 6:9–10; 11:4, 7, 14; Ephesians 5:28; 1 Peter 3:7).
 - ___ Woman: Submit to your husband and respect him, do not cut your hair, cover your head with a veiling, and do not teach in the assembly of believers (1 Corinthians 11:5–6, 13, 15; 14:33–35; Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:11–15; 1 Peter 3:1–6).
 - ___ Pray for the government (1 Timothy 2:1–2).
8. Works of good business
- ___ Work with your hands to support yourself and provide for your family (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12; 2 Thessalonians 3:10–13; Titus 3:14).
 - ___ Take care of your debts (Romans 13:8).
 - ___ Do not take anyone to court (1 Corinthians 6:1–8).
 - ___ Pay your taxes (Romans 13:6–7).

___ Do not closely associate with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14–18).

___ Obey your employer (Colossians 3:22; 1 Peter 2:18).

___ Pay a just wage (Colossians 4:1; James 5:4).

9. Works of true religion

___ Confess your faith publicly and be baptized with water (Romans 10:9–10; Acts 2:38).

___ Become a member in a congregation of true believers (1 Corinthians 12:12–27).

___ Gather regularly with other believers (Hebrews 10:25).

___ Confess your faults to one another (James 5:16).

___ Greet other Christians with a holy kiss (2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26).

___ Sing praises with other Christians (Ephesians 5:18–19).

___ Examine yourself before partaking of communion in memory of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:26–32).

___ Wash feet with other Christians (John 13:14–17).

10. Works of a good brother in the church

___ Submit yourself to the brotherhood in the fear of God (Romans 12:10, 16; Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 1:27; 2:2; 1 Peter 5:5).

___ Do not judge (Matthew 7:1–5).

___ Pray for all believers (Ephesians 6:18).

___ Do not hold a grudge against anyone (Matthew 5:21–25; Hebrews 12:14–15).

___ Admonish your brother if he is in error (Matthew 18:15–17; Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:14–15).

___ Avoid fellowship with those that rebel against God (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:4–5, 9–11).

___ Have no part in any doctrine or practice that is not Scriptural (Ephesians 4:14, 5:6; Colossians 2:16–18; 1 Timothy 4:1–3).

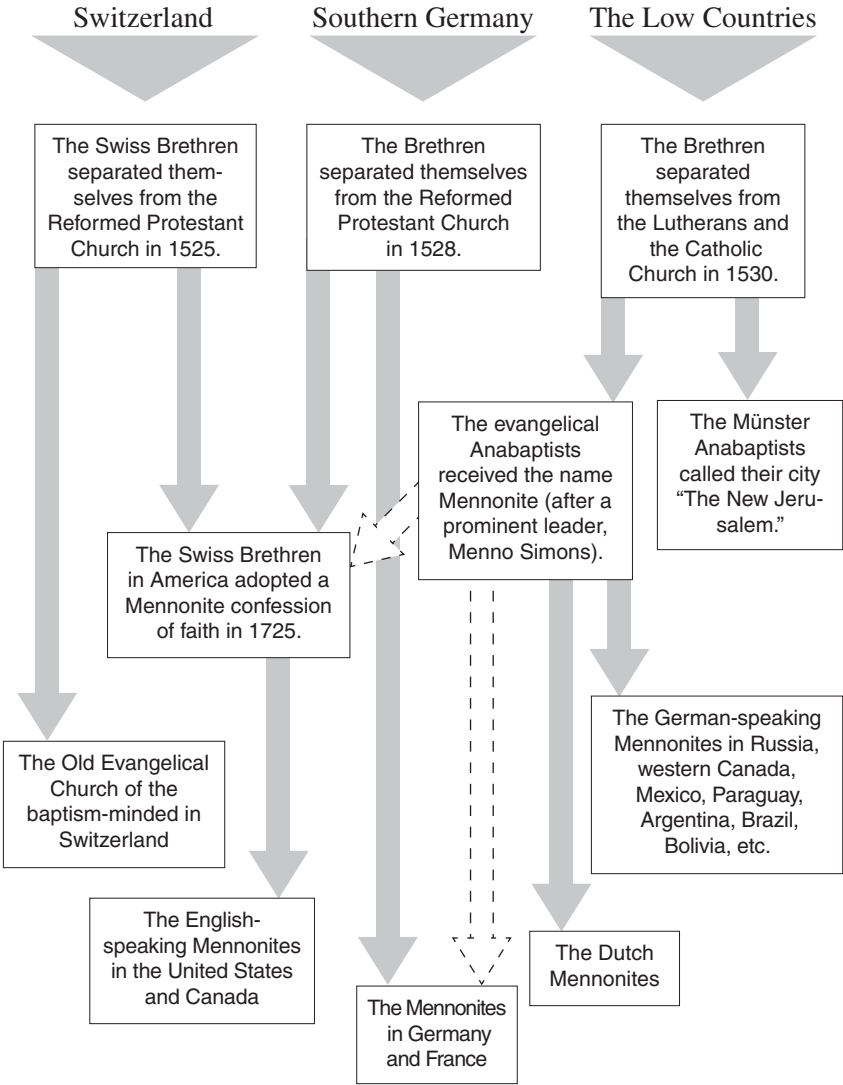
___ Do not take part in dividing the church of Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:10–13; 3:3–5).

___ Do not compromise the truth (1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Timothy 4:3–5).

During the next few weeks continue to study each of these works. Search the Scripture references given. If you marked any of the works with an “X,” ask God to help you improve those areas in your life. Consider how you can increase your faith. Each day let the Scriptures direct how you live. Then your faith will be a living faith and a **Faith Worth Dying For.**

What Happened to the Anabaptist Movement?

Anabaptism was born in



A Brave Sister



The clear voice of a woman singing could be heard in the narrow streets of Monschau. It vibrated against the buildings. It caught the people's attention and many came running. A crowd of monks and officials were passing along a street toward the river. In their midst was the singing woman, her face as bright and clear as her voice. Although she was obviously a prisoner, Maria seemed to have the only cheerful face in the crowd.

One of the bystanders overheard her say, "This is my second wedding day. Once I was the bride of a man. Today I hope to be the bride of Christ. Today I hope to inherit His kingdom with Him."

Maria had waited a long time for this day. She had been arrested by the bailiff a year earlier because she was a Christian and had been baptized as a sign of her faith. The bailiff had threatened her and had even tried to bribe her. He wanted Maria to attend the state church. Since she consistently refused, she was condemned to be drowned—a merciful form of execution used chiefly for women. So the authorities proved the

Scripture true which says, “The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel” (Proverbs 12:10).

They brought Maria down to the water’s edge but did not throw her in. For 2½ hours they enticed her to leave her faith.

“Maria, Maria, it will not go well with you. Look at the water,” whispered one.

A little boy picked up a stone and threw it. It splashed into the river, and the circles widened from it, spreading over the surface. The water shimmered and looked so cold. Maria could almost feel the shock of it suddenly enveloping her, but then she spoke.

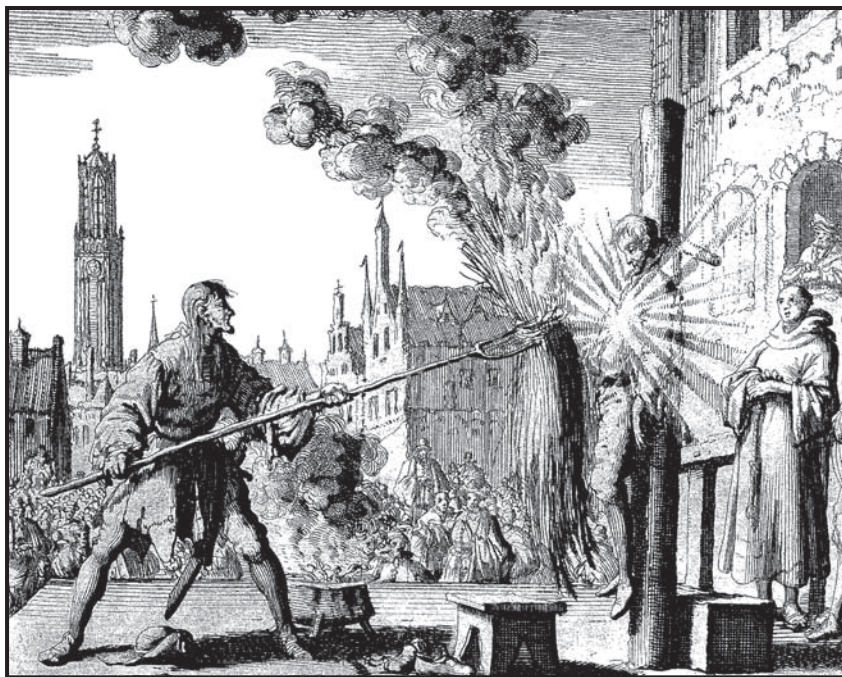
“I adhere to my God. What God began in me many years ago will be finished today.” She took off her shoes and prepared to be thrown in. They tied her tightly so that she could not swim.

“O heavenly Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” And so she was drowned. But her spirit went to God from whom she received the martyr’s crown, and the fellow believers, whom she left behind, were greatly encouraged by her example.

The river in the picture is probably the Rur, which flows through Monschau (Montjoie), a city in Germany close to the Belgian border. The account is found on pages 525–526 of the *Martyrs Mirror*.

—From *In the Whale’s Belly*, by James Lowry
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He Had a Heavenly Mansion



The cold wind of a December night bit at Hendrik Eemken's face as he pulled his coat more tightly about him. He and his wife Anna were stumbling along a dark alley in an unfamiliar section of Utrecht. Hendrik was worried that someone from the night watch might still be prowling around. They kept a more careful guard in this rich man's part of the city than in his own.

Hendrik had been baptized just that spring at a meeting on Homburger Street in the house of a penniless button maker. Now he and his wife were on the way to a meeting at the stately patrician mansion of Cornelis van Voordt, a mansion so important that it even had a name—the "Cranesteyn." He whispered the name over several times to his wife. It seemed quite impressive to the simple tailor.

It was four o'clock in the morning. They had been told to come at that time. They must stay inside the big house the entire day. They would not be able to leave before nightfall when their departure would be unnoticed. In this way no one would know that an unusual group of people had gathered at the "Cranesteyn" that day.

The door in the garden wall was unfastened as Hendrik had been told. Through van Voordt's garden and up some steps they felt their way. Although there was not the faintest gleam of light, they tapped quietly at a door. A servant girl with a candle opened it. The inside of the door window was hung with a heavy black cloth.

With his hat in his hands, Hendrik entered the ballroom where the meeting was to be held. The candles in the crystal chandelier spread a sparkling light over the rich gilt furnishings of the room. The windows also were hung with several layers of heavy black cloth. Old Cornelis van Voordt himself, who was very friendly toward the brethren but not a member of the church, offered Hendrik a little songbook. Hendrik refused, saying he could not read.

Soon the meeting began. The man in charge was dressed in black. He was of average height with a gray beard and white hair. Hendrik was told that the man was named Dirk Philips. He was perhaps the most effective bishop left among the brethren since Menno Simons had died in January of that year and Joost Verbeeck, who had baptized Hendrik, had been executed in June. Hendrik listened carefully to Dirk's lucid preaching.

At this nocturnal meeting, the wife of Cornelis van Voordt and two of his sons were baptized along with Beatris, their servant girl. Then communion was served to about twenty members of the church, rich and poor alike. It was Hendrik's second communion service.

After the service, Hendrik enjoyed the many hours in the big house while they waited for nightfall and their departure from the meeting. He talked with the other brethren about the Scriptures and especially tried to hear everything Dirk Philips said. Although Hendrik could not read, his keen interest in the Word of God caused him to learn quickly. He could even tell others in which chapter they would find this or that statement—in a book he could not read!

In the spring of the following year, 1562, while Hendrik Eemkens and his wife were attending another meeting at van Voordt's mansion, the authorities broke in. Some of the worshippers escaped, but not Hendrik and his wife. A few of the persons captured avoided the death sentence by recanting. Cornelis van Voordt, although he was not a brother in the church, was banished with his wife, and their riches were confiscated.

Hendrik Eemkens, the poor tailor, had nothing that could be taken from him but his life. He was sentenced to die on June 10, 1562, at Utrecht.

At his execution when Hendrik knelt in the scaffold to pray, the savage executioner jerked him up by his shirt so that he could not finish. Hendrik

then had to stand on a little bench, which you can see in the picture, and yet all the while he kept calling out and admonishing the assembled crowd to repent and turn to God. The executioner fastened him to the stake with a chain and a bag of gunpowder around his neck.

Since Hendrik spoke so boldly, the brutal man passed a rope around his neck and with several twists hushed his words. Pulling the bench from beneath Hendrik's feet, he thrust a fork with a bundle of straw into a little pot of fire on the scaffold. When the straw was burning, he held it up to the bag of gunpowder hanging around Hendrik's neck. It ignited with a flash, and soon Hendrik Eemken's earthly sufferings were over.

More details about this courageous witness for Christ can be found on pages 660–661 of the *Martyrs Mirror*. Information about the man who baptized him, Joost Verbeek, can be also found on pages 651–652.

—From *In the Whale's Belly*, by James Lowry
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What Is the Martyrs Mirror?

The *Martyrs Mirror* is a large book weighing almost six pounds. It was originally published in the Dutch language, but presently is available only in English and German.

The history of *Martyrs Mirror* begins with the first book of martyrs of the Dutch Anabaptists, called *Het Offer des Heeren*, which means “The Sacrifice of the Lord.” That book was first printed in 1562.

Het Offer des Heeren was a pocket-sized book. The editor, whose identity had to be kept secret, compiled it to encourage the Dutch Anabaptists during a period of cruel persecution.

This book had a strange way of getting bigger. When those who were searching for truth read it, they felt the call of the Holy Spirit to yield themselves to Christ. In continuing to read the book, they were strengthened to face persecution and even to die for their faith. As a result, there were new martyrs, which made more martyrs’ histories. And so the little book grew with each of its many editions.

Thieleman J. van Braght compiled the *Martyrs Mirror*. He was an elder in a Mennonite church. (A large part of the Anabaptists were eventually known as Mennonites, named after one of their prominent leaders, Menno Simons.)

Originally, Thieleman proposed to only renew the publication of a 1631 edition of the martyr book, with some additional history of martyrs from Holland and Switzerland. In deciding which Anabaptist martyrs should be included, Thieleman rigorously excluded anyone who recanted before his execution or whose testimony was shaded by false beliefs. Nevertheless, when his edition of the book came out in 1660, it was almost twice the size of the original. With Thieleman’s first edition, the *Martyrs Mirror* largely attained its present form but did not include any drawings.

Twenty-five years later, the second edition was published. This edition included the drawings of Jan Luyken, some of which we have reproduced in *The Faith Worth Dying For*.

The *Martyrs Mirror* in English today is a stately volume of more than 1100 pages, divided into two parts. The first part, which is largely the work of Thieleman, is a history of baptism and persecution from the first century to the sixteenth. The second part contains the work of many writers gathered over the years in many editions, much of which had been published in *Het Offer des Heeren*.

92 What Is the Martyrs Mirror?

The *Martyrs Mirror* is a book worth reading for the inspiration it offers and for the instruction in Bible doctrine. We have prepared these studies to share some of its riches with you.

—adapted and condensed from *In the Whale's Belly*, by James Lowry
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