Persevering Through Affliction

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

17 But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by
being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in
thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to
see you. 18 For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul,
did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. 19 For what
is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the
presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?
20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

1 So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to
be left by ourselves in Athens. 2 We sent Timothy, who is our
brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the
gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your
faith, 3 so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For
you know quite well that we are destined for them. 4 In fact,
when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be
persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

5 For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to
find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the
tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have
been in vain. 6 But Timothy has just now come to us from you
and has brought good news about your faith and love. He
has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us
and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

7 Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and
persecution we were encouraged about you because of your
faith. 8 For now we really live, since you are standing firm in
the Lord. 9 How can we thank God enough for you in return
for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of
you? 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may
see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus
clear the way for us to come to you. 12 May the Lord make
your love increase and overflow for each other and for
everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13 May he
strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy
in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus
comes with all his holy ones.

Quote by John Wesley (1831). “The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.”, p.315

“I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out.”

In Today's Context, John Wesley's Concern Can Be Expressed As:

1. Attending church regularly but not trusting God in our daily lives.
2. Knowing God's Word but not obeying it.
3. Serving in church but without love for God.
4. Appearing to be Christians but not living like one.
5. Losing faith when facing difficulties and challenges.

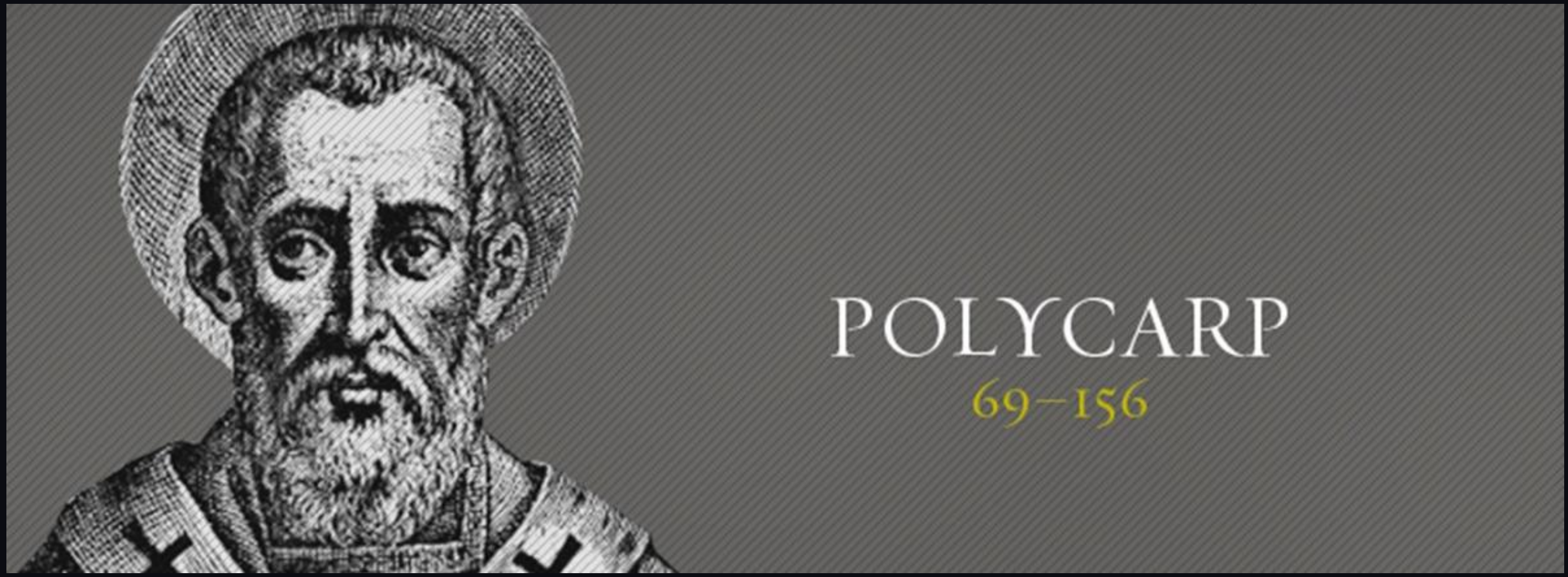
In Today's Context, John Wesley's Concern Can Be Expressed As:

- The question for us today is not simply whether we call ourselves Christians or Methodists, or whether we still attend church on Sundays.
- The question is whether we will continue to trust God and desire to live according to His Word and commandments, especially when we face difficulties and afflictions because of our Christian faith.

Hebrews 11:35-38 (NRSV)

35 ... Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to
obtain a better resurrection. 36 Others suffered mocking and
flogging and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned
to death; they were sawn in two; they were killed by the sword;
they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute,
persecuted, tormented— 38 of whom the world was not worthy.
They wandered in deserts and mountains and in caves and holes
in the ground.

Polycarp (Bishop of Smyrna)



For Personal Reflection:

Do I truly trust God and follow His Word, even when I face difficulties and hardships?

1 Thessalonians 2:17–18

17 But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by
being separated from you for a short time (in person, not
in thought), out of our intense longing we made every
effort to see you. 18 For we wanted to come to you—
certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked
our way.

1 Peter 4:12–15

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that
has come on you to test you, as though something strange
were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you
participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be
overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted
because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit
of glory and of God rests on you.

1 Peter 4:15–16

15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or
any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.
16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be
ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

The Applied New Testament Commentary (p. 790)

“The church that endures persecution with joy is a strong church, and its witness is powerful. Let us not seek the easy road. Through the suffering we endure for Christ's sake, God will be glorified and our church will be made strong.”

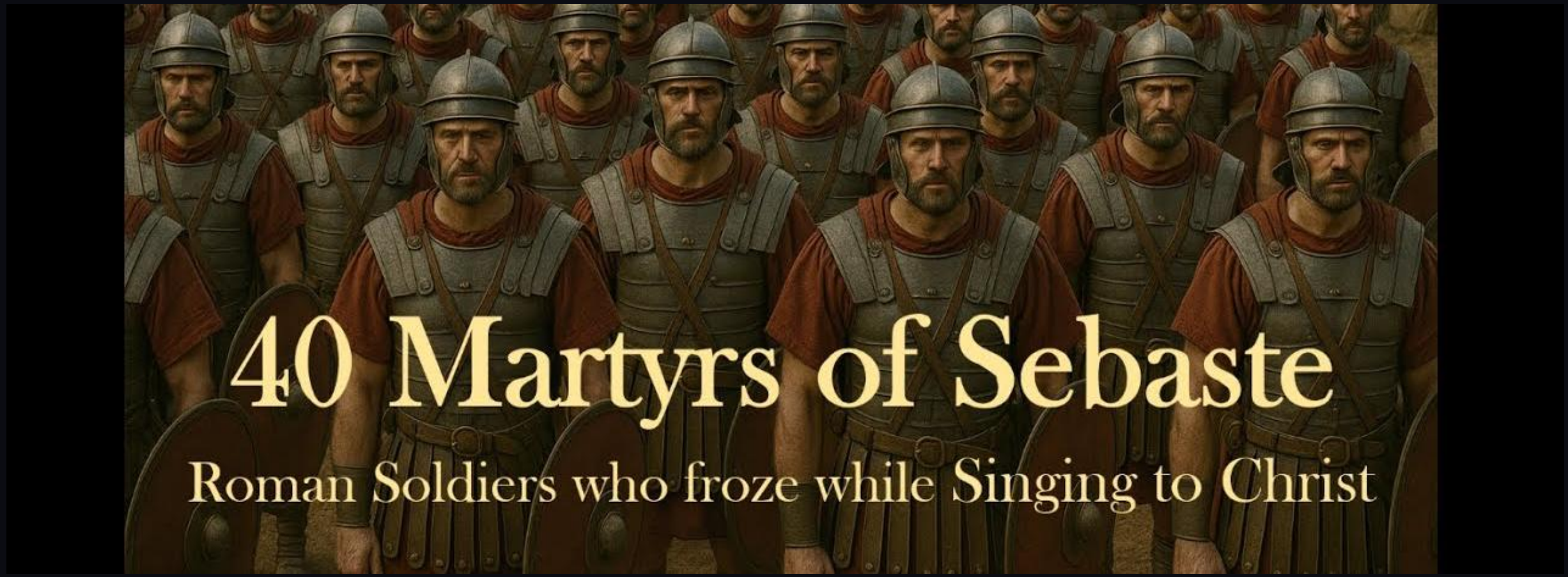
For Personal Reflection:

Am I ashamed to stand up for my faith when others disagree with me?

1 Thessalonians 3:6–8

6 But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has
brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us
that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you
long to see us, just as we also long to see you. 7 Therefore,
brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we
were encouraged about you because of your faith. 8 For now
we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.

The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste



For Personal Reflection:

Does my faith encourage and strengthen others, especially when I face difficulties and challenges?

Discussion Questions

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20. What can we learn from Paul's love and concern for the Thessalonian Christians? How can we show the same care to those facing persecution and afflictions today?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5. What should our response be when we face difficulties and afflictions because of our faith in Christ?
3. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-8. How can our faith and love encourage and strengthen other Christians during times of persecution and affliction?
4. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13. How should we live our lives as we wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ?