

Philemon: Lesson Three - Persecution

“To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker—also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home:”

Exposition: Historical Context

1. Roman Republic - Dictators

- **Epimenedes** - Athens to unknown God
 - Athens idolatry - Epimenedes
 - Religions of Rome & Greece/
 - Augers in Roman politics - animal sacrifice
- **Caesars** – each more wicked than himself
- Nero - wickedness in high places
 - Nero - wickedness, murder, incest, bi-sexuality,
 - Nero – fire destroyed much of Rome
 - **Nero's 6 accusations against Christians**
 1. Being Atheists – one God
 2. Lawbreakers – meeting in secret
 3. Subverters of Government – King Jesus
 4. Sexual deviants – Agape love feasts
 5. Cannibals – eating Christ’s flesh & blood
 6. Judgment of fire – preached Hell

Reasons Christians were hated

1. They believed in One God – King Jesus
2. They hated this present evil world (immoral culture)
3. They spoke out against sin & judgment to come (Hell)

Persecution Stories

- All 10 of Paul’s friends martyred, except Demas
- **Pliny the Younger to Emperor Trajan on Christians 120 AD**
- Pudens Senator's family hosted Peter & Paul -
- Peter & Paul's death, Luke's death,
- Two daughters bones, catacombs 3,000 dead, catacombs

Parallels between Rome and America – We are a Republic

- We the people, democratic, we elect representatives
- We the affluent, rich, educated
- We are entertainment addicted
- We allow political dictators, wicked rulers, congress, State government, governors

(* We are not of this world - *frog in the kettle* - doesn't feel the changes coming on.

(* Say something long enough, loud enough and every one will believe it's true.

In Nazi Germany good people said nothing.

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."

Roman Caesars

- [Augustus](#) (31 BCE–14 CE)
- [Tiberius](#) (14–37 CE)
- [Caligula](#) (37–41 CE)
- [Claudius](#) (41–54 CE)
- [Nero](#) (54–68 CE)
- [Galba](#) (68–69 CE)
- [Otho](#) (January–April 69 CE)
- [Aulus Vitellius](#) (July–December 69 CE)
- [Vespasian](#) (69–79 CE)
- [Titus](#) (79–81 CE)
- [Domitian](#) (81–96 CE)

Commentary

(ie) We are not of this world - frog in the kettle - doesn't feel the changes coming on.
(ie) Say it long enough, loud enough and every one will believe it's true.

St Francis of Assisi – "Preach Christ: If necessary use words."

There's no such thing as a silent witness!

Let your light shine! Don't hide it under a bushel. Give a reason of the hope that is in you.

Use words: Nazi Germany good people said nothing.

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."

"He should not be lulled to repose by the delusion that he does no harm who takes no part in public affairs. He should know that bad men need no better opportunity than when good men look on and do nothing. He should stand to his principles even if leaders go wrong."

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum quotes the following text as one of the many poetic versions of the speech:

*"First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me."*

It's not enough to picket, politic, and march. It's not enough just to vote. It's not enough just to march. It's not enough to hide behind a good church, or good preacher.

Preachers of righteousness need to be in the marketplace, on the job, in our schools, on school boards, in our hospitals, on social media, in the media, and in the public eye. We are the salt of the earth, but if we have lost our saltiness, what good are we in this world? If our candles are hiding under bushel baskets how will the world every see light in their darkness?

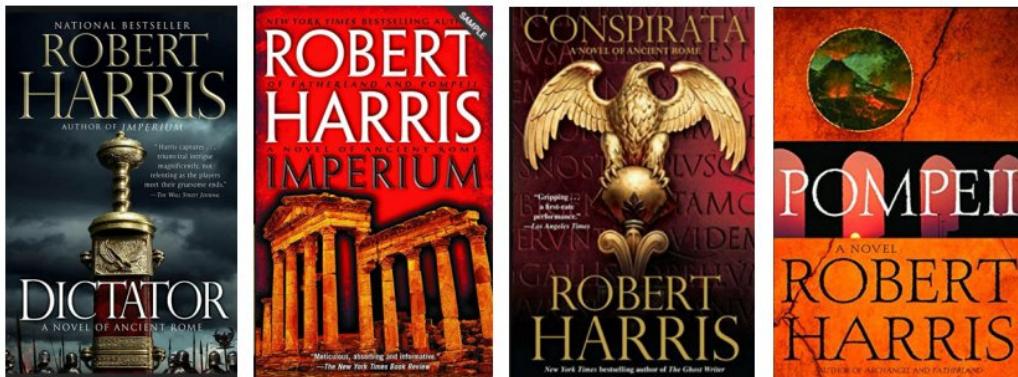
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"All who live godly in Christ Jesus WILL suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3:12

Dig Deeper

- Apocryphal Books – Acts of the Apostles
- Books - Robert Harris's Imperium, Conspiratum, Dictator
- History - Tacitus historian
- Sparticus – the movie
- Gladiator – the movie

4 books will help you understand Roman Life



Discussion Starters

1. How do the Scriptures on “*Love not the world*” apply to us today?
2. How is our culture like Rome? What are the cultural sins today?
3. How is our culture like Sodom? Days of Noah?
4. What slippery slopes have we already slidden down?
5. What are issues of public compromise the church faces today?
6. How can YOU make a stand in this wicked generation?
7. **Consider each of the listed Scriptures. What does it say? What does it mean for all time? How can you conform to it?**

Application: Scriptures to Think About

Tension between Scripture, Politics and Culture

Three questions need to be answered as you read each Biblical truth:

- 1. What does it say? Say it in your own words**
 - 2. What does it mean for every believer?**
 - 3. How can I put it into practice in my life?**
- Mt 22:21 *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are His.*
 - John 18:36 - *"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."*
 - 1 John 2:15-17 *Love not the world, neither the things in the world...If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him.*
 - Romans 1:32 *"Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Do we vicariously find pleasure in the sins of the world through the TV, internet, movies, and books we read?*
 - Romans 12:1-2 *"Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold." - Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*
 - 2 Corinthians 6:17 *Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,*
 - Hebrews 11:10 *...of whom this world is not worthy, They looked for a city whose builder and maker is God.*
 - Hebrews 11:24-26 *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.*
 - Hebrews 12:3 KJV — *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds.*
 - 1 Peter 3:15 KJV — *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*

"All who live godly in Christ Jesus WILL suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3:12
