

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
