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Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC  
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# Profiles in Christian Courage

## 7. Justin Martyr





# A Seeker in a Pre-Christian Age

- Born 100 a.d. in Flavia Neopolis, near ancient Samaria.
- Studied philosophy and after attempting Stoicism and Pythagorean schools, became a Platonic philosopher. Was looking for an explanation of the immaterial world and an understanding of God.
- Was walking alongside the sea thinking about “the meaning of life.”  
Encountered an elderly Syrian Christian who pointed him to the prophets:
  - More ancient than the philosophers.
  - Truth based on revelation rather than speculation
  - Fulfilled prophecy demonstrates their truth
  - “Proclaimed His Son, the Christ, sent by Him.”

# Justin's Conversion

- ▶ **Was already interested in Christianity because of**
  - ▶ Their moral superiority he had observed
  - ▶ Their courage in the face of persecution
  - ▶ Their impressive piety which he envied
- ▶ **Justin turned to the Scriptures and was brought to faith by the Holy Spirit.**
- ▶ **Converted to Christ, he became a traveling teacher, wearing the philosopher's gown and asserting Christianity as the only true "philosophy."**



# Justin's Writings

- Arrived in Rome during the reign of the Emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161 a.d.)
  - Policy of tolerance towards Christians
- Started a Christian “school” of philosophy
- *First Apology* (155 a.d.): written to the Emperor
  - Christians should only be arrested when they commit crimes; are generally loyal citizens.
  - Jesus as the Logos
  - Defends baptism and the Lord’s Supper from criticisms





# Justin's Writings, cont.

- ▶ ***Second Apology* (157 a.d.): addressed to Roman Senate**
  - ▶ Complaint about persecution of Urbanicus
  - ▶ Informs the Senate about Satan and his influence
  - ▶ Denial of cannibalism and sexual indecency
- ▶ ***Discourse to the Greeks: An analysis of the "gods" in Greek mythology***
- ▶ ***Treatise on the Sovereignty of God***
  - ▶ Draws from pagan philosophy and the Bible
  - ▶ Asserts that the best in philosophy is drawn from the prophets
- ▶ ***Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew* (147-161 a.d.)**
  - ▶ Proves from the Old Testament that Jesus is the Christ



# Arrest and Martyrdom

- ▶ With Marcus Aurelius as emperor, Justin was denounced by the cynic Crescens as a Christian (165 a.d.). Arrested with 6 friends/students.
- ▶ Required by the prefect Rusticus to sacrifice to Romans gods
  - ▶ Rusticus: “Approach and make sacrifice.” Justin: “No one in his right mind gives up piety for impiety.”
  - ▶ Rusticus: “If you do not obey, you will be tortured without mercy.” Justin: “That is our desire, to be tortured for Our Lord, Jesus Christ, and so to be saved. . . Do as you wish, for we are Christians, and we do not sacrifice to idols.”
  - ▶ Rusticus: “Those who do not wish to sacrifice to the gods and to obey the emperor will be scourged and beheaded according to the laws.”
- ▶ Eusebius: “The holy martyrs glorifying God betook themselves to the customary place, where they were beheaded and consummated their martyrdom confessing their Saviour.”



# Legacy of Justin, the Martyr

- ▶ Reminds us that there are seekers after truth in an age of doubt and confusion.
- ▶ The centrality of Scripture to evangelism and apologetics.
- ▶ The pre-evangelistic impact of Christian godliness, joy, and sacrifice.
- ▶ The impact of a fearless and public stance towards truth in an age of confusion, especially in emboldening Christians
  - ▶ Needham: “The apologists did not succeed in persuading the Roman government to cease from persecuting Christians. Probably no emperor ever read any of the apologies addressed to him. The chief effect of the apologies was on the Church itself: they helped to develop the Church’s theology and to strengthen the confidence of believers in the truth and righteousness of the faith they confessed.”
- ▶ Provided we are willing to die for Jesus

