Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Perpetua and Felicity

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1 Corinthians 13:7 “It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”



Imagine yourself in Carthage, North Africa, in the year AD 203. Two women are being held in a Roman prison because they refuse to renounce their Christian faith. One is Perpetua, about 22 years old, from a wealthy and well-respected family. She is married and has a baby son, still nursing at her breast.

The other is Felicity, her fellow Christian and a woman enslaved in Perpetua’s household. She is eight months pregnant.Two women from very different worlds. One born into privilege, the other denied her freedom. Yet in prison, they stand together as sisters in Christ.

Perpetua’s father visits her repeatedly, pleading with her to give up her faith. He begs her to think of her family, her baby and the future she is throwing away. She loves her father and is deeply distressed by his anguish. But she will not deny Christ.

In her prison account, Perpetua describes her father’s arguments as the work of the devil, trying to draw her away from her faith. She writes with remarkable conviction. She knows what awaits her, yet she is determined to face it. She trusts God will strengthen her to persevere regardless of how she is tested.

Reflective questions — What would you do if keeping your faith meant losing everything you hold dear? Could you stand firm if someone you loved begged you to turn away from Christ?

Reflective pause — 30 seconds

Felicity, too, faces the prospect of death. She gives birth to a little girl in prison, just days before the execution. Her fellow Christians pray with her and support her, unwilling to leave her behind.

Then the day comes.

The two women are led into the arena before a crowd. They are attacked by a wild animal. Perpetua is thrown to the ground. When she sees Felicity injured, she reaches out her hand and helps her to her feet. Even there, in the midst of suffering, they are looking after one another - always protecting.

The ancient account tells us that they stood together, encouraged one another and, at the end, embraced before they were killed by the sword.

Their courage did not come from an absence of fear. It came from a faith that held firm even when death was before them. Their hope was in their future - the promise of eternal life with Christ.

Reflective question — Is your faith strong enough to withstand the greatest test? Where do you need the Holy Spirit to strengthen you to trust, to hope and to persevere? And who might need you to stand alongside them when life becomes difficult?

Reflective pause — 30 seconds

Let the example of Perpetua and Felicity inspire you to embrace a love that protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres, whatever the cost.