

Seven Sons

2 Maccabees 7

by Don Falkos

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King Antiochus of the Seleucid dynasty arrested a Jewish woman and her seven sons. He ordered them to eat the meat of a pig. They refused; it would be against the Law of God. So he tortured them to death, beginning with the eldest brother.

Antiochus forced the entire family to watch as he cut out the boy's tongue, scalped him, and chopped off his hands and feet. The king had a huge skillet heated up over a fire, and while the boy was still alive, said to his soldiers, "Put him in the skillet and fry him."

Once the eldest was dead, Antiochus tortured and killed the next brother, and the next, and the next. All along, the mother and the surviving brothers encouraged each other, "Let's die bravely." And they did.

When six of the woman's sons were dead, she said to her youngest, "Don't be afraid of this butcher! Die willingly. Then God in great mercy will one day give you back to me along with your brothers."

Just before they died, each of the boys had words for the king:

God in heaven gave me this tongue, these hands, these feet. But I freely give them up rather than disobey the Law of the Lord. What are you waiting for? I am not going to obey your orders! God has not abandoned us. Kill us if you wish; the King of this world will raise us to eternal life. But you have no hope of life after death. We suffer now for a little while; you will suffer later for much, much longer.

The mother having watched her seven sons tortured and killed was then herself put to death by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, king of Syria.