

Audio Sermon: Three Secrets to Conquer Fear

by Josef Tson

Christ liberates us from fear by showing us the sovereignty of God, the meaning of martyrdom, and the power of perfect love.

Duration: 51:06

Scripture: Hebrews 2:14

Topics: "Overcoming Fear", "Sovereignty Of God"

Description

This sermon shares the personal experiences of a man living under communist oppression in Romania, highlighting the struggles, fears, and ultimate liberation found through faith in Christ. It emphasizes the power of love, accountability, and the sovereignty of God in overcoming fear and living a life of freedom and purpose.

Transcript

In 1945, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill gave half Europe to Stalin at the Yalta Agreement. With horror, we heard overnight that we were on the wrong side of that line that divided Europe in two and that we were left at the mercy of the Russians. It took the Russians three years to build up a communist apparatus in Romania.

By 1948, the secret police apparatus was there, the Communist Party apparatus was there, the country was surrounded by barbed wire, we were trapped, and the terror began. Do you know what terror means? Everybody is asked to go to political rallies. If you are absent, you are sent to a labor camp with no trial.

You go to the rally and you watch what they say, and they say stupid things, things you hate, but you have to clap and have to shout and have to show that you believe them, because if somebody sees you that you don't applaud, they will pick you up and send you to the labor camp. And you learn that if you ask a question and they think that because you asked that question, you show that you didn't believe them, that question may cost you your life. And you quickly learn that you don't speak your mind anymore, you know what they expect you to say, and you say what they expect you to say, even if you don't believe it, because you want to live.

You know what that meant in our terms? When an order came that from now on, Baptist churches can only meet Saturday night for a short worship, and Sunday morning for another worship, no other activities whatsoever in the church. No children, no women, no evangelism, no youth meetings, absolutely nothing

but those two meetings, public meetings, Saturday night and Sunday morning. There was a pastor who dared say no, he was picked up, he spent five years in labor camp, unspeakable labor camp, the worst labor camp of the country.

Everybody got the message, you accept. They came and told every pastor, you have to cooperate with the secret police, and if they give you, ask you to give information about your members, you give them. And there was a pastor who said no.

One evening a jeep stopped on the pavement right near him. Two strong men jumped on him, pushed him in the jeep, there were four strong people there, took him out of the city on a dark valley, and the four guys jumped on him and started to beat him to death. When he was almost crushed, they stopped, they said, now it's dead night, nobody knows where you are, we can leave you dead here, nobody knows, you get rotten here.

If you sign this letter that you accept to cooperate with the secret police, we take you home. Are you shocked if I tell you that he signed? Terror. Terror that teaches you even what sort of gestures they expect you to have.

And you learn that because you want to live. And you know you won't live if you don't obey. That was life under communism, 50s, 60s, and there came a time when the greatest thing happened to a few of us, when we were liberated from fear.

And I think that there is no greater freedom than that. When you are liberated from fear, not taken out of that system, but there, and you become free there. In my own life, it started the beginning of 1968 with a new experience, with a new encounter with my Lord.

When I made the determination that what he saved, he has to possess. Because he bought me at Calvary, and I am no more my own. And I told my wife from now on, whatever he wants me to be, that's what I will be, wherever he wants me to go, there I will go, whatever he wants me to do, I will do, because he bought me.

And I am owned. Yes, the Lord made a miracle at the beginning of 1969, and I was miraculously taken out of Romania. And in a string of miracles, I arrived in Oxford, got a scholarship in Oxford University, studied theology in the Baptist College of Oxford.

And for the first time in my life, I was free to go east or west, north or south. For the first time in my life, I could determine my destiny. But that wasn't true, because just a year before, I determined that I was bought.

And I had only one choice, to go to his majesty, my king, and say, my king, when I finish here, where do you want me to be? And he said, back home to Romania. Yes, your majesty, that's where I will go. And many, many people advise me that suicide, you will land straight in a jail, because you stayed here as a fugitive.

And are you so stupid to go back to the secret police, and to go back to that terror? That's stupid. That's true. But I belong to the king.

And my relationship with the king has only one word in it, obedience. And I have to obey the king, and I'll go. And when I went back there, I didn't go back to prison.

Because I was free. I was free before, I was free in the free world, and I was free when I went back. Because I came to discover that in the so-called free world, people weren't free.

And that freedom doesn't depend on where you are. I want to tell you tonight, how did God liberate me and my closest friends and co-workers, how did he liberate us from fear? Because I know that there are many people here who are not free from fear. And I'll show you what sort of fears.

I think that the first thing that the Lord did was to repair my eyes. That's the first way in which he liberated me from fear. Mending my eyes, repairing my eyes, or changing my eyes, whichever way you want.

I have difficulties with English language, so you choose your word for that. But here is what I mean. In Matthew 6, 22-24, Jesus says that all that is in you depends on your eye.

If your eye is good, then everything in you is light. If your eye is bad, everything in you is darkness. It all depends on the quality of your eye.

And if you want a biblical illustration, imagine the servant of Elisha. When that poor guy went that morning out and saw Samaria surrounded by military enemies, armies, and he came almost dead to his master and said, Master, we are lost. The city is surrounded by enemies, armies, and they are ferocious, and they are deadly, and we are finished.

And the great man of God smiled and said, Oh Lord, open his eyes. And something happens to his eyes, and all of a sudden he said, What? Master, look there. They are more with us than against us.

He just got his eyes repaired. Now, in 1970, as I was studying in Oxford, one of the most beautiful experiences of my life was that Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones accepted me in the Westminster Fellowship, going every first Monday of the month from Oxford to London for a whole day of theological debates with the doctor in the chair. And for two years I heard the doctor again and again saying, You must make the sovereignty of God the pillar of your thinking, the pillar of your theology, the basis of your existence.

And I did. That was one lesson that went into my whole being and changed all my outlook. Because I tell you now how that fits with the eye.

The sovereignty of God means this. With my bad eye, I look at the communist enemy. They are ferocious.

They are almighty. They have all the power in their hands. That's my bad eye.

But when I have my eyes mended, I see above them my sovereign God who manipulates them for his own purposes. Now, it happened in October 1974. I was arrested.

I committed a big crime. I wrote a booklet entitled The Christian Manifesto in which I described the failure of communism to produce the new man and how only Christ could solve the problems of that society. I sent a copy to Ceausescu.

My wife should tell you how we went together at the office of the president and we registered it as a message to the president. And then we went home and waited for his answer. And his answer came one morning at six, seven policemen with a mandate to search our house and then to put us on trial.

And the day came for the formal indictment. Now, that was to be a frightening experience. There were six senior officers there at the long table, a small table in front and me behind that little table.

And the colonel in the midst read the indictment and then he explained how grave the situation was. How could I stand up against them? After all, isn't it written in Romans 13 that the authorities are of God? Now, I never interrupt the speaker. It's not polite.

But I just couldn't keep my tongue. You see, when you are there, it's not you who speak. So I immediately jumped in.

I said, sir, would you let me explain how that Romans 13 applies here? They said, okay, go on. I said, sir, what happens here is not between you and me. What happens here is between my God and myself.

My God has some dealings with me here, sir. I don't know what. Maybe he wants to teach me a few lessons here.

I only know, sir, that you will do to me only as much as my father wants you to do. And you will not go one inch beyond that because you are only my God's instruments. He didn't like that interpretation of Romans 13.

But how I loved it because, you see, I saw above them my father pulling six strings and manipulating his six puppets. Now, that's a good eye. And that's understanding properly the sovereignty of God.

And I went across Romania in that time telling my people that sovereignty of God means that God is so much in control that he uses even his enemies or the ones who want to destroy his cause. He uses them always to promote his cause. And at the end of the day, they always discover that somehow they just pushed God's cause onward.

And they bite their nails and say, why did we do it? Somebody recorded one of those sermons and sent it to the government. I had an official from the government who said one day, you have such a strange view on us, Mr. Tson. Your sermon on sovereignty of God is so strange.

You see, you don't move among enemies then. They are God's instruments. And whenever they arrested us and beat us and did all those things, each time when we came out, we became stronger and everybody in the country listened better to our preaching.

And I pointed to that and I said, don't you see because of what they do to us, the gospel has much bigger strength? Don't you see how they push God's cause always? Look at it. Understand it. Sovereignty of God means that he uses always all his enemies to promote his cause.

Now that applies in America too. You know how? Look around you and identify all the people who make your life miserable. Look at the people whom you say, if this person wouldn't exist, my life would be heaven on earth.

And from today you start saying, these are my father's instruments working on me and on my character. And Romans 8, 28 is active through them. All things cooperate for my ultimate good, including these people who step on my toes every day and wrack my nerves every day.

They are my father's instruments. And if you open your eye like that, all your body is light. Look at all the dangers, all the threats, all the problems, everything in that light, with those eyes, the eyes of the sovereignty of God, and all your being will be full of light.

That's the first way in which God liberated me from fear. There was a second liberation, a glorious liberation. It's in Hebrews 2, 14-15.

Jesus Christ shared my flesh and blood, in order that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and might deliver those through, those through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. Satan keeps people in slavery all their lives by what? By fear of death. And when I understood that, I understood that Satan's tool of enslavement is fear of death, and I understood that Christ liberated me from that.

Why and how? Well, he died my death. There is no more death for me. There's no death for me.

I don't die. I go home. I go to glory.

So I was arrested, and that officer got very upset with me, and he said, don't you understand where you are? Don't you understand my power? Don't you understand that I do whatever I want with you? Sir, let me explain that to you. Look, sir, if you come tomorrow with your car straight on the pavement or the walkway where I am and then hit me, because I know you can't do that, I won't say, look what this rascal from the secret police is doing to me. No.

I would look up and in that instant I would see my father saying, Joseph, enough there. Come up here. Sir, you only send me to glory.

But sir, let me tell you something. My God is a very strange God. He will use you to send me up.

But at the same time, he will charge you with murder. Now, in order to prove this, watch out. It is staggering.

I said, sir, this was March 1974. At New Year Eve, at the beginning of this year, in the northern part of the country, this was in the south, a group of Christians, a group of Baptists were spending that New Year Eve together as we do. And among other things, they put scriptures in a bowl.

And each one drew one scripture as God's promise for the New Year. And they all read them, and they all rejoiced in what God said for them. And then when they finished with that, one of them remembered me.

And he said, poor brother Joseph, he's there at the secret police in interrogation. I wonder, what will the Lord give Joseph? Now look, brethren, let's make this agreement. I take this scripture from here, and we'll see that it reaches him.

And then I took my wallet, I took a piece of paper, I gave it to that secret police officer, and I said, sir, this is the scripture that man took from that bowl. Please read it. And he read Proverbs 22 to 23.

I will defend their cause, but I will spoil the life of them that spoil them. And his hand trembled, and kindly he gave me back that verse. He didn't keep it.

And he said, this is us. I said, yes sir, and watch out. Now you see, there was another time when I was charged with treason, and another major threatened to shoot me.

And all of a sudden my face shone, and he said, what? When I threaten somebody to shoot him, he at least gets afraid. But you smile, you are abnormal. No sir, I am not abnormal, I am supernormal.

Because you cannot threaten me with glory. When you shoot me, you send me to glory. I am not afraid of glory.

And you should have seen their frustration, because there is nothing more dangerous on this planet than people who are not afraid of dying. You cannot do anything to them. They are beyond your reach.

But it was this certainty that there is no death for me. It's only the invitation home. It's the invitation to glory.

And I can hardly wait. And when I preach at the funeral of a young and clean boy or girl, I make that mention. Look how God finished them so quickly.

And he has so much work on me, so he keeps me so long in the valley and says, you stay there, I still didn't finish with you. And I am craving to go home, to go to glory. Freedom.

Because Christ died my death, and there is no more death. So there was more than that. I shared with my wife at that time, and I shared with a few other people, if we can find at least ten people who are not afraid of dying, who stand up and preach the whole counsel of God, and then pay with their death, we conquer this land for the Lord.

And when that man first time threatened to kill me, the one to whom I gave that scripture, then I said to him, now let me go on with the explanation, sir. You should know, sir, that your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying.

Here is how it works, sir. My sermons are on tapes all over the country. When you kill me, I sprinkle them with my blood.

And everybody in the land knows that I died for my preaching. And everybody will pick up that cassette or that tape and say, I better listen again, that man really meant it, he died for it. Sir, my preaching will speak ten times louder after you kill me.

In actual fact, I will conquer this land because you killed me. Go on and do it. He sent me home.

And then one of his colleagues commented to another Baptist minister, we know that Mr. Zorn would love to be a martyr, but we are not that big fools to fulfill his wish. Now that pastor ran to me to tell me that shocking news that even if I beg them, they will not kill me. Stop, stop a little bit, because I see something very, very serious here.

For so many years, I was afraid of dying. And because I was afraid of dying, I kept quiet, and I wasted precious years in doing nothing. I wasted my life because I wanted to save it.

And when I decided to give it away, to die for the Lord, they tell me that even if I beg them, they will not kill me. Don't you see now I can go across this country and I can preach whatever I want, wherever I want, because I know they will not kill me even if I ask them to? As long as I wanted to save my life, I lost it. When I lost it, I found it.

And somebody said some words like this somewhere. That's when I found out that those words were literally true. Give your life away in the service of Christ, and you will find it.

So that's how Christ liberated me by showing me the glory and showing me the meaning of martyrdom. And because he showed me these things and opened my eyes to see these new values, instead of the

value of survival, I was free. And what an extraordinary feeling to be there at the secret police and to be free.

You don't have to come to America to be free. You can be free at the headquarters of the secret police in Romania. That's real freedom.

Only Christ can give you that. There is a third way in which Christ liberated me from fear. You find that in 1 John 4, verse 18.

There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out fear. And he who fears is not perfected in love.

One of the first days in interrogation, I have to imagine this. I was placed under house arrest, and for six months I had to go every morning, from Monday to Friday, to interrogation at the secret police headquarters. They confiscated my library before.

I had to be in interrogation from Monday to Friday. I lived above the church. I had a little apartment there.

And I was allowed to preach Friday night and Sunday morning and evening. I had no library. I was in interrogation five days, and I had a fresh sermon Friday night and two good sermons on Sunday--six months.

One of the first days in interrogation kept me until eight in the evening, and it was late. The man just said, take your coat and go home. Tomorrow morning at eight be back in the battle.

I turned to him. I said, Sir, why do you use that language of war? You should know, Sir, that every morning before I come here, I pray for you and for your salvation, and I pray for your family. And then I come to meet the man for whom whose salvation I just prayed.

I don't come to a war because you don't go to a war with a man for whom you just prayed. I could see how it would hit him, and he just choked, and he couldn't breathe. And he just said, okay, go home.

Later on in the interrogation, the other men, they were always two there, but sometimes for certain reasons one was absent, and usually when one was absent, the other one could speak. They were afraid of each other. So when the major was alone one day, he said, Mr. Zon, when I interrogate somebody, I feel how they hate me, and they are justified to hate me, because I am not nice to them.

But with you, Mr. Zon, it is different. I don't know how to put it, but I want you to know that it's a delight for me to be with you. I have to confess, it wasn't a delight for me to be with him, or was it? He told me in the last day of interrogation, he said, Mr. Zon, you go free, and I'll miss you.

Because you see, in six months, I had so many occasions to tell him my experiences with my God, and he would forget that it was an interrogation, and he would just listen for hours, and then he would remember and say, well, we are in an interrogation, let's go on. I'll miss you. You see, the Lord told us that those people there have only one chance to hear the gospel.

If we are arrested, we are there because we have to witness. We have to show them Christ. I think that the most beautiful experience, I think, of those years for me was when I was arrested in Palm Sunday of 1977.

Sunday morning, before going to preach in the city of St. George, two gentlemen picked me up and took me down to Bucharest that Sunday. I found out why. It was another of my writings, and they consider that

a treason.

Because we were six who did it, it was also a conspiracy to commit treason. Treason brings twenty-five years in prison, but conspiracy to commit treason is capital punishment. On Monday morning, as the official interrogation started, there were the two usual interrogators there.

About lunchtime, a general came in. He made a sign like that, the hand. The two immediately left the room.

The general just started to curse me, and then jumped on me and started to beat me. Slapped me and hit me. Eventually, he hit me with a fist in the forehead.

I hit the wall. It almost cracked my head. When he finished with that, he just turned around and left the room.

The others on the corridor heard my screamings. They just came in and shrugged their shoulders. Let's go on with our interrogation.

On Thursday, that week, about lunchtime again, the general came in again. He made the same sign. The two went out.

I just caught the table like this. I braced myself for the second round of the boxing. He saw that gesture, and he smiled.

He sat down at the other table and said, Don't worry. This time I came to talk to you. Now, the Lord told us that we don't have to prepare beforehand our speeches when we go there.

You only prepare your speeches when you come to the pulpit. When you are arrested, he said, Don't worry. You will be given what to say at that moment.

I can tell you the most beautiful stories of those things that the Holy Spirit gives you there. The moment he said, I came to talk, it just jumped from me. Mr. General, because you came to talk, first of all, I want to apologize for what happened on Monday.

It just came out of the blue. He looked at me, and it didn't make sense to him because on Monday he beat me. Why do I apologize? I said, Well, let me explain.

You know, Mr. General, on Tuesday, I was kept here all day without interrogation. I had time to think and to pray. It dawned on me, Sir, this is the Holy Week, and you beat me in the Holy Week.

Well, for a Christian, there is nothing more beautiful in this world than to suffer when his Lord suffered. You realize you gave me the most beautiful gift of my life. I am sorry I shouted.

I should have thanked you for the most beautiful gift of my life because you beat me in the Holy Week. Again, I saw a man who choked. I said, Well, I shouldn't have done it.

Let's talk. We had an interesting talk. Following that, he decided that I should go and preach in my church for Easter and then to go back immediately after Easter.

When you preach sermons in that situation, you have to know that they are much, much better sermons than in any other time, especially when you know that it may be your last. It comes out very good. I don't

know if those people profited for eternity.

You just heard before that all our preaching is either for salvation or for condemnation. Now, my job there was to show those people the love of Christ. That's why I was there.

And with all that I did there, they had to see that somebody whom they hurt loved them so that they could say, It's a delight for me to be with you. That was my job, to show them the love of Christ. And I told people, This is the aggression of love.

I am not a victim when I go there. I am the attacker. Love on the attack.

Going there and saying, Thank you for the beating. That's the aggression of the love. That's the most beautiful war you could ever fight.

Be an aggressor of the love of Christ to everybody who hates Christ and hates you. Because of Christ. Look again to the people you think are making your life miserable.

And start to be an aggressor of love. And say, Lord, teach me how to show these people love. Give me ways in which I love them.

And you will see how many ways He will show you how you can love those people. And start loving them practically. Doing things of love to them.

And that moment you are no more the victim of their hate and of their malice or their wickedness. And even if they don't take it, even if that is their condemnation, you are victorious because you transform yourself from a victim into a Christ-like attacker. Because Christ came into this world as the aggressor of love.

And He accepted all the hate of the world and absorbed it in the cross. And instead of that, He said, Father, forgive them. And that's how He conquered.

There is one other way in which my Lord taught me how to be free. I'm a sinner. I'm a sinner.

Saved, but still I fail. And sometimes I fail miserably. I'm not ashamed to say it.

And I am ashamed, but I am ashamed before Him. Because after so much love that He showed me, I shouldn't fail Him. Well, He taught me one important thing, and that is that I have to be accountable.

And that means that I made the discipline of my life that I always have an older man, a godly man, to whom I go to confess my failures. I always saw that I had one, and I had for a time a pastor in Romania and then another pastor, and Richard Wurmbbrand was for a while my mentor and then my confessor. When I came to this country in exile in 1981, I went to the pastor of the First Baptist Church in that city, and I told him my spiritual discipline.

And now I wanted him to be the man to whom from time to time I should come, because, look, I travel every Sunday to other places for the mission, and I live in hotels, and I may be tempted with this and that, and I handle the money, and there's all sorts of temptations, and I have to be accountable, and I have to confess. And I was so shocked when I saw that man so embarrassed. He never had anybody to go like that to him, and he didn't know what to do with that.

But, you know, when I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long, for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer, and then I acknowledged my sin to thee, and my iniquity I did not hide. I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin. How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit! Of course, you know, this is Psalm 32, but James tells us that in James 5, 16, confess to one another.

I have to put myself to shame to somebody. If we confess, we're forgiven, and that is freedom. Freedom from sin comes through confession of sin, through accountability.

I always have to be under that accountability to somebody. I am free in his mercy. My Lord sought me in the slavery of sin, and he liberated me when he washed my sins away.

That's when I experienced freedom. And then he took me through all these other steps to mend my eyes, to see that he is sovereign, and there are no more enemies in the world for me. They're only my God's instruments.

To understand then that he died my death. I don't die. I go to glory.

That dying may be God's instrument for me to conquest. I was liberated then when I understood that I conquer my enemies by loving them. I cannot be afraid of the people I love.

I am afraid only of the people I hate. But when I hate, I am in bondage. When I love, I am free.

And when I learn the discipline of not letting any sin between me and the Lord and confess it and stay clean, I keep my freedom intact. What a joy to be a free being, a free person, free to live to the God-given potential, free to let the Lord use you as he wants to use you, because you are free. You are not blocked in your energies inside which area you are not free in.

I didn't come in vain tonight. God brought me here for you, because you have some slavery in one area or another, and he wants you to be free. And he gave me this message tonight for you.

Will you take it now and apply it and say, Lord, all these words were for me, and I accept to personalize them here, here, here, here. You look into your life, say, they apply here, here, here. Change me, Lord.

Liberate me, Lord.

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