

Brutal Persecution In Romania

by Josef Tson

This sermon by Brother Joseph Sohn emphasizes the importance of repentance, revival, and total surrender to Jesus Christ. He shares insights from the revival in Romania, highlighting the need for a deep commitment to Christ, readiness to die for the faith, and the struggle against worldly temptations. Brother Joseph also addresses the significance of baptism and the age of accountability, urging a meaningful understanding and decision before baptism.

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Description

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Transcript

When we considered speakers to bring in to share with us in relation to revival one of the first names that came to our mind and to our hearts was Brother Joseph Sohn. Brother Joseph is an exiled Romanian pastor in whose heart God has done a tremendous work and has brought perspective to many of us, for those of you that know him, in relation to true Christianity, especially as it relates to the type of Christianity here in America as compared to in Romania and other countries. When I asked how he would like to be introduced he said simply a slave of Jesus Christ.

Brother Joseph. I consider these two days yesterday and today as some of the most beautiful days for me or a special gift of the Lord for me just to be in the presence of Manly Beasley and Brother Ravenhill and a few other great experts in revival. I grew up with Andrew Murray and the Keswick literature.

Actually, if you want to know, this summer I was planned to go to Manila but then I was thinking what gift to give to my wife and daughter for this summer and I decided instead of Manila I will go with them at Keswick and we just come with the glow of Keswick here and so it was my upbringing and my kind of literature that feeds me is what these men represent and for me it's the first time I see them in person and it's a special gift of the Lord especially because they are so old and they will not belong with us. I feel totally inadequate to speak in a place with them and with you I don't presume to teach you. I agonized on what to say this afternoon and one important thing that they want to say from the beginning is that when it

comes to revival there are not two revivals alike in history.

The issues are different. So the methods the Lord uses to revive his people are different. I am so aware that the situation in Romania is so radically different from the one in America that I don't know if I can be relevant in telling you how the Lord revived us.

Could that apply here because of the so different situation? You see with us it was brutal persecution that made everybody submit, everybody acquiesce, everybody accept all the restrictions, everybody keep quiet and try to live their faith in themselves whatever the restrictions out and whatever the compromises one was asked to make in order to stay alive. And I came to see one day that the greatest sin was the desire to survive. When I wrote the first paper on this issue in 1973 I mentioned that our greatest mistake was the desire to survive because I said sometimes the Lord doesn't expect you to survive.

Sometimes the Lord wants you to stand up and witness and die and so out of our desire to stay alive we made all the compromises and I came to see that the real issue was am I ready to die for what I believe in? Do I love the Lord Jesus so much that I literally accept to die for him? And the Lord took me through a process through which I came to understand that actually when he asked me to die for the gospel that is a ministry that gives me, that he gives me. And that through that dying he will speak to others and maybe that is what will spark the revival. If I stand up, if I preach the whole counsel of God and they kill me then everybody else will see it and do the same.

And when I saw that I turned to my beloved wife and I said to her, Elizabeth, this is what I want to do. I want to see a young generation standing up and not being afraid to speak the whole counsel of God with no compromises at all and ready to die for Christ. Only then we conquer this land.

But I cannot do it without your permission. Will you dedicate me to the Lord for this? She had a struggle for a while with that and she would tell you that a struggle was as long as it wasn't quite necessary for her to say it. Only when she really came to see that it was necessary she was ready to do it.

What happened was that we had eight policemen at our door that Friday morning at six. They searched our house for eight hours. They confiscated all my library and just cannot stop saying, telling you this, as I had to sign on every book.

You know I am a book man. I live with books and to sign on every book found at my place on the 4th of October 1974 and give it to a policeman to put it in a bag to take them away. And I was reading every title I had to sign away.

And one of the first, imagine eight policemen turning your house upside down, you signing your books away. And as I read that book the title was, Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory. And under title, Is it Yours Now? And that moment I said, Lord if it's not mine now it will never be.

Give me that joy now. And that moment I realized I was a host. Those policemen needed a cup of coffee.

I had to make a testimony to them and I was completely changed. And from that day on, through all my interrogations, through all my problems, one issue was there. Do I have the joy? And they came to see that on my 8th and the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Now when the policemen went, the house was turned upside down. That night Elizabeth couldn't sleep. She couldn't sleep the following night.

And then that second night she woke me up at about twenty to four. She asked me to go in the kitchen with her, made a cup of coffee. And she said, will you Joseph go through the Bible again with me? Tell me about that lamb of sacrifice.

You are teaching about the lamb. I got a teaching how God conquers the world through lambs. Jesus being the chief lamb.

But the other lambs who go to the wolves and as they are torn in pieces, the wolves become lambs. So I went through the Bible and they showed her where it was and how. And then she said, let's go on our knees and pray.

And we went on our knees and there she said, Lord, I give you Joseph for whatever ministry you want. Imprisonment, death, whatever. When she tells this story she will add, I never had a sleepless night without after that.

But then something else happened in Elizabeth. You see, for 14 years we didn't have children. And it was about 16 months before that we got the most wanted child.

Now she said, I am ready too. I am ready to go to jail with Joseph. But what about Dorothy? And she realized that the surrender wasn't complete.

So alone she went back at the prayer place and she said, Lord Jesus, I give you Dorothy too. It must have been something extraordinary for that mother to say that because she was mad for that little girl. But listen to this.

I was in the living room looking in the garden and she came close to me. I didn't know what happened. Only later and she explained what she meant.

It was after she prayed that and she gave Dorothy to the Lord. She came and touched my arm and she said, Joseph, look at this beauty in the garden. Now look at you and if I touch your hand now, it seems to me that I don't touch your body.

I only touch your spirit. And I wanted to know what she meant by that and she just said, this world, matter, this world of matter doesn't exist to me anymore. The only reality that exists for me is the spiritual reality.

She was so detached now from everything because all she had dear, she gave to the Lord. Last night as I heard Brother Bisley speaking about Hebrews 11, these people who had one thing in common, they were people who considered that this world wasn't the true reality. They were the people who knew that there was another world, another reality and they were only strangers and travelers to that reality.

And for them that was the real reality and especially Moses. That's why he was ready to give up Egypt because he was looking to that. He was seeing that reality and said, Egypt is rubbish.

I want that reality. And I just remember Elizabeth with her sense of that reality. I just want to tell you another of those experiences as we went through many interrogations and years of trials and difficulties and beating and whatnot.

At the end of all that, there was one day at the interrogation when the interrogator told me that the following day, he intimated to me that he was decided to finish with me the following day. He allowed me to go home that night and I so sensed that tomorrow really he was going to kill me. I spoke with Elizabeth.

They felt I needed further spiritual help. We went to a couple who are prayer warriors and they felt they could give me help. I shared with them and then we went to pray.

Now it's very strange. I look back at that prayer. It just didn't occur to me to pray, Lord, don't let that man do it to me.

Lord, rescue me. That's something that I think now. Why didn't I pray that? Because there and then I only said, Lord, tomorrow they will take this body and crush it under their boots.

Lord, the only thing I want is to give you a clean sacrifice. So will you wash this body anew in the blood so that tomorrow it's perfectly clean? And that moment I felt I was lifted up. I was somewhere in total sweet communion with my Lord.

I read about this levitation, as they call it. When I said amen, I sensed that I came down. I was sorry I said amen.

It was so good there, so beautiful, so unspeakably holy. Now I went there next day and only to hear that the interrogation was over. And I look back on that and said, why did the Lord make us finish with that? It was a more complicated story, but I felt that we had a great victory there and said the Lord wanted us to finish in a note of victory.

And Elizabeth looked to me and she said, Joseph, it's not that. Let me tell you what I see in this, Joseph. See, Joseph, I watched you through all these interrogations, and I watched myself in them.

And here is what I saw. Joseph, the Lord has a battle in us until he brings us to a corner where we have no choice, no way out, and where we say it's all yours. And that happened that evening when you said it's all yours.

Unreservedly, totally with no qualifications. When God's purpose in you was fulfilled, there was no need of interrogation anymore. That's why it was over next day.

Because it all had that purpose to bring you to that place where you give it all to the Lord. I learned a very important spiritual lesson, and that is that again and again I do a blunder. I took my life back in my own hands.

And he again has to bring me in corners where I say, I am sorry, Lord, again I took it in my hands. Have it again. And somehow keep these hands off my life.

Be there, the only Lord, the only Master. And again and again my battle is this, to keep him in command. Keep it all under his authority and keep myself a slave.

Now, permit me please to do something that it's very difficult for a foreigner to do, and that is to make a critique of the country where he was given so much hospitality and so much help. And I would like to tell you in the time that is left for me how I see Christianity in America. Brother Ravenhill said that the greatest, well, the cause of downfall in America is not the strength of humanism, it's the weakness of the evangelicals.

And I totally agree with him. When I came to this country eight years ago, I started to see and watch and understand America. I wanted to understand Christianity here because my job is here is to select books, translate them, and give them to my brothers in Romania.

And I have a tremendous agony with each book that I choose. Is this the right thing to give to my people? So I have to scan the whole spectrum again and again for every subject from which I choose literature. I am forced to study the whole spectrum.

And as I studied these things, I came to see that those weaknesses that make evangelicalism become a tragedy in America. Here are the things that I saw. Now, you may think they are the right thing, or you may say I am wrong, but I tell you what I see, the things that I don't want to take to my country.

And I want to defend my Christians in Romania against these things. The first is what kind of Jesus is presented here in evangelism. And if I am to describe the Jesus that I see presented here, I would say a Santa Claus who distributes goodies.

Come to Jesus and he will give you this or that or that, whatever you want. Bring a list of all the things that you want and he will give them to you. I heard preachers say exactly that.

It's a blank check. You come and fill it in because that's what Jesus gives you. He is there to bestow all these goods on you and give you great feelings and make you rich and prosperous and heal you and satisfy you and give you self-fulfillment and self-esteem and all these things.

They look in my Bible and they say, where did they find this Jesus? Because I see right there where Peter starts in the first sermon. The only thing he announces about Jesus is that Jesus was made Lord by God. And they are so shattered by that news, so scared by that, and they say, brothers, what shall we do? Now he is Lord.

You see, the Jesus I knew was the Lord. Romans 14, 6-9 tells me that the purpose for which Christ died was that he might become the Lord. And then I read in 2 Corinthians 5-15, for this reason Christ died, so that we cease living for ourselves and live for the one who died for us.

How many of us preach about that purpose of Jesus' crucifixion? He died with that purpose in mind, to make me cease living for myself and say, I live for Jesus. It is that Jesus, that Jesus that says, you go and sell everything and you come and I am your boss, I am your Lord, and you come and submit and obey. He is the King and when you go to the King, you don't go with your hands in your pockets and say, hey King, let's have a chat together.

You go and say, your majesty, I'm here to take orders. What do you want with my life, your majesty? You don't go with your agenda to him. You don't go to ask for his agenda for your life.

Oh yes, he has a kingdom to give, but his first word is submit, accept my rule. So this is the first thing. You see, now I couldn't preach in Romania, come to Jesus and he will give you all this satisfaction.

In Romania I had to say, now come to Jesus, but wait a minute, don't hurry too much. You know that you lose your job when you come to Jesus. Be careful.

Do you find in Jesus that treasure that makes you out and sell all you have in order to obtain the treasure? If you're not ready to look back to whatever you lose there and say, all that is garbage in order to get the King, don't come to Jesus. And I had to make it very difficult for them because I didn't want them in a rush of emotion to come and the next day to go because it was too difficult to follow Jesus. So what sort of Jesus do we depict in evangelism? Is he the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the one who demands you and your life and your submission and your obedience and your everything? The second would be a

second question actually.

What kind of salvation do we present? Or what is the content of the salvation we present? Is it the salvation from hell to heaven? That's not the salvation that we see in the Bible. Jesus, when he tells the apostle Paul what sort of salvation he is going to preach, we find it in Acts 26 verse 18. I sent to you to them to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from dominion of Satan to God in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in me.

You bring them from under Satan to under God. That is the salvation. Transfer from one dominion into the other dominion.

Or, if you want it in Peter's words, and I think these are even more important for us today to see, you are not redeemed with gold or silver. From what? From hell? From this futile way of living that you inherited from your parents. You are redeemed from a type of life into another type of life.

Brother Rabin here just said, are you saved from alcoholism? Are you saved from fornication? Are you saved from lust? Are you saved from this or that? Because you are redeemed from that type of living into another type of living. Or, as Paul puts it to Titus, Titus chapter 2 verse 14, the grace was shown and this grace does that and that. What? Because Christ wants to make a people for himself passionate for good works.

What God wants through all that grace that was shown in the cross of Christ is a people passionate for good works, for a new type of living, for clean type of living. So, the type of salvation that we preach. The third thing, what kind of relationship we preach right in evangelism.

Is that relationship a transaction that is up there? They heard some people saying it's a legal transaction. All that it was in your account is put in Christ's account and all that was in Christ's account is now in your account. Now, that is a real explanation of Romans.

There is that kind of transfer of guilt and of merit there, but that's not enough. That's only the heavenly aspect. The relationship is an ownership issue.

Who is my owner? And there can be only two and no neutral ground in between Satan or God. I am either the slave of Satan or the slave of God and the relationship is this, whose slave are you? Now, as I speak in mission conferences and preach in so many places, again and again, just like today, some pastor would come and say, how do you want to be introduced? And I was fed up with this pompous presentations and lists of titles and achievements. And I said one day, why don't you introduce me as Paul introduces himself, Paul, the slave of Jesus Christ.

And even better, I have a better, I love this one, Jude. Now, you know, Jude was the brother of Jesus Christ. What an introduction! Jude, the brother of Jesus Christ.

I love his way of introducing himself. He still wanted people to know where he came from, what sort of family he came from. So he writes, Jude, the slave of Jesus Christ and the brother of James.

Everybody knew that this James was the brother of the Lord. But you see, Jude, the slave of Jesus Christ and the brother of James. Now, this pastor loved it and he went to the pulpit and he said, Joseph wants to be introduced as Joseph, the servant of Jesus Christ.

And I looked and said, I didn't say that. I said, slave, why did he change in servant? Then next Sunday, it happened in another place, next Sunday in another place. Until about two years ago, I was preaching a Trinity Seminary series of sermons in the chapel.

And the first one in the office with the New Testament professor, he said, Joseph, how should I introduce you? And I just said, Joseph, the slave of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Oh, I like that.

And he started to write. And I said, but please don't change slave into servant. And he just did.

Then I turned to him and said, sir, don't you understand the astronomic difference between the two? A slave is owned by his master. A servant condescends to give you a service either out of magnanimity or for money. But Paul says, don't you know you are not your own? You are bought with a price.

Sir, I don't dare say I am a servant of Christ. That's diakonos. And you never hear this word used in relation to God in the New Testament.

We are diakonos to each other. Whenever it speaks about God, we are doulos. I douleo to Christ.

I slave to Christ. And the professor went to the body of students there and explained all that. And actually, that gave us the tone for the whole week.

And I got many thanks for those messages. But the one that came again and again was, thank you for making us aware of the difference between slave and servant. You know, NIV and other modern versions, that's where they did the catastrophe.

They changed slave into servant. Because the modern man doesn't want slavery, especially American man whose most cherished word is independence. He doesn't want his students to call him a slave.

So remember this, that I am totally against this word servant. I am for the word slave when it relates to God. My relationship to God is the relationship of a slave.

He bought me. Oh yes, he's my father too. But I have to come into this relationship with this mentality of the slave who has no other choice.

I was bought. I don't belong to myself. I am not my own.

The other word that puzzled me when I came to America and gave me a lot of trouble was the word commitment. Now, you see, as I translate everything in Romanian and as I want to take to Romanian whatever is good here, I immediately said, how do I translate commitment in Romanian? And the trouble is I don't have a word for commitment in Romanian. And so good that I don't have one.

And so I just try to understand what's commitment. Listen to it, listen to it. Incidentally, it was introduced in English in the 60s.

It's part of the 60s American tragedy. If you read the Alan Bloom's book, what's its title, The Closing of the American Mind, he speaks about this dreadful word commitment, how it entered that time in the language. Now, commitment means that I engage myself to do a certain thing to you.

I pledge that I do something for you, as far as I can understand as a linguist this word. Well, I asked a question, and that was in a flash, it brought to me fantastic light. The question was, what other word did

the word commitment replace in the evangelical vocabulary? Normally, when a new word comes into practice, it throws out another word.

It replaces a word which somehow became obsolete or somehow became unwanted. People want a new idea, people want a new attitude. So what was the word that they replaced? And I immediately saw that the word replaced by commitment was the word surrender.

Now, here is why. Surrender means I lift up my hands and I say, you take over. You decide now, because I give it up.

And you come to these Americans with the total independence mentality, and who want to be their own boss, and nobody should command them what to do, and you speak about full surrender? That won't do. Somebody said in Mississippi, as I spoke to a group of pastors that lunchtime on self-denial, he turned around to his colleague and he said, I would never preach on self-denial. My people won't buy that.

Here was a man who knew what his people would buy, and that's what he was selling them. So let's sweeten up the things. Let's say it's commitment, and we say full commitment, total commitment, strong commitment, but it's still me engaging myself to do something for you.

I still remain untouched. And you can see across American evangelical spectrum that there is less and less and less talk about surrender. In many places, it's a completely lost word.

It's commitment. Commitment. Because commitment doesn't touch the core of the being.

It's not slavery. It's not me being possessed, owned by somebody else. So, incidentally, just for this kind of words, another word that was introduced in the last 30 years is the word values.

Now, you see, until 30 years ago, the Christians had rules, principles, commandments of God. But we don't like rules. We even say, well, we are under a grace.

We don't need commandments and principles. So, but values? That's what I have. That's what I cherish.

That's what I like. Values. They are my values.

In that respect, I don't want values. I have principles given to me by God, and I live by those principles. So, don't ask people, what are your values? Ask them, what are your principles? What are the rules by which you live your life? That's what defines that person.

I'll come to the one issue which is the most controversial this time in America. I know that, therefore, I can lose some support or some friendships with that, but it was an agony in me for a long, long time. You see, the Catholics, in all their history, had the split between common people of God, as they called them, and the clergy and the monks.

They were the disciples. The rest were just common Christians. I was terribly shocked when I came to see that this distinction is so prevalent in American evangelicalism, this teaching that discipleship is an optional.

You come to Jesus, and you are saved, but you're not obligated to anything. Well, as an optional, later on, you make him Lord, and you become a disciple. So, I looked again and again in all those calls to discipleship of Jesus.

That's the main issue there. Is the call to discipleship only to a chosen few, or it is to everybody who follows Jesus? You look in Matthew 16, and you look in Mark 8, and you see that where Jesus starts with, if anybody wants to follow me, if anybody, Mark says, before he said that he called the multitudes with the disciples, and he shouted loud, if anybody wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow me. So, again, as a side thing, this picking up your cross, it's so hazily taught.

As I studied the issue of suffering with Christ and sharing in Christ's sufferings, I came to see that the invitation to pick up our cross and follow him means, as he puts it there, suffering for my sake and for the sake of the gospel. When you suffer for the sake of the gospel, you suffer for the sake of the lost, so that they may obtain the salvation that is in Jesus Christ, as Paul puts it in 2 Timothy 2.10. Picking up the cross and following Christ means that, as he went to be crucified for our salvation, I accept to be crucified for other people's salvation. Now, don't be scared, because Paul explains there in 2 Timothy 2.10, for this reason I suffer all these things, for the elect.

You see, he suffers for the elect, so that they may obtain the salvation that is in Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ obtained my salvation. My cross is there to spread it, to make it available.

And as I spoke about this in England, a Keswick theologian came to me and he said, Joseph, I saw you struggle with words. Put it this way. The cross of Christ is for propitiation.

Our crosses are for propagation. And he gave me the clue to the best words. We are invited to become partners with Christ for the salvation of the world.

And if we don't accept to lose our lives like that, we lose them in actual fact. We only gain them when we lose them with Christ for the sake of the gospel. Now, what would happen if this is an accepted teaching all over America? Take, for example, 2 Corinthians 12.15, where Paul says, I will gladly spend all I have, and I will expend myself for your souls.

What if every Christian in America said and meant those words? I will gladly spend all I have and expend myself for the lost, for their souls. I think my time is gone. I was asked to share these two things with you.

One was to tell you a little bit about our revival. And I remind you that our revival had the issue, are you ready to literally die for Jesus? Is he precious enough for you? And they were revived who have said, yes, he is that precious to me. As I interviewed people for baptism again and again, after I saw that they clearly understood the message of salvation, and understood who Jesus was and what it meant to be a Christian, I would come to that final question.

Do you know that on Sunday when I baptize you, a secret police officer will be in the building, in the auditorium, will take your name, send it to your place of work, and you will lose your job, and you have a pretty good job. And I would see tears in their eyes, and they would say, brother, I know that I will lose that job, but Christ died for me. I am ready not only to lose a job, I am ready to die for him too.

And then I would say, oh, if that is your answer, then I'll baptize you. You see, then you know that when you baptize those people, they have made their calculations. They went through everything.

And when they came, they came with everything. That is the true evangelism. And that shouldn't be waited for for later on.

Everything has to be put on the table there. This is who Jesus is, this is what he claims, and he claims everything. He wants to become your Lord, that's why he died, and he expects you to stop living for yourself, and live for the one who died and lives for you.

Don't postpone it. And let me tell you something, you don't scare them. You are afraid that if you put it that way, nobody will come.

That was the feeling in Romania, and we were losing ground until we stood up and started to preach this kind of Jesus, who demands everything, and for whom you have to be ready to die. And at that point, we had the revival. At that point, we had the young people come in.

Amazing! And saying, we don't want the compromises of our parents. We feel that it's either or. We want to be totally with Jesus or not with Jesus.

And that's revival. When you are not lukewarm, you are hot for the Lord. But that is when you confront them at the beginning with a total claim of the total king of kings.

I've heard you share a little bit in the past about the role of repentance in the revival in Romania. Could you briefly share a little bit of that with us today? Right when the first, now to start with this, look at Eastern Europe as the part of the world where, of the part of Europe where reformation never went. Reformation stopped in Hungary.

There was some reformation in Czechoslovakia, and a little bit of it in Hungary. About 20 percent of the Hungarians are reformed. Beyond that, there is Poland, Romania, Russia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Greece.

They never had reformation. Now, about a hundred years ago, some British Baptists came in, and some German Baptists. And very strange, they started with preaching.

Repentance. You have such an ugly and sinful life. You have to repent of that and come to Jesus and he will forgive you, but he forgives you only if you repent.

And people started to come to repent. And immediately they were called repenters. So even today, if you go to Romania and speak with common people, you see they are Baptists, and then a little bit later the Primate Brethren came, and then Pentecostals.

Now, these three are the reformation in Romania. But the common people don't call us Baptists or Pentecostals or Primate Brethren. Yes, they say they're repenters.

When I was, my father was the first repenter in his village. And it was a few years, just he alone, and then he moved to the city and I went to the school there, and when I was nine, a Catholic priest came to teach us religion. And the first thing the kid said, we have a repenter here.

A what? Like a leper. He couldn't believe, and he said, well, let me test him. And he came, called me in front and he said, make the sign of the cross.

And I put my hands on the back and said, no sir, that's sin. That's what my daddy told me. And he slapped me.

That is my first religious experience. Ever since, we were identified as the ones who take repentance seriously. Now, the revival started at that point where a preacher who was soaked in prayer for a few years, he wasn't allowed to be a preacher.

And with our movement in 1974, we secured for him the right to preach again. And he really exploded in this church, in Oradea. He just enumerated the sinful practices he knew were familiar in that church.

And he just went through the list of them and called people to make a commitment, commitment, to come before the Lord, repent of that sin, and promise they will exclude that practice from their lives. It was a vineyard area. Previous pastors had their own vineyard and their own wine.

And this man explained to them that it is the alcohol that blocks all spiritual life. And lo and behold, in a few months' time, the church was so hot that they took a vow of total abstinence from alcohol. Now, they got all those strictures, repented on their sins, made the public pledge as a church that they will not practice those things anymore.

And by June, when they took that pledge in 1974, before that, on average, if you looked on the 10 previous years, on average, that church would baptize 10 more new converts. From June to December 74, they baptized 249 people. And that was when the revival started.

And it spread everywhere, and it spread as a call to holiness, a call to prayer, and especially prayer for the lost. And the other ingredient was we stand up and we accept to die for what we believe. And it is today, as you go to Romania, the most oppressed country of the communist world today, the most unfortunate, you go there, you see over-packed churches, throbbing with life, and those people would tell you, well, that's the secret police agent here, and that one is watching us now, and smiling, and saying, let's do our business.

And a lot of visitors told me that they just don't seem to be concerned. They take it as for granted that they are there, and they have to hear the gospel. No more afraid, because again and again, you will tell them, you want me to prison? Here am I. You want to kill me? Kill me.

As one of them put it, sir, when you kill me, you send me to glory. You cannot scare me with glory. After coming to America and now living somewhat in a materialistic society and worldliness, have you found that to be any difficult, in your own life, coming from that environment to this one? I would say we, not only me, with Elizabeth, we found it rather difficult because we got immune to a certain type of microbes, spiritual microbes, like the fear and oppression.

And we came here where you have a different type of, a totally different type of microbes, spiritual microbes. And we didn't have immunity to that. I'll tell you, one of my biggest problems was pornography.

Going into that newspaper, news store to buy a newspaper and just smearing my eyes with those images there, or opening that TV and then seeing what you have. You cannot see anything now on TV without something dirty to smear your eyes. So I had to give up.

But it was an enormous struggle as I went to different hotels and alone there, and there was the TV. Would I open the TV or spend that evening in prayer? And that was a long battle. And what I did, I went to our pastor in Wheaton, Illinois, the First Baptist Church, and I told him, I said, look, as I am here a leader of this mission, there's nobody above me.

I must have a mentor. I must have a pastor to whom I confess my temptations and my struggles. And I told him all this.

And I said, now, whenever I fall into this temptation, I would come and you should take me to task. You should watch me. My problem with that man was that he was not used to that.

He didn't have anybody like that. And I just saw that he was impotent. He couldn't take that job seriously.

But you see, I have to be responsible to somebody and I have to shame myself, at least in front of somebody to whom I go and say, yes, I did it again. I fell into that temptation. And the temptation of leisure and commodity or not being enough disciplined with my time and with my schedule, these are new things that I didn't have in Romania that much as I have them here.

So I have to cope with new microbes. I like to say that you look at the parable of the sower and the seed that fell among the thorns. Now, Jesus says that there are two kinds of thorns.

Some thorns are the worries of this world. Some thorns are the pleasures and the riches of this world. Now, I guess that in Romania we have the first type of thorns, the worries, the fears of the world.

Here, you have this type of thorns. And I read in Chuck Swindoll that for a hundred people who would be thrown into, say, persecution or hardship, 90 of them would succeed, would come out victorious. But if you take the same hundred and throw them among the thorns of the pleasures and the riches, 90 will fail.

And so it's right for those Christians in the communist world to pray for you. And there are many, many there who know that it is more difficult to be a Christian in America than in Romania. So they pray for you and have pity of you.

I totally agree with what's being said about salvation and this. One of the problems that I have faced in communicating this to our church is in how to relate this to children who see role models and parents that don't live this kind of salvation and still keep the message simple, so to speak, in Christ. And I'd appreciate some counsel on relating it to children.

Thank you for that question. Although it's difficult because I differ with my Baptist brethren in this area, we will not baptize people before. Our sort of rule was you don't go lower than 16.

And now in two or three cases, I went to 14 where there was really mature children. But you see, you have to make your own mind if you go into that persecution. And you don't expose children to that.

You want them to know exactly what is at stake and then make that final decision and go into baptism. So I think that it is very wrong that you go and baptize children of five. They don't know what they do.

They are just manipulated by their parents. And I would challenge you with this. If they say yes to Jesus and you believe they are saved and you say that baptism doesn't save, why do you hurry to baptize them? Why don't you let baptism to be a meaningful event when they are at the age of accountability, when they make it on their own and you make that baptism as something very meaningful and not each year? You see, in Romania, we go through a three-month baptismal class and we have a thorough examination of them.

And then baptism is a big event that really impresses both on the ones baptized and on the whole community. And so baptism becomes a very, very meaningful thing. But here, I think it has lost all

meaning.

And that's why you have to go into that totally, I think, unacceptable issue of re-baptizing them. Because, well, they come and say, it didn't mean anything to me, so I want to make it meaningful. And you just say, well, let's re-baptize you.

Well, the Bible says that there is only one baptism. So that's how I would make it meaningful. Make that child accept the Lord and grow in the Lord and let him come to further and further understanding.

But let that final decision that will be sealed in baptism be at the time when that boy or girl really makes the decision of his or her own.

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