

Courage in Christian Ministry

by Josef Tson

Josef Tson's sermon emphasizes the courage needed in Christian ministry, highlighting the significance of trust in God amidst persecution and the call to embody Christlike humility and sacrifice.

Duration: 1:28:51

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:10, John 15:11, 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 1 Peter 1:8

Topics: "Persecution"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal experience of being interrogated and beaten by a general in Romania. Despite the physical abuse, he learns to rely on the Holy Spirit to speak through him during these interrogations. The speaker also discusses the connection between liberal theology and communism, and his mission to draw people back to the scriptures. After the revolution in Romania, the speaker gives away all his books as proof of his faith, and experiences a profound transformation when he realizes the joy and glory of the Lord. This transformation leads to a period of fruitful ministry, where he baptizes 850 new converts in just four years.

Transcript

The following message was recorded at an event hosted by Desiring God. More information about Desiring God events, conferences, and resources is available at www.DesiringGod.org. Be gracious to me, O God, for man has trampled upon me. Fighting all day long, he oppresses me.

My foes have trampled upon me all day long, for they are many who fight proudly against me. When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I have put my trust.

I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me? All he can do is kill us. I read a quote from a man named Manuel Pumasacho from Ecuador.

He's a Quechua Indian pastor. And he says, I thank God for persecution. Now I fear no one.

I don't worry about anything. I have complete trust in the Lord. And this could have been written by our speaker this morning, Dr. Yosef Son.

For six months, Yosef was called before investigators in communist Romania. And daily he responded to the constant threats of death that were leveled against him. And he finally told an investigator, he said, Sir, your supreme weapon is killing.

My supreme weapon is dying. My preaching will speak ten times louder after you kill me. Well, this dedication to preaching the gospel resulted in Yosef's being exiled by the Romanian government in 1981.

Which was a major mistake. Thought he was getting him out of the country, which seemed relief. And comes over to the U.S. and he becomes the executive director.

And shortly after that, the president of the Romanian Missionary Society, which is located in Wheaton, Illinois. And has spent years here and abroad preaching and exalting the Lord Jesus Christ. And awakening people to the suffering church and the role of suffering in the Christian life.

He taught a course at Western Seminary in Portland in the 80s. And the man that's staying in my home, Scott Clark, is a friend of mine, a missionary from Cameroon. And he sat in that class and he said how Dr. Tsan would startle the students.

He said, he would say communism is coming down. God is going to bring communism down. And I think they kind of, they didn't scoff at him, they respected him too much.

But they kind of rolled their eyes, you know, oh would that be true, you know. And sure enough, it happened. The other thing that Scott said that impressed him was that one of the things that so moved the students.

Was his compelling argument that communism was a direct result of liberal theology. That Karl Marx was a casualty of liberal theology. And so one of the burdens in Dr. Tsan's life is to go around and to draw people back to the scriptures.

And to give the word of God the supreme place it has in the truth claims of this world. And to do anything he can to stand against the liberal movements in Romania and the U.S. and beyond. But when the revolution in Romania happened in 1990, the doors were opened for the gospel.

They were always open but they were opened further. And Dr. Tsan returned immediately to Romania where he founded the Oradea Bible Institute. Which is now known as Emanuel Bible Institute.

He also built a Christian publishing company. And he established the Christian Radio Voice of the Gospel. He has recently or since then he's turned the Bible school over to other leadership.

But he said the one thing that he won't let go that he wants to keep his arms around is the publishing company. And because he's so committed to getting God-centered Bible-based teaching literature into the Romanian church. And so he's written extensively himself and he's also finding excellent books to translate into Romanian.

He's the author of five books, many articles. He earned a Ph.D. in Belgium and his dissertation topic was on martyrdom. And the fruit of this dissertation was published in 1997 in his book called Suffering, Martyrdom and Rewards in Heaven.

So I encourage you if you've never read on martyrdom that you would consider getting this book. Today Dr. Tsan travels widely in America and Europe, Romania. He's there much of his time.

And he is preparing the church to suffer in a manner worthy of God. And I can't think of a better way to close this conference that's focused on broken-hearted courage than to listen to Dr. Tsan. So let's welcome him.

Thank you. This has been an amazing conference. Many points of view.

Amazing, first of all, because who could have believed that we come to a point in time when persecution will be here in America. That preaching the gospel will be called hate crime. That people who just stand for the truth of God are threatened to be killed.

But this has come here. And it was an amazing conference because they were amazing speakers. Elmore, Ben Patterson, John Piper, all of them stood for what they believed and they were all heavily, bitterly persecuted.

And we were challenged and fed and nourished and enlightened and encouraged by their testimonies. Now, they were so much in your culture, in your situation. You identified with everything they stood for and everything they went through.

Isn't this an anti-climax that you have a foreigner now? Bringing a totally different background and maybe different issues. Well, we'll see. My background is an Eastern Orthodox country.

Eastern Orthodoxy is much stronger than the Catholic Church on the dogma that the church saves people. You just go to the priest and the priest imparts you salvation. And you know what you don't have there then.

You don't have personal relationship with God. We had debates on TV and on radio there. And as a consequence, Orthodox theologians come and say there isn't such a thing as personal relationship with God.

You have relationship with the church. The church links you with God. So, they will start building a huge cathedral in Bucharest to match the huge mad palace of Ceausescu with the name the Cathedral of the Salvation of the Nation.

Now, it is in that situation that we live. Second, the religion was always considered a state affair. It's a state concern.

Being Eastern Orthodox means being Romanian. It's your essence, your Romanian-ness. And when you change your religion, you betray your nation.

Now, my parents happened to be among the first who accepted the Baptist faith. And as a consequence, when I went to the school, I immediately found out that I was worse than a leper. Children would not pray with me.

And when I was in the third grade, a priest came in the school to teach religion. And the first thing, the kids said, we have a Baptist here. Hey, what? Baptist? Who is he? And they all pointed to me and said, now, come here.

Let me test you. Make the sign of the cross. I put my hands on my back and said, no, sir, that's a sin.

He slapped my open face. I call that my first religious experience. On top of that, in 1948, communism came.

Stalin time. I went to a Marxist university in the city of Cluj in 1951. Four years of Marxist indoctrination.

And men, ladies, I came out of that stronger Christian than ever. And I came from there with a call to be a preacher. So I went to the Baptist seminary in Bucharest.

And there I stumbled on liberal theology. The book that killed me was a book called A Plain Man Looks at the Cross by Leslie Weatherhead. Most liberal theologian of that time in England.

Pouring fun on atonement by the blood. I was so shocked. I wasn't prepared for that.

I went to my favorite teacher. And I said, what is this? Well, Joseph, they're right. These are just metaphors.

But wait a minute. You preach the blood every Sunday. Yes, but people in the pews here are simple folks.

They would stone me to death if I preached like Weatherhead or like Voznik. And I just know that they are metaphors and they give them what they need. You imagine a huge scaffolding hit the base with something and all crumbling down.

That's what I felt inside. Everything crumbled. Went in my room.

It was a time when a new persecution has been started. And I said I was ready to risk my life for the real thing. Not for metaphors.

I quit the seminary. Lost my faith. Seven years in spiritual wilderness.

I wanted to be accepted by the communist government. I did everything to prove that I was theirs. Ugliest things you could imagine.

So you have in front of you a big, big sinner. But by the grace of God there came Richard Wurmbrand. Tortured for Christ.

Just came out after 14 years of prison. He was a Jew. Fantastic Jew.

Went to see him and he said sit down. Tell me how did you fell? Did you fall? I told him about this atonement issue. Oh.

And he started to teach me. How real it is. How really God took our sins and put them on his son.

And he went in different ways like a good rabbi. He was that kind of mind. And he explained everything to me.

And put me back. There was a great work of God in the fact that. I stood before Jesus one morning and I said yes Jesus.

I believe now. I understand now. But will you forgive one like me? Joseph.

My blood washes away everything. I died for all your sins. And after that I told my dear wife now look.

The one who saved me has to own me. He bought me. I am no more my own.

Whatever he wants me to do that's what I will do. And you know the first thing he did. He wanted me to do was to stand up.

And by that time I was a high school teacher in one of the best cities of the country. I loved the job. I knew if I went public and they would fire me.

But I said I will do whatever he says. So I went public. And did testimonies.

Well somebody from the west heard my testimony. He worked for me a visit to Austria for a little medical treatment. And that way I was able to get out.

I went to England. I got a scholarship in Oxford University to study theology. With a decision to go back.

Oxford? For a man who was terribly burned by liberal theology? I said I need help. And somebody said you know. In London.

Martin Lloyd Jones meets with about 150 pastors every first Monday of the month. And this year they are discussing the whole year what makes an evangelical. In different chapters of systematic theology.

I said I want to go there. But you are not pastor. They have this strict rule.

I said now look. Go to the old man and tell him these words. I am the only Romanian in my generation who came out of Romania.

And when I go back and I study theology in Oxford. When I go back whatever I teach that will be gospel in Romania. Does it matter to you what theology I take to Romania? Romania.

He just said to that man. Tell him to come here. Broke the rule.

Accepted me in the Westminster Fellowship. I am still a member there. And in my years there.

I became what they call a Baptist with a reformed persuasion. Now. After three years.

Three and a half years of study of theology there. I was ready to go back. Imagine I was a fugitive.

Going back to a communist country was suicidal. I shared with a group of students. That my dream is to go and teach a new generation of preachers in Romania.

You know I kept that vision. And at the end a student said. Joseph it all sounds marvelous.

But what chances of success do you have? Success. I said this is typically Western way of thinking. In Romania when you come to Christ.

They don't say come to Christ that you have your success. They say come to Christ. But wait a minute.

Are you ready to lose your job? Are you ready to be persecuted all your life? Did you count the cost? But here is this man throwing me to me. You see for us the only issue was obedience. My king said go to Romania.

And I said yes your majesty I go. Didn't ask about success. But that moment I said Lord I have an idea.

What if I ask you that question? What chances of success do you give me? The Lord was quick. I said Joseph. My answer is in Matthew 10 16.

I send you as a sheep in the midst of wolves. I saw like in a vision a circle of wolves. A sheep in the center.

And the Lord said. What chances has that sheep to stay alive five or ten minutes? Let alone of converting the wolves. That's how I send you Joseph.

Totally vulnerable with no chance of success whatsoever. And with no chance of staying alive. If you accept to go that way.

Then go to Romania. If you don't accept that way don't go. I want to tell you that that moment changed completely all my theology.

Went back to my room. Sat down. I said Lord I want to talk to you.

You're my father. And my king. As my king you say go to Romania.

And I say yes sir I go. But as my father I want to know why my father sent some of his children to the wolves. I want to understand your mind.

What are you up to? When you do that. And it was quick again. Joseph said the Lord Jesus.

As my father sent me so send I you. He sent me as a lamb to be slaughtered. I send you as a lamb to the wolves.

And you don't send the lamb to the wolves they have great time with the wolves. But don't you see. As the lambs go to the wolves.

With the proclamation of the gospel. And with love. And with the attitude of self-sacrifice.

When they jump on them. And tear them in pieces. With the last breath they will say but we still love you.

And at least some of the wolves shudder and become lambs. Because the truth conquers by dying. And all of a sudden I understood God's strategy.

They say oh Lord. So being killed for you and for the gospel is not a tragedy. That's part of the job.

That's the essence of your strategy. For 2,000 years that's how you conquered. Now I'm ready to go.

And I went that way there. And now whatever happened. Has to have first of all biblical base.

Has to have a good theological base. Let me now plunge first into scripture that will explain my title. Persecution and Christlikeness.

My text for that will be Philippians chapter 2. Verse 5 and 6. We are told to develop a Christlike mentality. To think the way he thinks. And most of the translations there in verse 6. Add things that shouldn't be added.

No translator dares translate exactly as Paul puts it. And only recently a few theologians wrote articles in which they say. Why don't we take it exactly as Paul wrote it and see what that means.

Now here is what Paul said. Although Christ was in the form of God. He didn't consider equality with God to be harpagmon.

Which means rapaciousness. Acquisitiveness. Grabbing.

What's the essence of being God? That was the issue of Christ when his father said you go down there. What does it mean to be equal with God in that situation or to have in you God's essence? Does it mean I want everything for me? Grabbing. I am God.

I deserve everything. Everybody should give me. Give me.

Give me. I gather everything. Accumulate everything for me.

No. It's exactly opposite. He emptied himself.

By becoming a slave who lived for others and served others and died for others. Let me put it in a different way. You know those kinds of love like Eros love.

Eros comes out of inner emptiness and poverty. And he says give me. Give me.

Give me. I want to be satisfied and you satisfy me. That's Eros.

Agape comes out of inner fullness. You bubble with fullness and you explode pouring out. And you are satisfied because you give.

That's agape. And God is agape. Fullness.

Richness that has to be given. Now Christ said that's the essence. Giving.

Not getting. Let me put it in different words of Paul. 2 Corinthians 8, 9. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What follows? You know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was rich. And he became poor so that we can become rich.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was the fact that he was so rich. And he said I have to make people rich. The cost is that I have to empty myself.

Become poor. The essence of Christ likeness is that fullness. That richness.

That bubbling with grace that has to be imparted. Now if you want to be like Christ get rich. So rich that if somebody touched him healing went out of him.

And when they say we break you. Fine. But when you break my body I feed you with it.

We shed your blood. Fine. When you shed my blood it will wash away your sins.

I am that rich. Now if you are that rich. When they come to threaten you.

You say that's fine. I love you. And you just continue to give them love because you are rich.

I want to tell you. Man. Get rich.

So rich with the word of God. So rich with the fullness of Jesus in you. And with the fullness of the Holy Spirit in you.

So rich that you just cannot stand but give. You will never be depressed. As long as you are rich you cannot be depressed.

You will never want to quit. You are too rich for that. You cannot go hidden because you are too rich.

The secret of being a minister is being rich. You are a rich person that explodes by giving. So this is what I mean by persecution and Christlikeness.

If you have that Christlikeness, that fullness, that richness in you. You can stand persecution. So this is first.

Richness in persecution. The second important thing is sovereignty of God in persecution. I got this from Martin Lloyd-Jones.

Make the first pillar, the pillar of your theology, the sovereignty of God. Let me tell you how I understood sovereignty of God in my situation. About two years after I went back to Romania.

They really jumped on me and they decided to put me on trial. So in preparation for the trial as we were taken to the police. There was a ceremony of charging me.

Imagine a long table, six senior officers and the prosecutor there. And the colonel read the charge or the indictment. Then he started to deliver a speech to explain to me how grave it was, what I did.

And to my amazement at one point he said, You know, after all, isn't it written in Romans 13 that we are of God and you challenge us. Now I never interrupt the speaker, but in that situation I couldn't contain myself. And I broke through and said, sir, will you let me explain how I understand Romans 13 in this situation.

He said, okay. And I said, sir, yes, you are God's instruments. No doubt about that.

But what happens here is not between you and me. What happens here is between my God and myself. God has some dealings with me here.

I don't know what, maybe he wants to teach me a few lessons here. Believe me, he taught me fantastic lessons here. But sir, you will not do to me anything but what God decided you to do.

You will not go one inch beyond what he decided. Because you are only my God's instruments. You know, he didn't like that interpretation.

But for me, it was just like seeing my father pulling six strings and moving his six puppets. That's sovereignty of God there. It's just, if all your enemies are God's instruments, why are you afraid? You are so afraid of the beast and the ten horns, Revelation 13 to 17.

You almost die because you don't know who they are. And there are so many books. Wait, wait.

Whoever they may be, in chapter 17, we are told that the Lamb and the ones who are with the Lamb, and the chosen ones will conquer them. But that's not enough. Verse 17.

For the beast and the ten horns unite only to do what God made them to do. Imagine them, whoever they may be, as sort of computerized monsters. And the program in their computer was put by my daddy.

They will only do what my father decided them to do. So why be afraid? Now, if you understand the sovereignty of God like that, then all these people who threaten your lives are God's instruments. That's how the church in Acts 4 prays, when Peter and John tell them that if they continue to preach, they were threatened to be killed.

The church starts to pray and calls God with a name that is absolutely strange. The name for God there is despotis, an absolute ruler. Despotis.

Why do the nations fret? Don't they understand that they only do your will always? For example, here recently Herod and Pilate and the Gentiles and the Jews united against Jesus only to do what you decided beforehand that they do. Now, they are up in arms again against Peter and John. And what will they do to them? Only what you decided before then that they do.

And you know, if you say that there is no more prayer, you cannot say then, protect them, put a shield around them, smash their enemies. No, because you just said that they will do what you already decided that they do. So there is only one prayer left.

Give them boldness in preaching and accompanied with a few miracles so that it is even greater. That's prayer according to the sovereignty of God. And that's understanding your position in persecution if you understand the sovereignty of God.

Let me go on and tell you something about persecution and beauty. In 1977, I was arrested while just having to go to preach one Sunday morning. And they picked me up at 8 o'clock and took me to Bucharest, the place where they interrogate people who did crimes.

On Monday, two interrogators started to question me. About lunchtime, a general came in. He made a sign to the two interrogators.

The two interrogators, they immediately went out. And he just jumped on me and started to beat me, slapping me, hitting me with a fist. As he hit me, I hit the wall and my head almost cracked.

And when he finished, he just turned around and he went away. The other two came in like nothing happened and just continued. This was on Monday.

On Thursday, they're still in interrogation there. About lunchtime again, the general came in again, made a sign. The other two went out.

I immediately braced myself for a second round of boxing. And he saw that, he sat down and smiled and said, don't worry, this time I came to talk. Now, you know, when you are there, you don't speak.

The Holy Spirit speaks. I found out that was true. So, I just burst and I said, Mr. General, if you came to talk, then first of all, I want to apologize for what happened on Monday.

Now, on Monday, he beat me. It didn't make sense for him that I apologize. I said, but let me explain.

You see, on Tuesday, I said, they kept me here all day alone without interrogation. I had time to think and pray. And as I was thinking, it dawned on me.

This is the Holy Week. And you beat me in the Holy Week. Do you know, sir, I am sorry for screaming.

You know how he screamed as he was beating me. I'm sorry for screaming. I should have thanked you for the most beautiful gift you could have ever given me.

You beat me in the Holy Week, sir. That's the most beautiful thing. I suffer when my Lord suffers.

Thank you for the beating. He was choked. He just couldn't speak.

And then he said, okay, let's talk. We had some very meaningful talks after that. Let me go on and tell you another aspect.

Persecution and suffering and brokenness. I still had quite a lot of trust in myself. Until there, in those interrogations, there were two special moments when I was so scared, I wanted to quit.

And it was my dear wife who came very strong and said, didn't you say you want to die for Christ? Now do it. Don't teach your wife that kind of theology. I will not tell you all that happened, but I will tell you Elizabeth's conclusion.

Joseph, I watched you these days, in these events. God brings you to a place where you are really convinced that it's all over. And there you have nothing left but to say, here is me.

Do whatever you want. Now I am ready to die. Then he has done the work in you.

And when that work in you was done, all of a sudden there is a solution to the whole problem and you go free. Because the battle that God had was the battle in you. They were all your instruments to bring you there where you are completely broken.

And it was after that second complete breaking me that the fire from on high came and in just four years there I baptized 850 new converts. That never has happened in Romania before. It was under communism, unheard of.

But it was when the Lord broke me like that. See, he broke my pride first of all when I fell and I went through all that sinfulness. And he always keeps me saying, look, you were taken out of fire.

You have nothing to boast with. And then he brought me to those situations where my wife and a few others shamed me and pushed me to the end. And I cannot say I was a hero because Elizabeth was the hero.

And he broke my trust in myself and my pride. And then he said, now you qualify for the blessing. You qualify for the fullness.

You can be an instrument of revival. So all this persecution was God's instrument for me to break me and to make me fit for being used by him. Let me tell you something about the very important dimension of martyrdom.

That is stolen martyrdom. You've never heard of this. Stolen martyrdom.

Whenever they apprehended Christians, first of all, they smear that Christian telling lies. Oh, he was caught with cocaine. Or he was caught embezzling the money of the church.

Or he is a womanizer. Of course, in medieval times, he was a heretic. And they smear you so much that everybody believes that you deserve to be burned at stake.

They not only make you martyr, but they steal your martyrdom. Letting everybody believe that you are a rascal. That's the most painful thing.

And you know, there in that interrogation, I was six months in one interrogation, having to go every day for eight, ten hours of interrogation, from Monday to Friday. And after about three months of interrogation, the interrogator told me that they did mud-racking. You know what's that? You go through the life of that person and find everything dirty there.

Mud-racking. We have now so many ugly things from your past. And we are going to spread them to all the churches.

Your Baptist will come to smash your windows. That moment, I became pale. Power left me.

I started to tremble. Because I didn't imagine what. There was dirt in my life, you know.

That was a problem in my past. Those years when I was away from the Lord. He looked to me and he was afraid I had a heart attack.

It was so bad. It was eight o'clock in the evening. And he called and apparently couldn't find any car available.

He just said, I don't want you to die here. And he took me in the street, stopped the taxi, told the taxi where was my address and said, take him home. And I went home and for two days I couldn't walk.

I was crushed. That Saturday morning, by morning devotion, Jesus was in front of me. And said, Joseph, let me tell you how you imagined your martyrdom.

Going with your cross to be crucified, but passing among two rows of Christians. Applauding. Bravo, Joseph.

But what if I make all those brothers and sisters of you, as you pass with your cross, took down, take mud and throw on you and on your cross. Will you accept that cross? With mud on it. Lord, even this is from you.

Then I accept it. It came like lightning. I felt it hit me in the head and went through my legs.

And that moment I was able to stand up. When they called me back, following week, and the man started gently to tell me something, I snapped. And with each sentence he said, I retorted.

And at one point he stopped and said, Mr. John, who visited you this weekend? I have in front of me a different person than the one who lived here. Somebody came and changed you completely. I have to know who came and visited you.

Jesus visited me. And made me ready for the battle again. But I accepted even the mud as coming from him.

Now, I come to a little bit of more controversial ground. Suffering and glory. Peter says in 1 Peter 4, If your suffering is a sharing in the suffering of Christ, rejoice.

Because the spirit of glory already hovers over you. Paul says, 2 Corinthians 4.15, These sufferings, momentary sufferings, work for us eternal weight of glory. Do you take it seriously? Literally, the suffering

works the glory.

Romans 8.17, If we suffer with him, we inherit with him. Take it literally. 2 Timothy 2.12, We shall rule with him if we suffer with him.

Now, you will find this in my book in more detail, but I just want to tell you that one of my beliefs about martyrdom comes from three special scriptures. There are many others that tell us that the martyrs have the highest positions of ruling with Christ in heaven. First one is in Philippians 3.10.11, where Paul says that his desire is to know Christ and have in himself the power of his resurrection and go into partnership with his sufferings and then die as he died.

And he means martyrdom. Now, I know your commentators twist that and spiritualize it to death. But he means what he says there.

Why? Because he says, I want somehow to reach the resurrection of the dead. Well, everybody will reach the resurrection of the dead. That's not a big deal.

You see, the problem is that in the Greek, Paul doesn't say the resurrection, not Anastasia. He says ex-Anastasia. The extra resurrection.

I want to reach the extra resurrection. And with that you go to Hebrews 11.35. Those people who were offered to sacrifice to the emperor and then go free, but they refused and accepted martyrdom because they wanted the better resurrection. What's the better resurrection? We'll go to Revelation 20.

The people who are resurrected in verse 4 there are only the ones who were killed for the gospel. You cannot squeeze anybody else there if you are literalist, as I am. That is the resurrection of the martyrs to rule with Christ.

And the belief was formed in the 2nd and 3rd century that there is an instant resurrection of the martyrs to go to be assessors with Christ, to rule with Christ. That's why that big desire for martyrdom in the first centuries which made the strength of the Christianity in the first centuries. They were not afraid to die, they were desiring to die.

So there was a rule that if you provoke your martyrdom, you are disqualified. They had to stop them from provoking their martyrdom. That's what was the strength of the church, this desire for martyrdom.

Now, whatever you do with me now, I betrayed a part of my theology there, but take it at least this, that the more you suffer here, the more glory you will have in heaven. This suffering works for you the eternal weight of glory. Well, if you say, why Lord, why so much suffering? Because I want to give you more glory.

This is not bad for you, and especially not bad for your eternal future. Rejoice. You know, that's what I was pointed to when I was a child.

The world hates us, but look at Acts 5.41 when Peter and John had their backs cut with a whip before the Sanhedrin. They didn't go out crying and saying, look, brothers, what they did to us. They went out rejoicing because they were found worthy to be dishonored for the name.

Jumping in one leg and saying, brothers, we were found worthy. That's the feeling. That's the thrill.

We were found worthy. This is not for everybody. Martyrdom is not for everybody.

God has chosen a few of His and earmarked them. This is a fixed number of His children whom He earmarked for martyrdom. Revelation 6.11 So the end will come only when the number will be completed.

If you want to speed up the coming of the Lord, complete the number of martyrs. Who volunteers? Now let me quickly come to the last point. Persecution, suffering, martyrdom, and joy.

If somehow you think that going through persecution and suffering gives you a morose attitude and somber and sad, you are wrong. Rejoice, says Peter, because the spirit of glory hovers over you. But in that book of Peter, right at the beginning there is another phrase which came to me absolutely strong.

Let me tell you the story. Fourth of October, 1974. It's the most memorable day in my life.

That morning at six, seven policemen came to my door with a warrant to search our house. And they came in and they started from top to basement and turned everything upside down. About nine o'clock they decided to confiscate all my library.

Now my library was a huge, one of the walls in my study, only shelves. All that library was brought by smugglers from the West. Most precious treasure for a preacher and theologian.

And they decided to confiscate it. Imagine a policeman was taking the books from the shelf, had me sit at the desk, and I had to write on every book on the front page, found at my place at the house search on the fourth of October, 1974, and sign. They believed that they would find anti-communist literature there and that would make another charge.

But they had to have a proof that they were found in my place. So I wrote that sentence as many times as many books were in the library. Now, can you imagine a pastor giving away all his books? Take one book, look at the title, Grown, and write it away.

And it wasn't long until a book with this title came. Joy, Unspeakable, and Full of Glory. 1 Peter 1.8 Joy, Unspeakable, and Full of Glory.

Subtitle, Is it yours now? I stopped. Lord, if it's not mine now, it will never be. Lord, please make it real now for me.

All of a sudden, it seemed that the sunshine came. It was sunshine in me. All of a sudden, I straightened up.

I looked around. I saw those seven policemen as being my guests, and they were the host. And I immediately told my dear Elizabeth, Elizabeth, will you make a pot of coffee for them? And then from that moment, I started to break in with my being host.

Let me then tell you that for weeks after that, that issue of joy followed me. I was going for interrogation every day. My books were confiscated.

But I still had to preach every Friday night and every Sunday morning and evening with no literature, no books. I was under house arrest. I lived on the church premises.

I only had the right to go to preach and then come back to my home. And I did a study on joy in the Bible. And I came to see Nehemiah 8.10, the joy of the Lord is your strength.

That's the main point. But then John 15.11, I want my joy, says Jesus, be in you. And then 1 Thessalonians 1.6, you receive the gospel in midst of many tribulations with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

The joy of God the Father, the joy of Jesus, and the joy of the Holy Spirit is not my joy. It's his joy. So watch out not to sadden the Holy Spirit because if he is sad in you, the joy of the Lord is no more there.

So you are weak. You are strong only as long as you have the joy of the Lord. And the sermon was ready.

I went that Sunday morning and started to speak on joy. The joy of the Lord is your strength. Now people were coming from all over the country those Sundays to listen to this preacher who was all week in interrogation and then preached on Sunday, coming with tape recorders.

And that Sunday evening, one of them said to me, he said, Joseph, I came here to see what could a man preach after he's been where you were all week. I was expecting to see at least a tired man, but in my vision, it was a broken man. And to my dismay, you came this morning thundering about joy and I saw it on your face and they said, my God, it's real.

And if this man can have it in that situation, then I can have it. Now, I said that was the last. I have another point, the last one.

Sorry. It would have been disaster if I jumped that. Suffering and love.

When I was there in that interrogation, after the second day of interrogation, my main interrogator said, okay, it's all done for today. Take your coat, go home. Tomorrow morning at eight, be back for the battle.

I turned to him and said, sir, why do you speak like that? You should know, sir, that every morning before I come here, I pray for you. I pray for your salvation. I pray for your family.

And then I come to talk with the man for whose salvation I just prayed. That's the spirit in which I come, not for a battle. He choked.

And again and again, as he asked me so many questions, each time I could see a possibility of sharing the gospel with him, sharing my experiences with the Lord. And that man would forget about interrogation and sometimes listen for an hour. Well, for me, it was just an hour without interrogation.

At one point, he told me, well, first of all, at the end of six months, he just told me, it's all over, you go free. I will not see you again. Although three years later, I was arrested and he saw me again.

That's when I was beaten. But he said, you should know, I'll miss you. You know, I realized that man needed me.

And then when I was arrested again in 1977 and when they treated me as they did at one point, you see, they were always too afraid of each other, watching each other. But sometimes one had to go to the bathroom or some other place. And when one was alone, he would tell me something out of his heart.

So at that point, when he was alone, he said, Mr. Chun, whenever I interrogate somebody, I feel how they hate me. And they justified. I'm not nice to them.

But with you, it's different. I don't know how to put it, but you should know, it's a delight for me to be with you. Now, I immediately thought, it's not a delight for me to be with you.

But, but, then of course I repented of that thought. Because here was this man telling me, here is a man I tried my best to hurt. And he loves me still.

I consider that as one of the greatest moments of my life. When that man, who is now considered as the most wicked interrogator of those times, of the secret police, had to tell me that I didn't hate him. I loved him.

Now, I'm a preacher. I always make sermons from these things. So I went to my church and I made the sermon which I entitled The Aggression of Love.

And I said, you think that these persecutors of ours are the aggressors. They jump on us. Wrong! We are the aggressors.

We start the attack. But we only have the gospel, our love, and the readiness to be slaughtered. And we go loving them and love them until they crush us.

But we conquer at least some of them with that love. The aggression of love. And this is where I end my message.

Remember, first of all, if you are rich, then nobody can conquer you because whenever they hit you, you just give them riches, more riches. Remember, sovereignty of God in suffering. Remember, suffering and beauty.

Remember, suffering and brokenness. Remember, suffering and glory. Remember, suffering and joy.

And above everything else, why do we do it? We do it because the love of God was poured in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And we are so full of love. Love of this post-modernist of America.

Love of these people who are so angry that we want to evangelize them. We love them. That's why we preach to them.

That's why we stand for the truth. And that's why we are ready to die. Because we love them.

And we are the aggressors. The aggression of the ones who have only three weapons. The gospel, our love, and our readiness to be slaughtered.

And with these weapons of Christ, they were the weapons of Christ. He came with the truth, and with his love, and with self-sacrifice. And the ones who are with the Lamb, the Lambs who have the same mentality, the same attitude, the same riches, they conquer.

May we be more than conquerors. Amen. Thank you.

Questions, please. Brother Tsan? Yes. In a few weeks, I go to Russia to teach Russian pastors.

There are other pastors here who are doing the same thing, whether in Russia, or the Ukraine, or other former Soviet nations. The worst we have suffered is maybe having an elder or deacon slander our name. Knowing that the door may close again, and persecution may come upon these pastors we are training, how would you advise us to be of encouragement other than sharing the head knowledge that we have from our own training? Let me say that our theology in Romania was made by Southern Baptist professors who came to Romania in the 1920s and the 1930s.

And one thing that they never taught us, because they didn't know it, was how to stand persecution and suffering. So when communism came, we were not prepared. I should have known, for example, that you don't shout glory to a man.

But in the Stalin time, we had to go in the streets and shout glory to Stalin. That was just like first Christians being asked to say Caesar is Lord. And they died, burned at stake, or thrown to the lions because they said only Christ is the Lord.

I should have said the same. I don't say glory to Stalin, I say glory only to God. They would have sent me to labor camp.

I consider that the greatest sin I ever committed. But it was only in the 70s that I came to see the value of suffering and martyrdom. I started to give my people this teaching, which came as a fantastic liberation for us.

So, both there and here, we need now this teaching about the value of persecution and of suffering. And that's why I say that my book on suffering and martyrdom is so timely. I wanted to understand myself that issue and I did 20 years of work on it.

It became a PhD dissertation in Belgium. Then it was printed here by the University Press of America. Atrociously expensive, \$60 hardcover and 48 paperback.

But now that was sold out, they gave us back the copyright. We are expecting these days to receive the newly printed copies. And I have these forms and also this brochure.

There's an envelope there. You just put the check for Romanian Missionary Society, \$25. And that includes the package and shipping.

Or you have the form and they will mail one to you. Now, it's 430 pages, very involved. We are planning to rewrite it for the larger public, maybe 250 pages, but it will take maybe another year or so until we do that.

I say we with my daughter. She's now a writer and she takes this as a project to rewrite daddy's dissertation. Make it a readable thing.

She is just graduating in Philosophy of Religion at Talbot. So she's qualified. So this is what I would say.

Get training in this area and teach people in Russia and teach people in America. Because this is going to snowball. Since the 60s, it was this anti-Christian attitude built up, built up.

And now all the universities teach that the only group that is undesirable here is the Christian evangelicals. The evangelical Christians. Because they are the only intolerant people.

They have the guts to say that they have absolute truth. And that means that we are then liars. That's intolerance.

And we expect this to become an avalanche. You never know where it ends. It may end with a strong man taking leadership in Washington following maybe an economic disaster.

Which may happen. And that man may be an anti-Christian or say, well, now we can get rid of the Christians. Now that's one scenario.

But I see building up this and you know for 2,000 years the Christians across the world have been in the tribulation. Only the Americans have not been in the tribulation. So if you ask the question, will the Christians go through the tribulation? You just say, will the American Christians go through tribulation? We've been in it for 2,000 years.

So Jesus said, in the world you will have tribulation. So prepare your people for it. And that way it doesn't come as a surprise.

It doesn't come as a disaster. You just say, praise the Lord. We were found worthy.

Another question, please. It seems like there's a movement in American churches that's turning to politics to protect the American Christians and Christians throughout the world from persecution. That's a good question.

Thank you, I already planned on answering it. Praise the Lord for Sunday for the persecuted church. At last.

Praise the Lord for the groups in Washington who now press to have a law here that the American government will not help nations that persecute the Christians. Now here is the two aspects of the situation. On one side, I have to be ready to be slaughtered.

On the other side, I have to stand up and say, hey, I am a Roman citizen, and a Roman citizen cannot be maligned like that. There is a law that protects me as a Roman citizen. You know who said that.

So you see, here is a man who knows how to take the suffering, but who knows how to defend himself wherever he can. And so this has to go hand in hand. Now, when I was in those troubles, I had my friends from Oxford who immediately rallied support in London and in Washington on my behalf.

Each time I came out before they put me on trial because of the big interventions to Ceausescu. I am free because God used that instrument. So they gave me a chance to have victories there, after victories, because they had to solve the problems which I indicated.

So combine this. On one side, we are ready to be persecuted and there is no problem. On the other side, use all the legal means, both for yourselves and to defend our brothers in Saudi Arabia or in Indonesia, because if we really push the government, they may solve the problem of the Christians there.

Thank you. Dr. Song, many mission organizations are now utilizing covert tactics and penetrating difficult nations. This sounds foreign to your experience.

Is that practice unbiblical and what are your thoughts? Again, it's not one or the other, it's both. I praise God for that Dutchman who studied in Glasgow, I think he studied in Glasgow or in Edinburgh, but in 1955, he went to Moscow to a communist youth rally and he heard there that there are 90 million youth in the communist world. And he said, God, who will bring to them the Bible? And the answer was, you.

And then he said, how? Smuggling. And that's how Brother Andrew was born, God's smuggler. And by early 60s, we saw the miracle, new Bibles.

You know, from 47 to 64, I didn't see a new Bible. In 1964, when I saw a new Bible, I kissed it and cried. A new Bible.

These people who risked their freedom to come with hidden compartments. And Brother Andrew was very strict on this, don't tell lies. We don't use lying.

We pray that those guards be blinded and give them funny answers, but don't lie. You asked me what sort of funny answer you can give later on, but anyhow. I told one of my interrogators.

I said, you know, he boasted that they know everything about me. I said, of course, I don't have anything to hide, but one thing. I hide when I receive the Bibles.

Because I know if you catch me with that, you confiscate them. But I don't make a secret that I spread thousands of Bibles. I can give you a statement to put me in prison with that.

But because the Lord commands me to spread the Bible. So I obey God, not you. Other things, I do everything in the open.

So, yes, use all sorts of means which can be done in honesty and integrity. Using lies to promote God's cause is a no-no. You disqualify yourself.

That's my answer. Dr. Stone, there are a number of organizations that help the American church to partner with the persecuted church. I was wondering if you could evaluate the usefulness of that kind of financial assistance.

And maybe recommend organizations that you think are doing a good job of helping the persecuted church in that way. I will not say names. Because there are hundreds of organizations that do a wonderful thing.

And they would do injustice to the ones I don't name if I pick and choose some of them. You just look into their credentials. See if they do what they say they do.

Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability is a good trademark. Because they really keep us accountable. And a judge asks the Holy Spirit to lead you which ones are doing the best job.

There are so many places of persecution in the world. Praise the Lord for all these organizations who help them. But I cannot go further and say this is the one that does the best thing there.

Dr. Zahn, I was wondering if at this stage you could make a judgment call on our country. As far as persecution is starting and there's always been some of it. Certainly not as much as you would have in a totalitarian country that's more organized against the gospel.

But in our current stage where we see persecution on the horizon most likely to come is something we should expect. If we aren't experiencing it now, making a generalization, do you see that as an indicator of our cowardice? Or a season of grace? Okay, somebody said yesterday that whatever question they ask you, you give them the message you plan to give. Well, you launched me to make a general assessment on the evangelical Christianity in America.

Thank you for that. If you bear with me, I still have seven minutes. I'm a foreigner who lived in Eastern Europe and in England and now I've lived nine years in America.

I try to understand what happened this century in America. This century I mean from 1900 to 2000. I saw some paradigm shifts.

Here are they. In the previous century, the great desire of the American Christians was holiness. Meeting to find ways of being holy and claiming new experiences of sanctification.

Now whatever way they expected that, but the yearning was there. The goal was holiness. At 1900, the group of them yearning for holiness got tongues.

And the Pentecostal movement was born. And then the charismatic movement. And from that day, most of the people didn't meet for holiness.

They met for feelings. They met for personal enhancement experiences. That's the first paradigm shift.

From yearning for holiness to yearning for feeling or experiences that enhance you. The second paradigm shift started in the 50s. When coming to the Lord became just a simple decision.

You make a decision. And that's all. I don't elaborate on that, but come to the 60s.

I just point out a change of words. Up to the 60s, every good preacher would have told you that fullness of the Holy Spirit and victorious life comes with a price. Full surrender.

Full surrender was key to spirit-filled being for victorious living. In the 60s, surrender was replaced by commitment. Alan Bloom in Closing of the American Mind points to the fact that commitment came in use at that time.

Surrender means that I lift my hands and I say to the one in front of me, you take over. Do whatever you want with me. This doesn't work well with an American independent.

But if you say, well, you commit yourself to do something. And it's a stronger or weaker commitment. It's an engagement, but you remain yourself.

And surrender disappeared almost completely from your preaching. It's only commitment. At the same time, the new translations replaced slave with servant.

Now, in the New Testament, you never diakoneo to God. You never serve God. You doleo to God or latreo to God, which is the same.

The same Jesus who taught me to say, Abba, Father, Daddy, taught me to relate to him as an unworthy slave who has only done what he had to do. But bond slave was thrown out and now you have only servants of God. The concept of slave is gone.

But he bought me. I'm not my own. Then we go on and there were a few other shifts.

One of them came after the sexual revolution. You see, with this sexual revolution, the only thing is that there is not enough arousal. So, what you need is excitement.

And you should know that the word excitement in the past meant arousal. It means the same in French and Italian and Romanian. Now, the yearning is for more and more excitement.

My yearning is for joy. Deep, deep joy of the Lord. Not excitement.

Excitement is given by something that excites you and then it's gone. I have the joy of the Lord. And then, let me tell you the last one.

Up to the 60s, you had principles for living and you had laws, rules. In the 60s, with that terrible shift, where God was thrown out, immediately laws were thrown out and rules and principles. Now, if you have no more laws, no more rules, no more principles, what do you have? Values.

Principles and laws were replaced by values. And everyone has his own values. You have your values, I have my values.

And let's speak about values. And you know, the evangelical American has just swallowed the terminology. Family values.

No, it's God's rules for the family. Principles for living. We don't have values.

We have God's rules and laws and principles. So, what happened with all these things is enormous shifts. Throw them away.

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