

The Battle Is for the Mind

by Josef Tson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of giving our minds to God and being aware of the battle for our minds, as well as the significance of martyrdom and the madness of God's plan to conquer through love and self-sacrifice.

Duration: 44:14

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 10:16, Matthew 16:24, John 12:32, John 20:21, Romans 8:31, 1 Corinthians 1:18

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Persecution Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the essence of communism and other satanic movements, which he identifies as being rooted in lies, hate, and violence. He shares a personal experience of being a Christian student in a communist regime and the need to come together to find arguments for Christ in order to combat indoctrination. The speaker also recounts a powerful story of being arrested and interrogated, where he boldly confronts his interrogator with the power of his faith and willingness to die for his beliefs. He concludes by asserting that even in death, his message will continue to spread and inspire others to follow God.

Transcript

Whew, I almost feel young. It was wonderful on spring break. So unpleasant to be back.

You wish it was at least two weeks, not just one week. I know you. I've been just like you in 1951-55.

That's when I was a student in a university in Romania. So, not far away from you. You take that away? Thank you.

Okay. I have another one, you know. Now, it's wonderful to sing together, be in a country where you are free to express your faith in the Lord.

It's wonderful to go with a crowd to praise the Lord. But what if you were alone? In a country that hates your faith, that hates you for following Jesus, would you still follow? If they told you you will have never a promotion, you will be hated all your life, treated as a scum of the earth, maybe even killed, would you still follow Jesus? Think of that. Romania is an Eastern Orthodox country.

And like all the other Eastern Orthodox countries, religion is your nationhood. If you convert to another faith, you betray your nationhood. So when German and British missionaries came to our area, and my

wife's parents and my parents were converted, they were considered like lepers.

When I went in the first grade, I was shocked that nobody would play with me. Teachers told the other kids to treat me as a leper. And I asked my daddy, what is this? Why am I hated? And my dad told me, open the Gospel of John, chapter 15, we are not of this world.

We belong to Jesus. And because we belong to Jesus, the world hates us. Don't be surprised.

Be happy. It means that we are really belonging to Christ. That's why they hate us.

Stand up and let them hate you. You belong to Jesus. So that's how I grew up.

As an unwanted, as a hated person. Actually in 1942, they planned to bring all the evangelicals and send them to an extermination camp. And they called my parents and my wife's parents, because we lived in the same city and her father was our pastor.

And they were called before the authorities and they were offered, if you go back to the Eastern Orthodox Church, you live. If not, we send you to the labor camp. And our parents said, we stay with Jesus.

Send us. And they packed. And they were expecting us all to be put in trains and taken to the extermination camp.

We didn't know why they delayed and delayed our departure. We found later on that the prime minister who was supposed to sign that decree, his mother was converted at that time. And she pleaded with her son not to do that.

Well, half a year later, the Russian armies came. This was in the Nazi time. And so that prime minister was arrested and he was shot dead.

We didn't go to the labor camp. God saved us. Because he had a plan with my whole life.

So you know when God has a plan with you, whatever enemies want to do, they will not touch you. Now later on, communism came over us. So we had the hate of the Orthodox Church, but we also had now the hate of the communists.

And it was in 1951 when I gave my life to the Lord. I looked to it. I knew what was involved in it.

That I would never get promotion. I would always be thrown out. But I choose to love Jesus.

It was very interesting. That fall, I went to the university and I met another student, a medical student at the church, a little church there. He saw me.

He then saw me at the university and he came to me and he asked me if I was a Christian. And he introduced himself to me and then he said, it was 1951, Stalin time, the toughest of all the times under communism. And this student explained to me they are going to start an indoctrination brainwashing us to completely make us atheists.

If we don't come together to find arguments for Christ, for God, we are finished as Christians. So he proposed that we come, a little group of students together secretly because if they found us they would have sent us to the labor camp. But we met together every Saturday night for four years when we were in the university.

Working together, thinking together how to find arguments against the Marxist indoctrination. That was considered, if they discovered us, that would have been considered the biggest crime because deliberately we stood against their indoctrination, their theory, their world view. But the greatest thing for me at that time was to understand that this was a battle for my mind.

The issue was, do I give my mind to the communists or do I give my mind to Christ? You know that battle is here, just like there. It's a battle for the minds, it's a battle in the TV, it's a battle in the culture, a battle in the state universities here. It's exactly the same battle for the minds of the young generation.

So be aware that they want to manipulate your mind. They want to twist your mind. To whom do you give your mind? You have to make a deliberate decision.

My mind will belong to the God who revealed himself to me in Jesus Christ. As an intellectual, I had to make a mental picture. The communists insisted very much that you have a world view.

We called it the conception of the world and of life. That the world is only here and now, it's only matter. There is no life beyond.

Everything appeared in the process of evolution. We are a little bit more evolved monkeys. And in all that, I had to say that's not true, that's a lie.

There is a God and that God revealed himself to us in his Son, Jesus Christ. And my mental picture that helped me most was especially drawn from Ephesians chapter 3. Jesus Christ is in my heart. He is my beloved, he is my teacher, he is my bridegroom, he is my model, he is my savior, he is my Lord.

The Holy Spirit is in my mind. He is the guide. He is the one who brings the thoughts of God in my mind.

I have God the Father in front of me. And he put his Son in my heart and put his Spirit in my mind. I am anchored in God like that.

Or as a theologian in the 4th century put it, the two arms of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. And God embraces us that way. On the other side is the world, Satan and my flesh.

Now, it all depends where I look. If I look to the world and to Satan and to my flesh and I am obsessed with them, their magnet is irresistible. I'll go there.

But if I make time for God, if I look to him and love Jesus and love the Holy Spirit and love the Father and have fellowship with them, commune with them, their magnet is irresistible. That's where I go. So it all depends what decision you make, to go that way or the other way.

To look to God, have God in your mind and in your heart or to go with the world and with Satan. That's a decision, a basic decision that you have to make. Now, let me jump over a lot of years.

In 1969, I was still trapped there in a communist country, but in that year I was able to make a short trip to Austria. The Lord spoke to me clearly that I should go to England and study theology in a first-class seminary. I didn't have contacts in England, didn't know what seminaries were there.

So I went to Vienna and Austria. Somebody paid my flight to England. A British consul forgot the law and gave me a two-week visa for England.

Somebody else made a mistake and took me to Oxford University. And the head of college there loved my story and just like that gave me a scholarship to study theology in Oxford University. Everything covered the most expensive university of the world.

And I studied there for three and a half years, got my BA and MA in theology there. And here starts my greatest adventures with God. Because it was always clear to me those years that my Lord says, go back to Romania.

I had people who came from America there and said, Joseph, you are a good writer, you have great stories, you could write books in America, you could be a happy man and rich man in America. Why go back to prison? Why go back to that dark system? Well, I go because my God wants me there. And it's as simple as that.

I have to obey my God. Well, I was involved like you, I was involved in InterVarsity of Oxford for those years. So right at the end of my studies, the leaders of Oxford InterVarsity invited me to have a meeting with them.

And they just said, well, Joseph, we enjoyed being together. We are your friends, we want to pray for you when you go home. Tell us, what do you think will happen to you? What are your plans and what should we pray for? Well, I just told them, I said, look, I am the first and only man in my generation who was able to escape from the communist Romania.

I studied here, now equipped with theological studies. I want to go back. I want to train a new generation of preachers.

And I just went on telling them how I dreamed of training, training, training. That has been ever since my job. So when I finished, one of the students of the leaders, very pessimistic, very skeptical, said, Joseph, it all sounds marvelous, but tell me what chances of success, of implementing your dream, do you have? When I heard the word success, I said, now this is typically Western way of thinking.

Success. In my country, when you are invited to follow Jesus, they don't say, come to Jesus and you will be successful. Come to Jesus and you will have a second Cadillac.

And now they do that kind of invitation here. There they say, come to Jesus, but wait, wait, wait, don't hurry. Are you ready to lose your job? Are you ready to be all the time a second class citizen? Are you ready to be always hated? Are you able even to lose your life? If you do, then come.

That's the terms of the invitation to Jesus. Not success. So I was so confused by that word.

Then I lifted up my eyes and said, Lord, I have an idea. What if I ask you that question? You send me to Romania. What chances of success do you give me? My Lord was quick.

He said, my answer is in Matthew 10, 16, which reads, I send you a sheep in the midst of wolves. That moment I saw just like vivid, like in front of my eyes, a circle of wolves, a sheep in the center. Never thought of that before.

And the Lord pointed to that and said, did you see that picture, Joseph? Tell me what chances has that sheep to stay alive five or ten minutes, let alone of converting the wolves. Now that's how I send you there. Totally defenseless, with no chance of survival, let alone of having success.

That's how I send you back to Romania. Now Joseph, if you accept the way I send you, then go to Romania. If you don't accept that position, never go there.

I don't know what I told the student, then I mumbled some answer, but after that I went straight to my room in the college. Sat down and said, Lord, I want to talk to you. Look, Lord, you are my king.

And when you say, Joseph, go to the wolves, I say, yes, your majesty, and I go. But Lord, you are my father. And as your son, I think I am entitled to know your mind.

I just discovered that I have a father who sends some of his children to the wolves. Why? What do you gain out of that? What are you up to? I want to understand your mind. It was quick.

Jesus speaking again. As my father sent me, he sent me as a lamb to be crucified. As my father sent me, so send I you.

I send you as lambs to the wolves. But don't you see, I conquered by dying. And for 2,000 years, I sent my children to the wolves with the truth, in love, and accepting to be butchered there.

And every piece of land on this planet which was conquered for Christianity first had to be sprinkled with the blood of a missionary. I conquer by this kind of people who go there and accept to die. That's my way of conquest.

And that's how I send you to Romania. That moment, everything was over for me. I knew that going there might mean that I preach for a while and then the Lord will say, this is now illustrated with your dying.

And that's how you conquer. So I went back to Romania and I started to preach there. It was only two years later that they arrested me when that interrogator threatened to kill me.

And when I said, now sir, let me explain to you what you just said, that you want to kill me. Sir, your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying.

Now here is how it works, sir. You know that my sermons are on tapes all over the country now. When you shoot me, I only sprinkle them with my blood.

Sir, my sermons will speak ten times louder because you killed me, after you killed me. Everybody will pick up their tapes with my sermons and say, let me better listen because this man paid it with his life. I become credible through that.

I will conquer this country for God after you killed me and because you killed me. Go on, do it. He sent me home.

A few weeks later, another preacher came to me and said, Joseph, I was interrogated by a colonel in the secret police about you. He asked me a lot of questions about you. And then all of a sudden, he said this strange thing.

He said, we know that Mr. Zorn would love to be a martyr but we are not that big fools to fulfill his plan. Now you understand why they never killed me? They didn't kill me because they said we don't make a martyr. It's not in our interest to make a martyr.

But let me tell you, as long as I was afraid of dying, I kept quiet. Many years older people just told me, look, you can be a believer in secret. Don't stand up and tell what you believe.

They will kill you. How I hate that situation. Because when I was liberated from that fear and when I understood that dying was a privilege that God gave to some of his chosen ones, martyrdom is not a tragedy.

Martyrdom is only for a few chosen ones. It's an honor. And when I stood up like that, I was free there.

You know, what do you do to somebody who is not afraid of dying? I remember in another situation when the Minister of Interior told me that he was going to shoot me. And then another one came and said, well, don't you realize he will shoot you? Do something to save your life. And I smiled.

I said, sir, don't you understand when you shoot me, you send me to glory? I'm not scared with glory. He was so furious, mad. He said, what sort of creature are you? When we say to somebody, I shoot you, at least they jump scared.

But you smile to your ears. You are not normal. No, I'm not normal.

A little bit above normal. That's, incidentally, I struggle with this issue, martyrdom. Dying literally for Christ.

I searched in libraries. I was looking for a book to teach me what is the meaning and the value of martyrdom. And I discovered that there were lots of stories of martyrs, but not a book about martyrdom, theologically speaking.

To have a theology of martyrdom, I discovered that there was just no book on that issue. Wow, then I can write one. And I worked for 20 years on it.

In the 80s, I taught a few courses at Wheaton College. I put part of what I thought was a theology of martyrdom there. And eventually, I wrote it as a PhD dissertation.

I looked for a professor with whom to do it, and I couldn't find one in America. I went to Gordon Conwell, Trinity, Deerfield, you name them. I've been everywhere in this country investigating if there was anybody who could help me with this dissertation.

There was never none. Eventually, I found in Belgium, at the evangelical faculty there, there was a German professor there who did some studies on martyrdom. His name is Peter Beierhaus.

And eventually, they accepted to have me write the thesis for them. And it was published eventually by University Press of America. Then we took the copyright from them, and now our mission publishes it.

It's a big 500-page book, Martyrdom and Rewards in Heaven. Joseph Ton, spelling is T-O-N. Now, you can order it from our mission if you want, it's \$25.

I understand you can find it in Amazon. Quite a few other companies sell it there. But I spoke this morning at the Central Wesleyan Church and yesterday at the seminar on Islam, how I see now God forcing America to tackle the issue of Islam.

God's problem was that America couldn't care less about Islam, or were afraid of going there. God finished with the communist world. It collapsed, and there's no more.

But how to raise America to have only one concern? Islam. That was God's plan. And for that, he invented a man called Ayatollah Khomeini.

He was a man from Iran in exile in France. In 1979, he staged a coup in Iran, got the power, and every Friday he would preach there, we are going to create heaven on earth applying Islam totally. But our problem is America because America poisons our minds.

So we must kill America, the great Satan. And America was hearing and joking about it, laughing. How ridiculous, kill America.

But God raised another man, a young man called Osama Bin Laden, who listened to the Ayatollah and he said, okay, then I'll do what he says. And he made an army of suicidal men ready to kill America. September 11, 2001, they started the war.

All of a sudden, all of America woke up to this strange reality. All over the Muslim world, there are these people who want to kill America. If we don't conquer their minds, they will kill us physically.

What's this? Simply, it's God saying to America, you should have now only one concern, only one problem, convert the Muslim world or perish. That's God's doing. And you have no choice.

You see, all of a sudden, greatest writers in this country write books on Islam. And you're going to be trained how to approach the Muslims in this country and how to approach the Muslims in the other countries. America is now building up radio stations for all the countries in the Muslim world to open their minds.

It's a war for the minds again. The war for the minds of the Muslims. It will last maybe 20, 30, 50 years.

But there is no choice. You either conquer them, or you perish. Isn't God wonderful? Isn't He amazing how He forces you to go exactly where He wants you to go? So, let me give you a tip here.

Satan always works with three weapons. The lie, hate and violence. This was the essence of communism.

This is the essence of every satanic movement. Lie, hate and violence. When God started to tackle the evil of the world, there was only beasts there.

In the Bible, evil is always beasts. God said to the heavenly hosts, watch, I start the war against evil. And to the dismay of heaven, they saw a little lamb going towards the beasts.

And they looked, and that lamb was God's Son. Little lamb, fragile, innocent, defenseless. Here I come, beasts.

I come to conquer you. You know, in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, Paul calls that the foolishness of God. And you should know in the original it's the madness of God.

Isn't it a madness to send your son to a cross? But Jesus said, when I am lifted up on that cross, I will attract the whole world to myself. You understand? I conquer from the cross. And when he did it, and he came back to life, the very first thing he told his disciples, now I did it, and now it's your turn.

Because as my father sent me, so send I you. As lambs to the beasts. To conquer by giving them the truth of God in love and self-sacrifice.

When I told the story this morning, and I will not repeat that, my story with my interrogator, who was a hateful man who eventually told me how strange it was he found somebody who didn't hate him. Although he did so many things to me. You go there with the truth of God, in love, and you say, kill me.

When you kill me, I get the victory. So, this is all in that book, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven*. You will have to go to the Muslim world, and they will kill you there.

Let me tell you something very important. Muhammad took the concept of martyrdom from Christianity. He took a lot from Christianity, and perverted it.

He took the concept of martyrdom, Christian martyrdom was going with the truth in love, and accepting to be killed for it. He took it and he gave order to his followers, you go and impose Islam with a sword, and if you die in the process, you are a martyr and you go to heaven. That's a total perversion of the concept of martyrdom.

Now, the biggest mistake of the Western missionaries who went to Islamic countries was to say, don't say that you are a Christian, because they will kill you. Hide it. In an area where they value the courage to die for what you believe in, you go and tell people, don't show what you believe so that you will not be killed.

You will never conquer that way. But I tell you, if we had thousands and thousands of Christians equipped with the truths of the gospel, going in love there and say, here we are, loving you, kill us. Now they may kill hundreds and maybe thousands, but that's how we are going to conquer.

For 300 years, that's what the Christians did in the Roman Empire. Going to the arena where they were thrown to the lions, singing with joy, we are going to be sent to be the food for the lions. What a great honor.

And eventually they conquered the empire. You don't conquer with people who are afraid of dying. You only conquer with people who are not afraid of going in truth and love and self-sacrifice.

Let me tell you one of the most beautiful stories of my life. I was arrested on Palm Sunday, 1977. At that time I was charged with treason and conspiracy to commit treason.

That first Monday there in interrogation, there were two who were questioning me and all of a sudden a general came in and he made a sign like that, the two, they immediately went out and he just jumped on me, slapped me, hit me with a fist. At one point he gave me, he hit me in the forehead and I hit the wall that was behind me, my head almost cracked. Eventually he just turned around and left the room.

The other two came in, continued just like nothing happened, they didn't see anything. On Thursday, I was kept all day in interrogation there, on Thursday about the same time, lunchtime, the general came in again. He made the same sign, the two went out and I sort of got at the table like this, braced myself for another round of boxing and he sat at the other table there and he saw my apprehension and he smiled and he said, Mr. Zon, don't worry, this time I am calm, this time I came to talk.

You know, my Lord Jesus said, don't worry what you say there because it will not be you, it will be the Holy Spirit who will speak to you. I wasn't prepared for that. But that moment, I just said, Mr. General, if you came to talk to me, then please, first of all, I want to apologize for what happened on Monday.

On Monday he beat me. Why me apologize? I said, well, Mr. General, let me tell you what happened on Tuesday. They kept me here all day in this room with no interrogation.

I had time to think and to pray and all of a sudden it dawned on me, this is the Holy Week. And for somebody, for a Christian, there is nothing more beautiful in the world than to suffer when his Lord suffered. Mr. General, I am so sorry I screamed when you beat me.

Well, I screamed because there were other five friends of mine who were arrested at the same time and they got beatings and they screamed. But we had an understanding that that way we have witnesses that we were beaten. It was illegal to beat somebody there.

Anyhow, I said, Mr. General, I shouldn't have screamed. I should have just said, thank you for the most beautiful gift you could have ever given me. And I do thank you now.

It's so wonderful. I suffer when my Lord has suffered. You know, he couldn't speak.

It was so strange. Yesterday he came again and he said, because of what you said yesterday, I want you to go free for Easter. Go back to your church, preach there for Easter, and be back on Tuesday.

Tell your friends the same. They are all free to go. Thank you for the beating.

What a wonderful thing it was to suffer when my Lord suffered. I have to follow up because this will ruin my reputation. That's my purpose, is to ruin everything I said so far.

Through that beating, without me realizing, fear went into all my system. They took away my license as a preacher and they told me they were going to tell me in three months what next. But I went back to my church and I started to preach there.

Three months later, a new man, I never saw that officer of the secret police, very harsh man, came to me and said, you are a priest in the secret police and I made the purpose to finish with you as a preacher. We are going to give you a secular job and if you don't take it, we'll send you to labor camp and you'll perish there. I was so scared.

I went back home and I told Elizabeth, my dear wife, I'm going to give you a job. What?

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