

# Christian Missions to the Communist World International - Pt1

by Richard Wurmbrand

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*The sermon emphasizes the value of humility and detachment from worldly things, and the importance of attachment to God, using the example of the speaker's experience in prison.*

**Duration:** 58:23

**Scripture:** Luke 6:22

**Topics:** "Missions"

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## Description

In the sermon transcript, the speaker describes the experience of being imprisoned in a communist country. They talk about the hunger for love, food, and Holy Communion that they and their fellow prisoners experienced. The speaker also mentions the brainwashing they endured, being forced to listen to propaganda for seventeen hours a day. They emphasize the importance of finding joy and smiling, even in difficult circumstances, and prioritize putting God and others before oneself.

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## Transcript

Residents and sisters, first of all I wish to apologize for speaking to you being seated. During my 14 years in communist jails, we almost never walked. We had heavy chains at our feet, sometimes 50 pounds, 20 kilograms.

There were heavy beatings with rubber truncheons on the soles of the feet, and now it becomes more and more difficult for me to stand for a long time. It is difficult for me even to wear shoes. That is why probably for the first time in the history of this church you have before you a barefoot pastor.

My text is from 2 Corinthians 12, verse 11. I have become a fool in glorying. Ye have compelled me, for I ought to have been commended of you.

For in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles. Thou I am nothing. That is what Paul has to say about himself.

I am nothing. The greatest men in mankind were those who knew they are nothing. So many believe they are painters and they are sculptors.

Michelangelo, the biggest of them, said, I am not a painter. He compared his paintings with the painting of God on the wing of a butterfly, or a sunset, or a snowflake. And he knew nobody will ever be able to paint like this.

And we, all the others, we don't deserve the name of painters. So many of us believe that we are Christians, that we are something good, something highly talented and gifted. Paul said, I am nothing.

I wish to start tonight by telling you a prison experience. When the communists took over my homeland, Romania, they did what they did everywhere where they came to power, what they would do in this country, too, if ever it would fall under them. They put in prison thousands of Christians, all Catholic bishops, and only two of them survived.

The others died in prison. They were old people. They could not bear the tortures.

Priests, monks, nuns, Protestant pastors of all denominations, Jewish rabbis, but also thousands of laymen, farmers, workers, young boys, young girls, whose ever witnessed actively for his faith, went to prison. And we who were considered somehow to be leading personalities of the underground church, we were kept during years in solitary confinement, I, myself, and others. We were kept during years 30 feet beneath the earth.

We never saw sun, moon, snow, flowers, stars, mountains, rivers. I had forgotten that these things exist. We never had a Bible, nor any other book.

We never had a bit of paper or a pen. I had forgot to write it. I have not seen a lady for 10 years.

I have not seen a child for 10 years. In solitary confinement, we saw nobody except the wardens and the torturers. We never heard a sound.

The cells were soundproofed. We never heard a whisper. We saw nothing.

We heard nothing. Perfect silence reigned in those prison cells. We had almost nothing to eat, sometimes one slice of bread a week, otherwise soup of dirty potato peels, cabbage with unwashed intestines, and other such dainties.

For 10 years, I have never seen a color. We always saw the gray walls of the cell and our gray uniforms. I had forgotten that brown and blue and green and red and pink and violet exist.

Our world was gray. And years passed like this. One year after another, I became very, very tired.

And one night, I said to our Lord, Lord, you see, I have no brethren, no sisters. I don't have your written word. I don't have Holy Communion.

I have none of these things. But you have spoken so often directly to persons, even to very evil persons, like Saul of Tarsus, who had been a persecutor and a killer of Christians, and you came and spoke with him. And as I have nobody to speak to me, would you speak to me tonight? And then, it were exceptional circumstances.

And in exceptional circumstances, exceptional things happened. And when I said, you, Lord, speak to me, I heard his voice. His sheep hear his voice.

Now, I expected from him a word of comfort, a word which should strengthen me in my faith. Instead of this, I heard very strange words. He put to me a question.

He said, what is your name? Now, I believe that Jesus is God, and surely God should know at least what my name is. It's very strange for a God to ask somebody what is his name. But he has put such strange questions before.

He asked Adam. Adam, where are you? Well, if he is God, he should know where Adam is. He put this question to Adam, not because he did not know, but to make Adam think, am I not in the wrong place, hidden in a bush, hiding myself from my Creator, before whose eyes nobody can hide himself.

And so, the Lord put to me this strange question. What is your name? Now, I had known all my life that my name is Richard. But in that moment, I could not reply to Jesus, my name is Richard, because I happened to have read in church history that in Britain, there was once a big saint with the name of Richard, who, because of his faith, has been sentenced to death.

It was known that he was a believer and propagated his faith. It were times of persecution. So a police officer mounted a horse, as it was in those times, to go to arrest him.

The horse went berserk, overthrew him, and he died on the spot. So it was a clear case of murder, because if Richard would not have been a Christian, this police officer would not have mounted a horse to arrest him, he would not have fallen from the horse, he would not have died. So there was no much discussion.

He was sentenced to death for murder. And now Richard was on the gallows, and the executioner had some difficulty in fixing the noose of his rope. And Richard was such a good, good man, he could not bear that anybody should have a difficulty because of him.

So he went to the henchman, bowed before him, and said, Sir, I am so sorry to give you trouble. I am a farmer, I am skilled. Would you allow me to help you? I know how to fix the noose of the rope.

And the executioner, as executioners usually are, was very polite and allowed Richard to help him. And Richard fixed the noose, then he bowed again to the executioner and said, Thank you very much for having been so kind, and know that I have no grudge against you. I am very happy to go to the Lord.

Thank you for everything. And with a big smile on his face, Richard died. And I have the same name as that saint.

And I fear to say to Jesus, My name is Richard, because I trembled about something else. What if I say, My name is Richard, and he says, Are you like that, Richard? I was not like that, Richard. We all have beautiful names.

Paul, are you like that Paul? A zealous apostle. Mary, oh, you must probably be pure and innocent like that Mary. Magdalene, are you also a woman of such deep repentance for your sins? Joan, are you also an apostle of love? We have beautiful names to which nothing corresponds in reality.

We can tell each other, This is my name. We can't tell it to Jesus, because he might ask us, Are you like the others who have borne this name with prestige and with heroism for my name's sake? So I could not say that I am Richard. Should I say I am a Christian? I fear to say it, because I knew that in the first

centuries under the Roman persecution, Christians entered into the arena of circuses to be devoured by wild beasts for their faith, and they said, Christianusum, I am a Christian.

And I was not as courageous as those Christians. Should I say I am a pastor? I did not dare, because I knew that a pastor has to watch day and night over his flock. And I have not been like this.

He had asked me, What is your name? I bowed before him and said, Jesus, I have no name. Allow me to bear your name. And that is what he really wishes from us.

Paul understood it. Not Eilip, not the old Paul, not the new Paul, not the wicked Paul who has been a murderer, not the new Paul who is an apostle, not the wicked and full of vices, not the very good and full of virtues. The I has been abolished.

Not Eilip, but Christ lives in me. You have been brought up with the English language. We who have learned English being grown up men, we wonder very much about how you write words.

In English you write the word you with a small y, he with a small h, she with a very small s, but I, capital F, I am something very very important, capital F. And Jesus tells us, Whosoever wishes to come after me should cease to write I with a capital letter. Whosoever wishes to come after me should deny himself. His brother, his fellow man should come first.

God should come first. And he somewhere in the rear. Whosoever wishes to come after me should deny himself, not be anymore, not Eilip, but Christ lives in me.

Years of prison passed. We were very hungry, as I told you. We were hungry after food.

We were hungry after love. Nobody ever smiled to us. Nobody hugged us.

Nobody caressed us. Nobody told us a nice word. Only words of hatred.

We were so hungry after love. I passed through brainwashing. Seventeen hours a day we had to sit on a form without moving.

You were not allowed to rest a little bit your head on your hand or to close your eyes. That would have been a crime. And seventeen hours a day, from five in the morning until ten in the evening, you were not allowed to rest a little bit your head on your hand or to close your eyes.

And then the Pharaoh shows. To hear seventeen hours a day, nobody loves you anymore, nobody loves you anymore, nobody loves you anymore, nobody loves you anymore. To hear this during hours, during days, during weeks, during months, during years, seventeen hours a day, and in your nightmares you continue to hear, give up, give up, give up, nobody loves you anymore.

We were hungry after love. We were hungry after a printed page. We were hungry after the face of a man.

And we were hungry for one thing more, a hunger which is unknown in your country. We were hungry for Holy Communion. The years had passed and we had no Holy Communion.

Now how should we take it? We were everyone alone in a cell so it could not be a fellowship of brethren. At that time we did not have even this one slice of bread a week. We got instead some dirty mace cake.

Why? From where should you take wine in a subterranean communist prison cell? We had no Bible, we had no hymn book, we had nothing. We consulted with each other without being everyone alone in a cell by typing through the wall in Morse code. You know there exists such a code through which cables are conveyed.

A, B, C, and so on. One prisoner learned this alphabet from another. And we communicated in this way.

And we asked each other, how should we do? We are hungry after the body and the blood of our Lord as it is communicated in Holy Communion. How should we take it? We have nothing. And at once we had an illumination.

Wait a little bit. We have, we have something which is called nothing. If nothing would be nothing, we could not have it.

We have something which is called nothing. Now what is the value of this nothing? We have nothing. They are taking away from us our families, our houses, our furniture, our libraries, our churches, everything they are taking away from us.

They are taking away from us our own clothing. They are taking away from us even our names. Every prisoner, if he was a more important one considered by them, was taken away his name and given a number.

And he had not, he was not allowed to tell even a warden what his real name is. They feared that the warden at a glass of wine might betray the secret who is in prison to a friend of his. So we were given numbers.

The one prisoner number 5,833, the other prisoner number 9,221, and so on. And all the prisoners did not remember their numbers, and they were beaten because of this. I had the advantage to have a number very easy to be remembered.

I was prisoner number one, so it was easy to be remembered. But they are taking away from us everything. Even our names.

We had nothing. We were nothing. They mocked us.

They did with us what they liked. They opened forcibly the mouth of Christians and spat in this mouth. And they did worse than spitting in the mouth.

They throwed you under their feet. We were nothing. And we had nothing.

There was another one who said, I am nothing. Saint Paul. And when he wrote this, he was free.

He said, I was nothing. And I am nothing. And then we had something, the name of which is nothing.

We had nothing. And we began in these half-dark prison cells, subterranean prison cells, in which all kinds of thoughts come to you which don't come in the pre-birth. We began to think about the value of the nothing.

We all loved this world with its beautiful multicolored butterflies and the chirping birds and the scenting flowers and the pretty children. And we remembered, but waited a little bit, out of what did God make this

beautiful world? He made it out of nothing. So nothing is a very valuable material.

You can make a universe out of nothing. If anyone would try to make all these things out of gold and diamonds, he would not succeed. But out of nothing, God created this world.

But with what is Holy Communion taken in churches? It is taken with bread. And out of what is bread made? Out of flour. And out of what is flour made? Out of wheat.

And out of what is wheat made? Well, God made it out of nothing. And in Holy Communion, we take wine. Wine is made out of grape juice.

And the grape juice comes from the grapes, and the grapes come from the vineyard. And God has made the vineyards out of nothing. So nothing is a very valuable material.

Nothing is a basic material where this Holy Communion is taken everywhere in the world. Nothing, we have nothing. And nothing is a material out of which the universe is made.

Then we remembered in those prison cells that in Job 26 it is written, God hung the earth, this huge ball on which now 4 billion men live, plus animals and trees and seas and rivers and whatever you like, this huge ball, God hung the earth upon nothing. If God would have hung the earth upon a thick cable of steel, the cable of steel would have broken. But when it hangs upon nothing, nothing is the most resistant material in the world.

The earth hangs upon nothing, and it hangs well, it does not shake. So I have nothing. To have nothing means to have something very valuable and very resistant.

And then we remembered the words of Paul, I am nothing. Now if I, Richard Wurman, would be a very good preacher, it would be rumored, you know, Richard Wurman is approximately like Billy Graham. Now all respect for Billy Graham, the greatest soul winner whom we have in the world today, but I believe that St. Paul was a little bit bigger than Billy Graham.

And about St. Paul, it is not written that he was a big preacher. About St. Paul it is written that he was nothing. So if I am nothing, then I am like St. Paul.

In the first church of Corinth, Christians quarreled. Some said, Paul, what a preacher. And the other said, go away.

Peter puts Paul in his little pocket. And the other said, you should better hear Apollo. He is a real preacher.

And because all three preached love, they instead of loving each other, quarreled with each other. Who preaches about love better? And then St. Paul said, I am nothing, and we were nothing. We had nothing.

And we felt how foolish we have been not to rejoice about the fact that we had nothing and that we were nothing. And we decided by mutual consultation, on a Sunday morning, to take Holy Communion with nothing. I have read similar things having happened in the past too, in former centuries.

So we decided to take Holy Communion with nothing. And at a certain moment, on a Sunday morning, we gave a signal through the wall, from one end of the corridor to the other. There were many cells.

And at one and the same moment, we took in our hands nothing. We thanked God for nothing. You must not have a thing to thank God for.

If I have a new car, I will thank God for it. You can thank for the old car. The old car has four wheels, and you can have a very good ticket from the police with the old car.

You don't need a new car for that. And you must not have some higher pay, and you must not have some higher position to thank God. A bird does not sing because of the things it gets.

The bird sings because it has a song in its heart. And Christians are simply thankful and grateful in their character, and they thank not for things. They thank because they are thankful.

And we thanked God for nothing. We blessed the nothing, the beautiful nothing, out of which multicolored butterflies and the smiles of children are made. We blessed the nothing.

We ate nothing. And we remembered the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which has been broken for us. We had broken the nothing.

If you break the oblate or the host in Holy Communion, it makes a crack. It opposes the resistance. But the nothing opposes no resistance.

As the lamb went to the slaughter, so did Jesus go without any resistance. And we remembered that this is sacrifice without any resistance. And then we took another nothing.

The nothing can have many shapes. Things have always one shape. If you have a Datsun, you don't have a Toyota.

And if you have a Toyota, it is not a Volkswagen. Things have shapes. Nothings can have all kinds of shapes.

So we took another nothing. And we thanked God for this other nothing. And we blessed this other nothing.

And it was a real experience. The blood of Jesus Christ was communicated to us in the form of nothing. Now, I would recommend to no church to do it like this.

I believe that things in the church should be done exactly as it is written in the word of God, no change. The best wine is the old wine. And the best theology is the old theology.

And the best thing to be followed in the church is what the first Christians have done. So take Holy Communion as it has been done by the first Christians. But I think we can learn from these underground Christians, from the persecuted Christians who do it otherwise in special circumstances.

We should learn from them the value of the nothing. And they can help us. You can help them.

They have no Bibles. They have no Christian literature or very little of it. Thousands of Christians are in prison today.

In all kinds of countries. There is no communist country in which Christians should not be persecuted. In some countries more, in others less.

But where there is communism, there is persecution of Christians. And families of Christians hunger. There are today children who hunger because their parents died in prison as a result of their Christian faith or are in prison because of their Christian faith.

We have to help them. But I believe that these persecuted Christians can help us much more than we can help them. We can help them with a few coins, with a few bills, with big checks of hundreds or thousands.

They can help us with something more than that. They can help us to realise the value of the nothing, the detachment of the things of this world and attachment to the heavenly bright group. He is our Lord and not the transitory things of this world.

It was only seemingly that we were alone. It so seemed on the surface. But Jesus is a gentleman and he has promised, I will be with you always.

Now he spoke Hebrew and the word always does not exist in Hebrew. The only thing which he could say in Hebrew, I am Jewish myself too and my beautiful wife whom you have seen, she is Jewish too. And I can tell you a secret of the Hebrew language.

The word always does not exist in Hebrew. Or every day it is said in some English translations. It doesn't exist in Hebrew.

Every day, what does it mean he will be with us every day? I have some friends who see me every day for ten minutes. But the Hebrew word means every day is a whole day. 24 hours a day he is with us.

He is with us when we are in our nice homes. He is with us also when we are in prison cells. He is with us if we are in a sick room.

He is with us in poverty. He is with us in richness. He is with us in days when we pass through sorrows and in days when we can jubilate.

And he has never left us alone. We were not alone. He was with us.

He never comes by himself. He always comes surrounded by a host of angels. And he beautified even subterranean prison cells.

We did not always feel his nearness. But in moments when we felt it, then the gray walls of the cell shone like diamonds. There was light in the darkness.

Fires of burning love were in that cell. And in our hearts there was such a joy and such a jubilation that if such experiences would have lasted more than fractions of a minute, our hearts would have rent in pieces. He is there.

And when you renounce to the I, this I, this big I, myself. When you renounce to this, when you deny yourself, when you can say like Michelangelo, I am not a painter. And you are a Michelangelo.

And when you are a child of God who takes a cross upon himself. And no, I am nothing. It is much too big a privilege for me even to say that I am a cross bearer.

I would not dare to shout loudly I am a Christian. Because I know what a great thing is to be really a Christian. Then God takes possession of your soul.

Christ reigns in you. And then you have great ranks. I wish to tell you just one episode also from my own prison life.

I speak as the first person from personal experience, but I mean the thousands who passed through the same experiences in the communist prisons. One night I was interrogated by a colonel of the communist secret police. His name was Dulgeru, which means in English carpenter.

Three carpenters have played a big role in my life. One carpenter died on the cross for me and saved me. Now there was a third carpenter who had to decide about my being free or being killed.

He asked me if I should betray the secrets of the underground church. I should tell him where we print secrets and what we do and so on. I refused to do it.

Then he said, alright, if you don't tell me everything which I ask from you, you will be shot. At that time in our country the communists shot without any judgment, whomsoever they liked. And God gave me such a quietness in that moment.

And I said, Colonel, I know that one order of yours is enough. If you give the order, I will be shot. And now you have a chance of an exceptional experiment.

Put your hand on my heart. And if my heart beats frighteningly, what should I do? I die? Then you have the right to doubt that there is a God and there is eternal life. But if my heart beats quietly, serenely, I go to my beloved one, then you should know there is a God and there is an eternal life.

He got mad and shouted, never will I release you. Let him, what is his name, release you. He didn't wish to pronounce the name of Jesus.

Never will you see Westminster Abbey. I don't know how it came into his mind to mention Westminster Abbey. It is a renowned cathedral in London.

Never will you see Westminster Abbey. I said, well, Colonel, his name is Jesus and he is the son of God. And if he wishes, I will be released.

And if he wishes, I will see Westminster Abbey too. I was not very keen to see it, but because he has said I will not hear. Fourteen years passed.

I was released from prison. He was put in prison by his own comrades. And I saw Westminster Abbey.

And at Westminster Abbey, they sell illustrated cards. And I remembered there the conversation which I had had. I bought a card and I sent it to him.

Colonel, he was no more a colonel. He was a prisoner now. Do you remember what you said to me? Let him release you.

Well, he has released me. He is Jesus. He is the son of God.

And I am now at Westminster Abbey. And he can release you too. And you should also believe in him.

And if he wishes, you can even see Westminster Abbey as I have seen it too. These years of prison have served us much. It is very big suffering.

Thousands of our brethren suffer such tortures. I will not describe them because you would not sleep at fortnight if you would listen what these tortures are. The hunger, they are deprived of their children, of their beloved ones.

My wife has been in prison at the same time when I was in prison. But in another jail, I did not see her for 14 years. She was told officially that I had hanged myself in prison.

They lied to her. She did not believe it and so on. There is very great suffering in these prisons.

But there is not only suffering. There exists a conquest of suffering through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And I must say that afterwards when we were put in common cells, I have heard many more joyous Christian songs in communist prison cells than in very well-to-do homes in the free world.

And I have seen in communist prisons beautiful triumphant smiles of the Brides of Christ. They were in His embraces. They felt His holy kiss upon their lips.

And they would not have changed with American millionaires unless American millionaires were Brides of Christ too. Then they had two joys, to have millions and to have pride. But the Christian faith has proven true.

The Christian faith is very persecuted in communist countries and we have to help them. They have no Bibles. They have no Christian literature.

The Christian mission to the communist world, we help these persecuted Christians. We smuggle into them Bibles and Christian literature. I will not tell you how we smuggle because a smuggler who says how he smuggles is a very poor smuggler.

But millions of pieces of literature enter. I can tell you so much. Here you see a Gospel in a plastic bag.

This is thrown into the sea near the Russian shore, the Chinese shore, the Albanian shore. Here is a straw which makes it float on the surface of the sea. And when the tide comes it is brought in.

And here is a piece of chewing gum or of chocolate which should make the children interested to pick them up. That is how the Gospel enters in communist countries. Russia and the European satellite countries have every year 5, 6, 7 million tourists.

You can't check the tire of every car when so many tourists enter. You can't check every car to see if it doesn't have a double floor. Sometimes they check thoroughly.

They would untighten the screws. They don't find a double floor. They apologize.

They put everything in order. The car is allowed to pass. The Gospels were not in the double floor of the car.

They were in the double roof of the car. Where there are 7 million tourists, among them there are many pregnant women. Now with what is a woman pregnant? You will say with a boy.

How do you know? It can be a girl. How do you know a girl? It might be twins. It might be also a womb full with Gospels.

And it is simply not true what your doctors and nurses say that a woman can be pregnant in the ninth month only once a year. With us they are pregnant four or five times a year in the ninth month and have every time a very happy delivery without the slightest pain. We have to help these persecuted Christians.

They need Bibles. They need the Word of God. They need hymnals.

And we try to bring them into these countries. They need badly relief for families of Christians who are in prison. And we try to do this as best we can.

But this is only one way. The help is reciprocal. They can help us much more than we can help them.

They can help us with the example that courageous, heroic Christianity is not a thing of the past. It is not a thing of history. It is a thing which exists today.

In this century more martyrs have died for Christ than all the past centuries together. There are in these days also men and women who love Christ wholeheartedly, passionately. It is a shame to be a lukewarm Christian, to be a shallow Christian.

There is no motive to be so. He has given his life gladly for us. He went singing to Gethsemane.

Let us also give wholeheartedly our lives to him. Let us be dedicated to him in the service of God the Father. Amen.

At this point in the program we're scheduled to have question time and it could be that Mr Knight, are you going to collect the question sir or what? Beg your pardon? You take out now your ballpoint pens. I know that everyone here has a ballpoint pen. You never buy it.

You borrow it from somebody and don't give it back. So take out your ballpoint pen. And if you have questions on a bit of paper, at the same time, give me a minute.

At the same time, take out now your hymn sheets. On the hymn sheet there is a tear-up piece. Write here your name, address, and postal code.

We publish every month a newsletter with the pictures of those who are in prison, their addresses, their names. You will get it every month from us and you will be able to pray intelligently for these persecuted Christians. Think only about the shame.

I was in jail only 14 years. Only 14. Brother Nikolai Krapov, a Baptist pastor in Russia, is in jail already since 26 years.

And brother Paulitis, a Catholic, is in jail since 34 years. And brother Michael Arshok is in jail for his Christian faith since 43 years. And nobody in your country has ever prayed for them yet.

It was no time for you yet to know that these men are in prison for their faith. Now that is really a very great lack of knowledge, not to know the names of the martyrs. And you can get them from us every month with all the details and you will be able to pray intelligently and to fellowship with them.

So write down your names and addresses. Write down also the questions. And here a lady walks up and down the aisle and you can give to her the questions.

Tony, you also go and collect the questions. Here there is that gentleman who goes up and down. If you have questions you just write them down.

And bring me here the first questions and we will start. If you have a question just hold it up so it can be seen and someone will pick it up. Lift your hands those who have questions.

The secret is that because of the film I had to keep exactly to the schedule and I had to cut it short. In the question and answer session I will continue to tell you about the underground church. I see there were not many written questions and I wish to tell you a few things more.

I had to interrupt. With the film you understand I had to cut it to keep exactly to the minute. I wish to tell you just one thing.

Just give here what you have. That's enough. Give here what you have.

Sit down now. Now before answering the questions I wish to tell you a few things more. One prison experience which I believe might be useful to you.

Three years of prison had passed. During these three years I had not washed. We did not wash during years.

I have not washed three years. Some of your children would enjoy it. Three children with me.

And three years had passed and one evening the man who led my interrogation called me Now when you were called by them you knew you would be beaten, you would be tortured. But this evening he was very nice, very polite. He invited me to sit in an armchair and said Mr. Berman you have nothing to fear.

He had an open Bible before him. I have come to ask you a few questions from the Bible. Do you believe that this is a holy book? I said I believe every word of this book.

I know that in your country it is not a habit to believe every word of the Bible anymore. Now you have first of all so many Bibles. You have an authorized version, an unauthorized version, a revised version, an unrevised version, a living Bible, a dead Bible, all kinds of Bibles.

And you have every year some new theology. The latest about which I have heard was that God is dead. I spoke with him half an hour ago.

He was not even sick. Here they say that God is dead. Now we there behind the Iron Curtain, we believe the Bible exactly as it is written.

And I said I believe every word of the Bible that it is from God. He asked again are you very sure that this book is true? I said surely it is true. It is inspired by God.

Then he read in the first chapter. God created man in his likeness and in his image. And he asked me, Mr. Berman, do you believe that you are created in the image of God? I said I am sure of it.

Then he took out from his drawer a little mirror and gave it to me and said please look into the mirror. Now I had not seen myself since three years in a mirror. If I would not have known what a mirror is, I would not have known that the man to whom I look is Richard Berman.

I was considered at that time to be a handsome man. Now my wife is the only being in the world who believes that I am handsome. At that time many believed it.

And what I saw now before me was something monstrous. So ugly. Dark circles around the eyes.

Only skin and bones. Everything was so ugly. Horrible.

The eyes haggard. Everything shorn. He rejoiced looking at me.

It is a shock which I have seeing my face. And he said Mr. Berman, do you acknowledge that you are very very ugly? I said never in my life have I seen somebody as ugly as I am. He said well but you have just asserted that you believe you have been created in the image of God.

And if you are ugly, your God must be terribly ugly. And if he is so terribly ugly, why do you love and worship him? We all love a beautiful flower, a beautiful painting, a beautiful child, a handsome boy and so on. We love things like this.

Why would you worship? You say about yourself that you are so ugly. Why would you worship an ugly God? Now God gives the right answers in the right moment. If I would have been asked five minutes before, I would not have known the answer.

But I did not need it before. I needed it now. And when he asked me, how can you worship an ugly God? I replied, Captain you know that I am Jewish.

He knew that I am Jewish. Because Jews had always to get a double beating. They had to get a beating for being a Jew and a beating for being a Christian.

When we were in common cells, they would call all the Jews out for beating. And then after a time, all the Christians out for beating. And I had to get always two beatings.

Until I learned the lesson. And when I learned the lesson, when they called Jews out for beating, I did not go. I said I am a Christian.

And when they called the Christians for beating, I did not go. But it took me a time to learn this lesson. And I said to this Captain, you know that I am Jewish.

And in the Hebrew language, the language of the Jews, the word face does not exist. In Hebrew, you cannot say face. You can say only faces.

It is a plural. There exists only the plural. There is deep thought behind it.

Because there exists no man who should have only one face. Everyone has several faces. If I would have the money to build a church like this, I would make here in this place a big mirror.

You should look to yourself and see how beautiful you are. And how relaxed and how serene when you are in church. But if on Monday you do not like the soup of your wife, you do not have any more of this face.

If on Monday you have some trouble in your business or in your job, you have already another face. If somebody wrongs you and so on, you have several faces. And the Jews knew this.

And they did not admit the singular face. Every man has a plural. He has faces.

Panim. Every Hebrew word which finishes with im is a plural. Panim.

And I told the Captain, in the Bible, wherever it is written the face of God, in the original Hebrew, it is written the faces of God. God also has several faces. He has a face of absolute serenity, majesty, white.

He is the creator. He rules. And he knows the victory will be his.

But God has also another face. God became man. And a man of sorrows.

And he was spat upon. And he was beaten. And his face was full with spittle and with blood.

And that night he had been in prison. And he had not washed. And there must have been straw from the mattress in his hair.

He was so ugly that the stain must have marked his face when you drive nails through your hands and through his feet. It was an ugly face in that moment. But that was also one of the faces of God.

And I can tell you, Captain, I am very ugly. But even in my ugliness, I still have the face of God. God has humbled himself to take upon himself our sins and our sorrows and our tragedies.

On that day, I did not receive any beating from that Captain. There exists this triumph of faith over very difficult circumstances. And I believe that this underground church can help you much more than you can help her.

But this example of overcoming in faith difficult circumstances. We were after eight years of prison. Now we were in common cells.

I was used already to prison life. It did not impress me anymore. But I had with me a group of pastors who had been brought to prison that day.

Now, the first day in prison is very shocking. And it was in winter. We had to sit on the concrete.

And we had no mattress. We had no straw. We sat on the concrete in winter.

And winters are very bad in my homeland, Romania. And every three or four hours, some drunken wardens would come and say, all the pastors and priests out, and would beat them. I was used to the theater.

But for these, my colleagues, it was their first day in prison. And it was very, very difficult to bear. So I sat down near one of them whom I had known in freedom times before.

I wished to comfort him. And I asked him, brother, are you sad? And he lifted towards me beautiful blue eyes. I can see them even now.

And he said, brother, I know one single sadness. The sadness of not being yet a saint. Now, if from a pulpit, a pastor has eaten a good breakfast, and knows he will have a good lunch, and he tells you the biggest thing is to be a saint, it is very valuable.

But it does not have the same power as when somebody is beaten again and again, and sits on the concrete in prison, and is sentenced to 20 years, and says, I know one single sadness. Not to be a saint. Really, we have to learn from these our presence.

All the things of this world are transitory. To have a nice home, or not to have it. To have a big bank account, or not to have it.

To be laid off from your job, to make good money in your business, or to go bankrupt. To be healthy, to be sick, to be accidented, or to be safe. These are the things of this transitory world.

There exists an eternal world. There exists a paradise. I know about this paradise not from the Bible, and not from sermons.

I know about paradise because I come from there. Even a subterranean communist prison cell was paradise, when you felt the nearness of Jesus and of his angels. But how will paradise itself be? And somebody must be very, very stupid to miss paradise if it is offered to him for free.

Christ offers it freely. And there exists this beautiful world, and we can learn from these persecuted Christians not to be distraught by all the things which happen in this world. Sometimes you are nice, and sometimes you are ugly, and sometimes things go well, and sometimes things go badly.

God also has different faces. He shows himself to us in different shapes, sometimes through a joy, sometimes through a sorrow which he gives us. But he is God.

He is the God of love. And I wish to tell you just one thing more, and then I will take your questions. I wish to tell you just one thing more, now that we should also rejoice a little bit.

When I was in prison, alone in a cell, I read the Bible. I read it very much. You will say, how did you read it? You just told us that you had no Bible.

Well, you must not have a Bible in order to read the Bible. You must know the Bible in order to read it. Learn it by heart.

And I knew many, many chapters of the Bible by heart, and I could read whole chapters. Word after word, I knew them. And I had never memorized them.

But reading the Bible much, I found out that I knew them. And I read the Bible out of memory. Once I lay on the few planks which were my bed at that time in the prison cell, and out of memory I read Luke chapter 6. In Luke chapter 6 the Lord says, when you will be mocked and persecuted and hated for my name's sake, then you should do two things.

Let us open at Luke 6. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy. God says that when you are persecuted you must do two things.

One is to rejoice, and the other to leap for joy. Only to rejoice is not enough. You must do two things.

You must rejoice and leap for joy. And when I remembered this Bible verse in the prison cell, I said, well what a sinner I am. Jesus has said I should do two things, and I did only one.

It is true that I rejoiced, but I did not leap for joy. So I stood up from my bed and I began to leap. I leaped around, I danced around in the cell.

Now I don't know how many of you are jailbirds, but you know in jail the prison cell, the door of the prison cell has a hole, a peephole through which the wardens look in. You might have seen it on television how they look in. And it so happened that the warden looked in just when I danced around in the prison cell.

So he was very sure that I had gone mad. Now nobody dances in prison for joy, so I must have gone mad. And they had the order to behave very well with those who have gone mad, because these banging on the doors or shouting would disturb, you know, the quiet and the order of the prison.

So immediately unlocked the door, entered and quietened me down. Sir, sir, just be quiet, you will see everything will end well. I will bring you something good.

He went out again, came back after a few minutes with a big loaf of bread, which was my portion for two months, a big loaf of bread and cheese and two pieces of sugar. I had not seen sugar since years. And again he told me a few nice words.

He went out and I had bread plenty. I had cheese. I had given up even dreaming about cheese.

And now there was cheese and there was sugar. You know that sugar is sweet. How do you know it? Because you swallow it, which is wrong.

Sugar, first you have to admire it. It is white. It is glittering.

It is beautiful. When you have not had sugar for years, then you see its beauty. I said I will not eat yet.

I will just enjoy looking to it. I will first finish this chapter of the Bible. So I laid down again.

Where did I remain? Yes, I remained when they will hate you, when they will persecute you. Then rejoice and leap for joy. Yes, here I remained.

And what follows? Rejoice and leap for joy, because great will be your reward. And I looked to the sugar, I looked to the cheese, I looked to the big loaf of bread. Not always the reward comes in such a material form, but faith has a reward.

And I can tell you from these years in prison, we saw the reward. If I would prefer, instead of being a preacher, I should be a painter. And I should be able to paint the beautiful faces of suffering Christians, their faces shown.

And it was quite an achievement even for God, to make a face shine in prison, where we did not wash during years. The glory of God shone from behind a crust of dirt all three years. You have here a chorus, Jesus loves me, yes I know, for the Bible tells me so.

In communist countries we have very few Bibles, and we changed the chorus. Instead of singing, Jesus loves me, yes I know, for the Bible tells me so. We have changed.

Jesus loves me, yes I know, for their faces tell me so. Even the children in the underground church know that the faces of the sufferers, when they come home after many years of suffering, their faces show. And I have seen more triumphant smiles in communist prisons, than I have seen in very well-to-do homes of

Christians in the free world.

And I have heard such beautiful songs in prison. And we would never think of not being accompanied by musical instruments. Now the communists are very nice people, they have not given us musical instruments, they did not give us organs or pianos in our prison cells, but they never left us without musical instruments.

They put chains at our hands and at our feet, and we discovered that chains are splendid musical instruments. We could sing, onward Christian soldiers, cling clang, cling clang, marching as to war, cling clang, cling clang, and we were in common cells. The chains varied, some were only iron, some were iron mixed with some brass, some had a crust of rust on them, some were shorter, some were longer, and everyone had another tune.

And we could have a concert of chains. Chains can be changed in musical instruments. And your sufferings can also be changed in musical instruments.

Your cancers, whatever sickness you have, being bereft, being battered by your husband, having rebellious children, or parents who don't understand you, or trouble in your family, or trouble in your business, or being laid off. Everything can be changed in a motive to glorify God. As chains in communist prisons have been changed in this, you must not groan about everything and murmur against God for everything which happens.

Everything can be a new motive to glorify God. We learned very much there. We learned it takes 8 muscles of your face to smile.

Physiologists tell that 8 muscles of your face enter into action when you smile. When you frown, when you get angry, 48 muscles. You spend 6 times more energy for frowning as for smiling.

In times of inflation like this, when every buck counts, every dollar counts, a man who would spend 60 dollars or 60 pounds for what he can buy with 10 dollars would be considered as a fool. And how should we consider somebody who frowns when he can smile? Where have they gone? Where have they gone? I finish, then this offering will be taken, I believe, and then I will reply to a few questions of yours. I wish to finish only by telling you this one thing more.

I had to cut it short first because of the film. When I came to your country, I was told, in this country everybody preaches only 20 minutes and please stick to it. And I always stick to it.

I never preach more than 20 minutes. Only that my minutes are a little bit longer. With the inflation, everything has gone up.

Minutes have more than 60 seconds or so. But I stick to this. I don't speak more than 20 minutes.

But to come back to this, in the beginning, I remembered the Bible quite well in prison. And my mind was alert. But then the hunger and the torture made the body to be downgraded.

And then we were doped with drugs which would destroy our minds. I have been a drug addict for 10 years without my will. They put drugs into our food, into our coffee.

As often as we took a spoon of the food, we knew the drugs are there, but we had no choice. That was the only food which we had. And the drugs destroyed our minds.

I forgot my whole theology.

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