

God's Peace

by Richard Wurmbrand

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus' presence with us, even in difficult circumstances, and trusting in His sovereignty and goodness.

Duration: 31:29

Scripture: Luke 10:38

Topics: "Peace"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on their experience of being imprisoned and the thoughts that went through their mind during that time. They come to understand that God allowed them to be in prison to purify them for a higher purpose. The speaker describes the harsh conditions of the prison cell and the loneliness they felt, but also the beauty of being in the presence of the Lord. They share a story of another prisoner who found faith through hearing the gospel through the prison walls. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the joy and beauty they experienced in the presence of Jesus, comparing it to glimpses of paradise.

Transcript

Ladies and gentlemen, dear brethren and sisters, on a Sunday morning, I walked towards my church and mused about the sermon which I would have to deliver. My text was that the return of our Savior is nigh, is even at the doors. And I remember that I said to the Lord, I can't preach about this text.

It makes no sense to me. To be at the doors does not mean to be nigh. My soul is your bride, and you are my bridegroom, and you are nigh for me only if you have passed the threshold, not if you stand at the door.

And even if in the room you would still not be nigh to me, I wish you in my embraces, only when I will be one with you and you one with me, then we will be nigh to each other. Luther said that a Christian is an alter Christus, another Christ. I believe what Saint Gertrude said in her daily prayer.

Jesus, you are me and I am you. You are not you, I am not myself, but we both together are an entirely new being. I, you.

For a Christian, Jesus is not nigh when he is at the doors. He is nigh only when the Christian ceases to live himself and Christ lives in him. And when I was so debating with Jesus a sermon, which I had to

deliver after half an hour, at once a car of the secret police stopped near me.

Four men rushed out of the car. In no time I was in the van of the secret police. I was handcuffed.

I was blindfolded. I had been kidnapped by the communists. I was taken to a prison cell.

And now let us all live in our imagination this whole. Blindfolded, you descend with me some slippery stairs. I do not know where I am led.

A door opens before me. This blindfold is taken away. I am pushed into the cell.

The door is banged after me. It is locked. And now Jesus is no more simply at the door.

He is at a locked door. A door which I can't unlock. What would be your first feeling if such a thing would happen to you? I can tell you what happened to me first.

I trembled. We knew already how the communists behave towards prisoners. It is not only beatings, whippings, but refined tortures, cruelties, doping.

And I feared that under these atrocities my faith might break. I might become a traitor to the church and speak out its secrets. I was afraid of the tortures, of their pain.

I did not know if only I was arrested. I did not know if at the same time they had not arrested my wife too, as well as brethren and sisters from the church. But somehow a Christian is another being than usual man.

I had a frantic fright. But it was curiously mixed with a quiet peace. And while trembling, while being afraid, I could think about Jesus, that he once trembled.

The gospel tells that when he was in the garden of Gethsemane, he passed through agony, that he was sore amazed. I had often wondered what these words, sore amazed, meant. To me they meant at that time that he was afraid.

He knew that he would be terribly scorched. He knew his mother would be there while he would be scorched. How would his mother bear it? How would Saint Magdalene bear it, when nails would be driven into his hands, a spike into his feet, a crown of thorns would be put on his head, and then to hang naked on the cross, reviled by everybody.

And there was also another fear in Jesus. The fear that having taken upon himself the sins of the world, having been made sin, by this he would be separated from the one who constituted his life, from the one who was his love, the Heavenly Father. And so my mind went to that Jesus, being sore amazed and in agony in the garden of Gethsemane.

This happened in the first hours of my arrest. Then I remembered that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is written that Jesus is the image of God. Now if Jesus feared in that moment, does there exist any fear in God? Does God ever fear? I am a Jew.

The Hebrew was current to me. Flashed through my mind the words known by all of you. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

In Hebrew, Yerat Adonai Reshit Chochmah. This Yerat Adonai can be translated in two manners. It can mean my fear of God, my sentiments of fear, or it can be translated the fear which God has.

To understand the fear which God has is the beginning of wisdom. Now I wondered what fear can God have? He surely can have a fear. It is written in the Bible that the Pharisees closed the gates of heaven for themselves and for others.

God can use men whom he wishes to have in heaven because I locked the door for them. By my behavior, by my false teaching, by my making others to be disgusted of Christianity, I can lock the door for men whom God wishes to have in heaven. God fears this.

So there exists a fearing God. I would not subscribe now as a dogma to whatever I tell you, but these were the thoughts which flashed through my mind in that time. And then I understood why I had to be behind a locked door, why Jesus stands at a locked door.

God does not wish me to commit sins. God does not wish me to hinder through my sins the work of his salvation. He wishes to purify me for a future work, and therefore I have to be in a prison cell.

And with this thought I quietened down. Surely God had put me in prison for this purpose, to purify me for a higher, for a better work. I was alone in a cell.

We have left this hole. The cell is 30 feet below the earth. The only pieces of furniture in it are four boards which constitute a bed, a straw mattress on it, and that's all.

You have a cup of water in the cell, and some butter for other necessities. The cell is some nine feet by six. You have place to make only three steps.

You are never taken out from this cell for a walk. During years you will never see sun, moon, snow, flowers, stars. You will never have neither the Bible nor any other book.

You will never see a man except the interrogators who will beat and torture you. You are alone in a cell. They meant you to be alone.

But we were not alone. At that time I slept during the day as much as I could. I had decided to pass always the whole night in prayer and spiritual exercises.

I awoke when everyone went to sleep, and I was never alone in the cell. Around me were the victims of my life. I had committed gross sins in my life.

I did not wish to have children when I married. I was not a Christian. My wife was not a Christian.

Just make an abortion. And in the cell now I saw these my children. And they asked, Father, why did you kill me? I have committed nothing wrong.

I have never harmed you. Why did you take away my life? And for nothing in the world could I make these children disappear from my cell. They just danced around in a mad dance around me, pointing at me and calling me murderer.

There were all the men whom I had slandered, to whom I had lied. There was Mother, whom I had made so many times to weep. Never have I seen her again.

She died while I was in prison, after 12 years of waiting, and her last words had been, My Richard. There were all those girls whom I had defiled. Everyone to whom I had committed wrong in my life was there in my cell, dancing around me, pointing at me, and calling me with all kinds of bad names which I knew to be true.

I am a Protestant, and I believe that man is saved by faith alone, independent of deeds. There is one deed which saves, the fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross for us. I knew that if I had committed all the murders and whoredoms and lies and thefts which have ever been committed in the whole world during all history, lo, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the whole world, so my sins too.

This is what my faith told me. But the conscience of a man is never Protestant. The conscience is always Catholic.

You can be the staunchest Protestant and say faith and faith alone, and your conscience will ask you, And what about your deeds? I had a great struggle which lasted very much until it broke through. The blood of Jesus Christ has washed my sins, and has washed also the sins of the victims of my life, if they have believed. Zacchaeus had stolen from some Jew perhaps 100 dinars.

In any case, the Jew could not have done much with 100 dinars. It was a very small sum, but then Zacchaeus repented, and he gave him back 400 dinars instead of the 100. And now that Jew could open a little shop, and I was sure that Jesus would give to everyone whom I had made to weep for every tear a pear, and that he can give eternal life to those from whom I had taken away this life.

And by the blood of Jesus Christ, I and others who passed through this experience could overcome the terrible remorse which we had for whatever had been wrong in our past lives. And now the victims of our lives had disappeared. The communists meant us to be alone, but again we were not alone.

God had said it is not good for man to be alone, and a man, if he is put in solitary confinement, simply commits sin if he remains alone. Why should he? He can have the company of angels. He can just evoke them.

In Hebrew, the word *davar* means at the same time word and thing, reality. If a Hebrew reads the prologue to the Gospel according to St. John, he would read like this. In the beginning was the *davar*, the reality, and the *davar*, the reality, was with God, and God was reality, because word and reality are one and the same thing in the language of the Revelation.

So if I say angel, I do not say only a word. I say a reality, and the angel is so happy that I have called him, and if I believe I can evoke him, I can evoke his real presence. Secondly, I believe in the communion of saints.

The Bible says that we have around us a cloud of witnesses. It is not said that they are somewhere in heaven. They are around us, and we felt their nearness of the glorified saints.

We had a terrible time. We were tortured and beaten. Sometimes they behaved very nicely with us, and they lured us, just give up your faith and become our man, and you will be free, et cetera.

You had to resist this temptation, and during the night, the devil would be there in your solitary cell. It would be as if you could touch him, and the devil would tell you, don't you see that Jesus is not the Savior? Because if he would be the Savior, he would save you. If he would be the Savior, he had said, mine is the

whole power on earth and in heaven.

Well, if he has the whole power and is so good, why does he not deliver you? In times ago, I had written books proving that Jesus is the Savior, but because of the terrible hunger, we had times with one slice of bread a week, because of the doping, and all the other things through which we had passed, I had forgotten all the proofs from the Old Testament that Jesus is the Savior. But I believed in the communion of saints, and there was. She surely was and is here even now.

There was Saint Mary Magdalene with us. I wondered then if we understand rightly the words that we love him because he, Jesus, loved us first. We love him because he has given us forgiveness of sins.

We love him because he brings us to paradise. We love him because he has died on the cross for us. When Saint Mary Magdalene first loved him, when she kissed his feet, why did she love him? She didn't know if he would forgive her sins.

She didn't know if he would take her to paradise. He had not said a word yet. She did not know if he would die on the cross for her, if you would have asked her, why do you love Jesus? She would not have understood your question.

She would have asked, but whom else can you love in this whole world? Who is more lovable than he? She loved him for love's sake. She did not love him for his eternal gifts. She loved him and not his gifts.

And when the devil came with his terrible temptation, look, Jesus does not give you deliverance. Jesus does not give you any help. We had the cloud of witnesses around us who told us just love Jesus for himself and not for his gifts.

Love him even if he will keep you your whole life in prison, as Job said. Love him, believe in him, even if he slays you. It is the purpose of the communion of saints to strengthen you in time of great temptation.

Another saint about whom I thought very much in that time is a Britisher, St. Patrick. I love his story. He was made a slave in Ireland.

He succeeded to escape, but when he was free, he had one thought. What about my slaveholders? What about this cruel man who had beaten me and who had trodden me under their feet? I am a Christian. I must bring them salvation.

And he went and brought Ireland to Christ. I felt that this is also our duty towards those who keep us in prison, who jail, who torture us, who kill many of us. Just the fact that they hurt the church so much and that they torture so much the children of God shows how much they need Jesus Christ, his salvation.

There, in the years of solitary confinement, came to me in a very confused manner the idea that we have to reward the communists for all the evil which they do by giving them what we have best, the gospel of Jesus Christ. It did not even pass through my mind at that time that after many years there will be an American mission to the communists and a British mission to the communist world and a French and a German and a Dutch one, one in Rhodesia and one in Southern Africa, one in New Zealand, in Canada, in Australia. Now we have such missions in Norway, in Sweden, even in Japan.

I did not know that this will happen. But we lived in the communion of saints and they gave us the right thoughts. But as for Jesus, he was still at the door.

When I wished him on this side of the door, when I wished him in my embraces, when I wished him to be me and I should be he, I was very much tormented and dissatisfied with the words that he is nigh, that he is at the door. I remember Bible verses very vaguely. I remember that it is also written, Jesus says, I am the door.

And then I would go to the door, which was obscene, my mind was perhaps already confused, and I would caress this door and I would put my face towards this door and I would say, you have come one step nearer, you are no more at the door, you are the door yourself. And then came the great moment when he was no more the door. He was with me and the others, he was with us in the same cell, he has passed through locked doors, the bride of Christ received his holy kiss, and in his embraces we simply forgot that we were in a prison cell.

The doping continued and destroyed our memory, we forgot more and more. One of the most dramatic moments in my prison life was when I discovered one evening that I had forgotten the Lord's prayer. I tried to say it and I could not.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, I did not know any more what comes after thy. And then for a long time I would pray only so much, Jesus, I love you, and after a few moments again, Jesus, I love you, and Jesus, I love you, until with the time even this became too difficult for me, I could not concentrate my mind. It was the effect of the doping and of the hunger and of the other things.

The Bible was wiped out of my memory, it came back as the effect of the drugs past. The last verse which I remembered before night overcame my mind was one from St. Matthew, that the Son of Man will come in the hour when you will not think and on the day when you will not know. And my last prayer was, Jesus, now the hour has come when I know nothing more, this is the day when I can't think anymore, now it is for you to come.

And in that moment, the walls of the cell shone like diamonds, there was light in the darkness, we had forgotten all the truth about the truth, we had forgotten the multitude of theological teachings, and also the multitude of Bible verses which tell us the truth about Jesus, and we had Jesus himself with us. We would not have changed with the Queen of Britain or with some American millionaire. Christians danced for joy in these communist cells when they realized the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ with them.

Now I have traveled a little bit through the world, I have seen many beautiful places, I have never seen such beautiful sights as God discovered to us in this subterranean prison cell when he gave us a glimpse of paradise. Now I sometimes hear beautiful music, it can't be compared with the concerts of angels which we had. Some might say, well, this might have just been a visual hallucination, the paradise which we have seen in the cell.

I would answer, perhaps it is only visual blindness from your side that you do not see this paradise. This paradise exists, we have seen it, and we have been together with the most beautiful and with the most lovable being, this Christ Jesus. At once, being one with him, being in his embraces, all his burdens became our burdens.

The Westminster Confession says that man lives with the purpose to glorify God, and we had to glorify God. These years of solitary confinement have not been only years of personal experience with God. We could speak with our wardens, we could speak with the communist officers who interrogated us, and God helped us to bring several of them to Christ.

They were with whips in their hands, in beautiful uniforms, with epaulets. We were dirty, we had not washed ourselves for three years, we were in shabby suits of a prisoner, but Christ was with his little brethren, the power of his Holy Spirit was with his church in chains, and they could not convince us to betray our Christian faith. God helped us to bring some communists to Christ.

And then we would not lose our time even in the solitary cell. The cell is only relatively solitary. Only a wall separates it from another cell nearby, and there exists, thank God, the Morse code.

A, B, C, and so on. All prisoners learn it with the time from one another. You begin with a primitive code until you arrive to find someone who knows this code.

Once you know this code, you can converse with the people who are at your right and at your left. One from nearby told me one night that he was so depressed and that he wished to suicide himself. I asked him if he was not a Christian.

Oh no, he said, he knew nothing about it. By Morse code, the gospel was preached through the wall to a man whom I had never seen before, and he accepted Christ from a man whom he had never seen before. God made it that after eight years of prison and a half, when we were already in common cells, a new bunch of prisoners were brought in.

One had a shining face, which was quite an achievement, to have a shining face when you had not washed yourself for so many years. The face was shining from behind a crust of dirt. From the very first words he said that he was a child of God, I asked him, how did you arrive to faith? Since when are you a Christian? He told the story that he had been in a cell, and from nearby somebody had tapped through the wall to him the gospel, and so he was converted.

I asked him, in what cell did this happen? In cell number 12, he answered. I embraced him because I knew who had been in cell number 11. I look back now to these prisoners.

At that time, they were sometimes very heavy to bear. We were terribly hungry. We shivered for cold.

The torturers were very often bad. The longing after children, the longing after your family, after your brethren. But these years had also their unspeakable beauty, the beauty of being with the Lord.

Another very unusual experience. Until going to prison, I believed that I believed the whole Bible to be the word of God. When I was in the solitary cell, I discovered that I had never believed the Bible to be the word of God.

The Bible consists of white sheets of paper with black letters on it. I had always believed that only the black letters were the word of God. I had never given any importance to the white sheet.

And now for the first time, the white sheet spoke to us. At the age of 12, say the black letters, Jesus was brought into the temple and amazed the priests by the answers which he gave. I am not interested if the priests were amazed.

I would like very much to know what answers he gave to the priests. This is written in the Bible, but not in black letters. It is written on the white sheet.

I would have liked very much to know what Jesus had done between the age of 12 to 30. The apostles surely must have asked him about it. His development is of highest interest.

It is described in the Bible. It is not written in the black letters, but on the white sheets. St. Luke went to Bethany and spoke before writing the gospel with Martha and Mary, asking them details.

How did it happen when Jesus was in your house? Martha said, well, I had a little quarrel with my sister. And Luke, a conscientious historian, wrote down, well, this and this quarrel happened. And what can you, Mary, tell me? Oh, I sat the whole evening at the feet of Jesus and just listened to his talk, and he praised me for this, and I did not move from near his feet.

And then St. Luke will have asked her, Now, if you have sat the whole evening at the feet of Jesus, would you please tell me, what did Jesus say on that evening? You just read in Luke 10, and you will find what he taught. It is not in the black letters. It is on the white sheets.

There exists the mystery of the word of God, the mysteries which the bridegroom whispers into the ear of his bride, and there will remain always mysteries reserved only for her if this bride opens her heart for him. Every night I and many other Christians, thousands of us were in prison, we passed nights in prayer. We traveled from one country to another.

Every night we were in the United Kingdom, in the United States, in Canada, in Australia, in New Zealand, in Africa. We have been very much in the United Kingdom, which has been once a country of saints and scholars, and about which we had heard so much. I knew the story of your revivals, and of Wesley, and of Spurgeon.

I had this image of Great Britain, and every night we prayed for you. We prayed for the other English-speaking countries, and for all the countries of the world. We prayed for your churches, for your youth, for your children.

And God has rewarded this prayer, that now I can be together with those for whom I have prayed, as you probably have prayed for those who are in prison under the Communists. I am free now. I can lead a mission to the Communist world.

I wish to put on your heart, remember those who are not free. Tens of thousands of Christians are in prison in Red China, Russia, Romania, Albania, Zanzibar, Guinea, and other countries. Prisoners have had their eyes gouged out in Red China, members and tongues cut off.

Let us be united in our hearts with the heroic underground church from behind the Iron Curtain, which is privileged and glad to give every year innumerable martyrs, that the name of the most lovable being which has ever walked on this earth, the name of Jesus Christ, might be glorified. God bless you all. Amen.

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