

How to Organize an Underground Church - Part 2

by Richard Wurmbrand

Richard Wurmbrand emphasizes the necessity of silence, listening, and unity in the underground church to navigate the dangers of persecution and maintain faith.

Duration: 27:55

Scripture: Proverbs 17:14, Matthew 6:6-33, Romans 14:19, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, James 1:19

Topics: "Underground Church"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of brainwashing, particularly in the context of communist prisons. He describes the intense methods used in these prisons, where prisoners are forced to sit for 17 hours a day and listen to propaganda that promotes communism and denounces Christianity. The speaker emphasizes the importance of resisting brainwashing, not only in communist countries but also in the free world where various forms of media can influence our thoughts and beliefs. He concludes by highlighting the significance of using our words wisely, as Jesus teaches that we will be judged for every useless word we speak.

Transcript

Which we have to learn in the underground church is to be silent. Pastors, by their very nature and their very profession, are loquacious people, people who speak. Now, a pastor is not meant to speak the whole time.

Nobody can preach well unless he listens well. This applies also to the free world. I have already the age of 65, and when I look back to my dealing with souls, I have won more souls by listening to them than by speaking to them.

People have so many burdens on their heart, and there is nobody who has the patience to listen to them. Even your own husband has no patience, your wife has no patience, your children, they are young, they wish to go somewhere away. There is nobody to listen to you.

And if they find you a man who listens, you have won him without speaking to him many words. Now, in the underground church, silence is one of the first rules. Every wrong word, every superfluous word which you speak can put somebody in prison.

A friend of mine, a great Christian composer, went to prison because Christians had the habit to say, how beautiful is this song composed by brother so-and-so. They praised him. And for this, having praised him, he got 15 years of prison.

But sing the song, and don't mention the name of the man who is made. Now, you can't learn to be silent the moment when the country is taken over by the communists. You have to learn to be silent from the moment of your conversion.

A Christian is a man who speaks little, and with great weight, thinks over if he should speak this word, if it can do harm or not. In the underground church, every spare word can do harm. Solzhenitsyn, the great Nobel Prize winner, you know, this Russian writer who has come out, he has said in an interview, the one who has been his greatest persecutor, who denounced him, was his own wife.

It is written in the book of Ecclesiastes, when you are with your wife, don't tell her the secrets of your heart. Now, these words mean just nothing for me, but they are from God. And God knew that we will have an underground church, and he knew that at a certain moment the wife might become angry against you about some question, and if she knows the secret, she will be betrayed.

And she betrayed one sister, the wife, who was the secretary of Solzhenitsyn, and that one was so tortured or put under such pressure that she finished by hanging herself. But if Solzhenitsyn would have kept silent, this would not have happened. Another question, which is very important, I generally, I thank God for the years which I passed in solitary confinement.

I was, during three years, 30 metres, 10 metres beneath the earth, 30 feet. And I never heard a word, I never spoke a word. We never had a book.

The outward voices ceased. The guards had felled Solzhenitsyn's shoes. You did not hear their reproach.

Then, with the time, the inner voices ceased. We were drugged. We were beaten.

I forgot my whole theology. I forgot the whole Bible. One day, I observed, I had forgotten our father.

I could not say it anymore. I knew that it begins with our father. I did not know the continuation.

And I kept just happy, and I said, Our father, I have forgotten the prayer, our father, but you surely know it by heart. You hear it so many thousand times a day, so you know it by heart. So you put an angel to say it for me, and I will just keep quiet.

For a time, my prayer has been so much, Jesus, I love you. And then after a little time again, Jesus, I love you, and then Jesus, I love you. Then it became too difficult to say even this, because we were doped with drugs, which would destroy our minds.

We were very hungry. We had times when we had one slice of bread a week. There were the beatings, and the tortures, and the lack of light, and all this.

And it was impossible to concentrate my mind to say so much at least, Jesus, I love you, and I abandoned it, because I knew that it is not necessary. The highest form of prayer which I know is the quiet beating of a heart which loves him. And Jesus should just hear, tic-a-tac-a, tic-a-tac-a, tic-a-tac-a, and he should know that every heartbeat is for him.

Then afterwards, I came out from solitary confinement and was together with other prisoners, and I heard them speaking. I wondered, why they speak? So much of our speech is useless. Men become acquainted with each other, and one would say, how do you do? And the other, how do you do? And then both would not say how they do.

So what is the good of this? And one would say, don't you think that the weather is fine? And the other thinks and thinks and says, yes, I think it is fine. But why do you have to think about the fact that the weather is fine? And so much of our speech is useless. And now, here it is useless, and we don't take earnestly the word of Jesus who says that men will be judged, not for every bad word, but for every useless word.

So it is written in the Bible. Now, useless talking in a communist country means prison and death for your brother. A word of praise about your brother, if it is not necessary.

Oh, if somebody comes to visit you, oh, I'm so sorry you were not here ten minutes before brother Wernher just left. And this can be an informer of the secret police, and so he knows that brother Wernher is in town. Keep your mouth shut, and learn this already now.

You can't do underground work without using stratagems. Everyone knows what a stratagem is. I know one case in Russia.

The communist police suspected that the Christians are gathering somewhere, and they somehow surveyed a street where somewhere must be the meeting. And they saw a young boy going towards the house where they supposed that the meeting will be. And they stopped the young boy, the police, and asked him, where do you go? And he, with a sad face, said, my oldest brother died, and now we gather the whole family to read his testament.

And the police officer was so impressed and patted the young boy and said, just go, everything. He didn't say a lie. The older brother had died, and the family gathered to read the testament.

With us, a brother has been taken to the police, and he was asked, do you still gather at meetings? And he answered, but comrade captain, prayer meetings are forbidden now. Well, it is good that you conform with this. Just go.

But he didn't say that he conforms. He didn't say that he doesn't go to meetings. He was asked, do you still go to meetings? And he answered, but meetings are forbidden.

But the police officer understood that he's a man who conforms. A courier of ours went to a communist country. He was stopped at the border.

And he was asked, what books do you have with you? And he said, well, I have the works of Shakespeare and the works of Jehovah. And now the police officer did not wish to show that he's an ignorant Jehovah might be some other great British poet, or I don't know what, and to say I don't know who Jehovah is would put you to shame. So he said, OK, OK, all right.

So there are strategies which in every case we believe in the Holy Spirit that he's a reality. The Holy Spirit is not a verse in the Bible. If he's a verse in the Bible, he's of no avail to me.

And if angels exist as fairy tales to be told to children, then I don't need them. There are fairy tales enough without them. Angels are a reality.

We have every one a guardian angel. And if we are here together today, I don't know how many, 50 or 60, 50 or 60 angels are also here. There are also plenty of devils here always.

We are Christians, Gaza. There are always devils also. And we have to rely on angels and on the Holy Spirit.

We are not obliged to tell an atheist tyrant the truth. We are not obliged to tell him what he is doing. It is indecent from his side to put me questions.

If I would simply put you the question, how much do you earn a month? It's really an indecent question if you belong to society. You don't put such questions, no? How much money do you have in the bank? Nobody puts such a question. It's an indecent question.

And you are not meant to answer me. I'm not meant to ask a girl, do you have a boyfriend or not? Are you already in love with somebody? If she doesn't wish to tell me something like this. So a man is not meant to ask me about my religious activity if I don't wish to tell it to him.

It is an omission in my private affairs of an atheistic state who has no right to put such questions and we are not meant to answer such questions. It is very difficult at interrogations. They put you all kind of questions and they told me, you are a Christian and you are a pastor, you are meant to speak the truth.

Now tell us, who are the other leaders of the underground church? Where do you go? Whom do you meet? Who are the leaders in the different towns? If I would have said the truth, there would have been innumerable others who in their turn would have said the truth, and so on. You have to resist this where the result are beatings and are tortures, but you have to take them upon yourself. The result of torture is that you might die.

I knew a brother, a very, very good brother, a pastor, who has today as big pains as I had when I was beaten because he played rugby. And something happened with his foot and it gives him terrible pains. So if for rugby, I can take upon myself pains, and when he will get better, he will still play rugby.

Knowing that some other accident, to tell you the truth, I don't know what rugby is. I've never seen a rugby party. I don't know the difference between rugby and soccer.

I know that it is a crime in South Africa not to know what rugby is. But it is your fault because you have never invited me to see a rugby party. I don't know what rugby is.

I imagine it's also something with a ball or something like that. But the fact is that we take upon ourselves physical pains for rugby, which is a sport, a pleasure, healthy for the body, and you take these physical pains upon yourself to protect your brethren from being arrested. The worst thing which might happen because of this is that you will die under tortures.

But to die is the most natural thing in the world. A beggar stopped once at the house of a rich man and said, Could I please one night sleep here? I don't have where to sleep. And the rich man, Go away from here, beggar.

Here is not a hotel. The poor man said, I apologize. I'll go further.

But will you please answer me a question? I looked to this house. I found it so beautiful. Who has made this house? Now the rich man felt flattered somehow and said, This is the house built by my beautiful father.

And where is your grandfather now? He died since long. And who lived in the house after the grandfather? Well, my father. And is he still alive? No, he also died.

And who lives in the house now? I do. And will you also die? Yes. And who will live in the house after you die? Well, I hope my children.

Then he said, Why did you shout at me? You said that this is not a hotel. It is a hotel. It changes its inhabitants every time, just like a hotel room.

You pack your things, somebody else comes. So if you know, you will somehow know these things. Therefore when such stories are told, everybody laughs.

He laughs because of the obviousness of the thing. Now if it is obvious, take it as your part of the view of life. If God wishes me to be dead today, He does not need the communist torture.

I can die by a heart attack without the communist torture. So the communist torture never can shorten my life with one day. It never can the best restaurant with the finest dentist prolong my life with one day.

I die when I am called by God. And Christians are unafraid. They know where they go.

I recommend to you very much, for the underground work, there are here also brethren who work in Angola. The question is very actual for them already now. Not the slightest quarrel is permitted in the underground church.

Every quarrel in the underground church means arrests, beatings, and perhaps death. The communists watch and listen. They have their informers in the underground church.

Wherever there is a quarrel, there are reciprocal accusations. The one would say to the other, Yes, when you were with Brother Smith, you did this. Here I have a name, Smith.

Yes, but you have covered up the sin of Brother Johnson. Here I have another name, Brother Johnson. Yes, but what did you do when you were with Sister Johansson? Here I have another name.

Quarrels always bring up names, and bring up facts. And therefore, the word which is written in the Bible, Don't quarrel while walking on your way. I know in one town of Romania, in Tishine, there was a terrible quarrel between two congregations.

The one was Baptist, and the others were what you would call here the strict brethren. You probably know these exclusive brethren. And there was such a terrible quarrel.

It resulted in the arrest of the leaders of both congregations. The communists listened to everything. And you can't take last-minute decisions.

I know that in heaven I can enter only if I will be saint. Because who is not holy can't enter in heaven. Then it would be better to start today to be saint.

It will be too late to start to be saint when you go to heaven. You will not know how to start it. You have to start it now.

And if, in the case of a communist takeover, I will have not to quarrel. The bad thing is not to quarrel already now. It is dramatic that there exists thoroughly quarrels among organizations which work behind the input.

It has had already dramatic results. And as far as possible, they should be avoided. Even a family quarrel in a communist country can mean death.

I have been in the same prison cell with a man. He had a girlfriend. And as it happens at a young age, at a certain moment, he met another girl.

And he preferred that other girl to this girlfriend. But to this girlfriend, he had told different secrets. And this girlfriend went and told the secret police, and he got a lifelong prison, and he got mad in prison.

What has happened with him afterwards, I don't know. So that really the preparation for an underground worker is not something else than the preparation for a normal Christian worker. Only it is much deeper, and it has to become much more real, a part of life, knowing, well, I believe that in South Africa you can destroy a congregation by quarrels.

I believe that in your country, in all countries, there have been cases of congregations destroyed by some quarrel between two pastors or two elders of the church. That happens everywhere. But there it means imprisonment and death.

Another question. One of the great methods of the Communists is not only physical torture, it is brainwashing. And we have to know how to resist brainwashing.

A Christian must generally resist brainwashing, because there exists brainwashing in the free world, too. The press brainwashes us. The radio brainwashes.

Everything brainwashes, everything which exercises influence upon us. There exists no motive in the world to drink Coca-Cola. You drink it because you are brainwashed.

Water is surely better than Coca-Cola. But nobody advertises, drink water, drink water. If there would be advertising, we would drink water.

And now Communists have driven this technique of brainwashing to its extreme. Brainwashing, essentially, the methods vary. But brainwashing in Communist prisons consists essentially in this, that you have to sit 17 hours a day on a form which has no possibility where you should live, I mean you are not allowed to close your eyes.

17 hours a day you have to hear Christianity is dead. Christianity is dead. And so on and so on and so on endlessly.

say, give up, give up, give up, give up, give up, give up. You are bored already, because I repeat these words since one minute. But there you have to hear it.

The whole day, weeks, months, years, without any interruption. I can assure you that it is not easy. It is one of the worst tortures, much worse than the physical torture.

But Christ, who has foreseen all things, because with Him there is no time, future, past, present, are one with Him. He knows all things from the beginning. He has given us, when Pavlov invented brainwashing, Christ had invented already the cure for brainwashing, it is heartwashing.

He had said, blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God. Stephen, around him there were hundreds perhaps, or scores, I don't know how many, with big stones in their hands, to throw them at him. And he says, I see.

And the wife of Stephen probably will have thought, he sees in what danger he is, and now he will run away. But he says, I see, Jesus, standing at the right of the fire, wait a little bit until Jesus, don't you see all this mob around you, ready to throw stones at you? A mob which wishes to, oh yes, yes, yes, some little ants there, yes, yes, below there are some little ants, not worth mentioning. I see Jesus.

He didn't see those who wish to kill him. And there exists, blessed are the pure in heart, the simple fact is that they resisted brainwashing. I have passed through brainwashing three years.

Now, the communists would say that my brain has not been washed. But you cannot resist brainwashing. It is by heartwashing.

Now, technically, in the same rhythm in which they said, Christianity is dead, Christianity is dead, Christianity is dead, I and others, we repeated to ourselves, Christ also has been dead, but we knew he resurrected. And we remembered we live in the communion of the saints. We usually believe that the saints who have passed to the Lord are somewhere in the skies above the stars.

You know, the Bible tells us where they are. Seeing then that you are encompassed by a cloud of witnesses, why should they sit there in the stars? They are here where the fighters and the sufferers are in the world of the Spirit. There exists no here and there.

We, these notions of space and time, which don't exist in the world of the Spirit, we localize these things. They are around us, and we felt the presence of the martyrs of all times, and I personally had very much the feeling of the presence of Saint Mary Magdalene, and I was very much in the presence of her, and I was so happy when I thought, what is he telling me that Christianity is dead? Supposing that it is there, what difference does it make? Supposing that there is no more one single Christian in the world except me, what difference would it make? Mary Magdalene just loved Jesus.

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