

How to Organize an Underground Church - Part 3

by Richard Wurmbrand

Richard Wurmbrand shares his experiences and insights on how to prepare for and resist torture, emphasizing the importance of spiritual preparation, faith, and detachment from worldly things.

Duration: 28:50

Scripture: Matthew 5:11-12, Matthew 10:37, Matthew 16:24, Luke 14:26, Luke 14:33, Acts 6:15, Acts 9:16

Topics: "Underground Church"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of evil and its opposition to good. He emphasizes that while the devil may make mistakes and is not almighty like God, he can still be a powerful force of wickedness. The preacher shares his own experience of communist torture and how it can be spiritually used to strengthen one's faith. He also highlights the importance of living in the present moment and not worrying about the future. The sermon concludes with a discussion on the resistance of liberal and modernist theologians to torture, questioning their lack of conviction in their beliefs.

Transcript

This preparation we have to make already now before we arrive to prison. In prison you lose everything. You're undressed, you get this prisoner suit, nothing of what constitutes a nice furniture, a nice carpet, a nice curtain.

Not to speak, you don't have a wife anymore, you don't have children, you don't have your library, you don't... nothing of what makes... never see a flower, nothing of what makes life pleasant for you, you keep. And nobody resists, who does not renounce pleasures of life beforehand. There is a verse in Colossians about mortify your members which are on earth.

The Catholics have made out of it all kind of penances, and you had to walk on your knees up the steps of I don't know what church in Rome, and all kind of pilgrimages, and 40 days of fasting, and all kind. And because this made, they made this, we have given up mortifications altogether. But there exists a Christian mortification, a giving up the joys of the earth already now.

And the Christian who prepares himself for this already now, will not suffer the loss of them when he is in prison. If you use the things of this world without allowing an attachment, an emotional attachment, and I

personally, I use as an exercise, I live in the United States now, now, and you can imagine how an American supermarket looks like. You find there all kind of beauties, endless.

And I walk through supermarkets, I look to this, I say, I can go without. I go to another thing, this is very nice, I can go without. I go to the third thing, I can go without.

I have visited the whole supermarket, I did not spend one single dollar, I have had the joy of seeing many beautiful things, and also knowing that I can go without. We have to learn this beforehand. We have somehow, in making his commercials, brother Pike mentioned liberalism.

It is very interesting. We also had liberal theologians and modernist theologians. None of them resisted, none of them resisted any torture.

Why should I die for a dead God and for a problematic Bible? If the story of Adam and Eve is not true, the miracles of Moses are not true, Joshua did not stop the sun. The prophecies have been written many centuries after they have been fulfilled. Jesus has not been born from a virgin, he did not resurrect bodily.

Well, then there are more lies in the Bible than there is in Pravda. And then why should I go to death, why should I go to death for what is not true or at least problematic? I am Jewish myself in Hebrew, the language which Jesus himself spoke. And in which the first revelation has been given, the Old Testament, the word doubt does not exist.

Such a thing does not exist. To doubt is as wrong for a man as to walk on four legs. He is not meant to walk on four legs.

A man walks erect, he is not a beast. And to doubt is subhuman. A man, to every one of us doubts come, don't allow doubts about some problems, essential problems of the Bible, the existence of God, the resurrection of Jesus, existence of eternal life, and so on.

Every doubt, theological or philosophical doubt, makes you to be a potential traitor. You can allow yourself doubts when you have a nice study and you have to prepare a sermon and you eat well or you write a book, you can allow yourself all kind of daring ideas and doubts. But when you are tortured, these doubts are changed increasingly because you have to decide to live or to die for this faith.

I speak now about the spiritual preparation of an underground worker. It is the solution of his doubt. Go on, just as in mathematics, somehow you don't get the solution, you go on, there must be a mistake somewhere, no? And you find out, don't live with doubts, but arrive to the solution.

And now, just in the few moments which are left for now, we will have afterwards a question and answer session, I will continue tomorrow, to come to the very moment of torture. Torture is sometimes terribly painful. They use red-hot irons, sometimes it is a simple beating.

Now, a simple beating, we all have been spanked, we have been children, it's another spanking, it's not a big thing yet. But sometimes a simple beating is very easy too. You come back, Jesus has said, we should become again like children, so it means to get another spanking.

It's not bad. But by the way, a lady, a doctress, came to me and said, what should I do? I think about throwing myself through the window. They call me again and again and wish to make me an informer in the underground church.

And they threaten me that they will beat me if I don't accept it. What should I do when I think that they will beat me? It will be so terrible. I can't take it.

And I have the solution only to become an informer or to throw myself through the window. I said, you have another solution. Give a stick into your husband's hand and tell him to give you a good beating, and you will see how you can beat.

A beating is just enough. Don't be afraid of a beating. But the communists don't stop at beatings.

They use very refined tortures. Now, torture, you must know, can work both ways. It can harden you, and it can strengthen your decision not to tell the police anything.

And there are thieves who would resist any torture and would not betray with whom they have stolen together. And the more you beat them, the more obstinate they would become. Or it can just break your will.

Now, I will tell you one very interesting case which has been published by the Czech communist press. You know that under Dubček there was a period of relaxation, and then they could publish certain things in Czechoslovakia. And the following thing, I have the article with me.

And an article appeared at that time. Novotny, who has been the predecessor of Dubček, the communist dictator, had arrested one of his intimate comrades, a communist leader and a convinced atheist, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Because in prison, we were not only Christians or Jews or patriots.

Communists were also in prison. They arrested one communist, arrested the other, and tortured him just as they would arrest everybody. And now they arrested this communist leader, and they put him in a prison cell alone.

Electric rays passed through this cell, which disturbed the mind. And continually, a loudspeaker, day and night, is your name Joseph or not Joseph? His name was not Joseph. Think it well over.

Are you Joseph or are you not Joseph? The biggest criminal of America has been Dillinger, but you are a bigger criminal than Dillinger. But what is your first name? Is it Joseph or is it not Joseph? You are a counter-revolutionist, you are a spy, but are you Joseph or are you not? Just imagine, you know? And this day and night, he felt that he loses his mind. And at once, he got an illumination, and he said, I have met now unmitigated evil.

If communists torture a Christian, it is not absolute evil, because communists believe that they will construct an earthly paradise. Christians hinder them, so it is right to torture the Christians. There is some idea of right in this.

But when a communist tortures a communist, it is torture for torture's sake. There exists absolutely no justification. And he said, I have met now unmitigated evil.

But wait a little bit. Every coin has two sides. Every electricity has two poles.

If there is an unmitigated evil, against whom does this unmitigated evil fight? There must be an unmitigated good. This is God, and against this they fight. When he was called to the interrogator, he entered smiling into his room, and he told him, you can switch off now your loudspeaker, because it has

attained its result.

I have become a Christian. And the man, now the officer asked him, how did it happen? And then he told him this whole story. And the officer said, wait a little bit.

He called a few of his comrades and said, please repeat the story before your comrades, before my comrades. He repeated the story, and the captain told the other police officer, I have told you that this method will not work. It is overdone.

It's interesting that the devil, the devil is not almighty and all wise like God. He makes mistakes. And torture, communist torture, is an overdoing which can spiritually be used very well.

It is such an explosion of wickedness, wickedness for wickedness sake, that if you have the right spiritual preparation, it might strengthen you in faith. The first, the very important, is to learn what Jesus said, don't worry about tomorrow, tomorrow will worry about itself. I have made 14 years of prison, brother Kharapov has made 26, others have made, now 14 years of prison, it is impossible to make 14 years of prison, of communist prison, it's impossible.

But you are never asked to make 14 years of prison. Make one day at a time. And don't make one day, make an hour at a time.

Now one hour of pain, everybody can bear, we have had terrible toothache, we have had I don't know what, a car accident with terrible pain, we have passed through I don't know what, and you are not meant to bear pain more than this minute. What amplifies the pain is the memory I have been beaten and tortured so many times, and tomorrow they will take me again, and the day after tomorrow, and the day tomorrow I might not live, or they might not live. No, tomorrow can be a common overthrow, as it came in Chile, I don't know what will happen tomorrow.

Yesterday's beating has passed, and live only on today. With torture it is the following, now I have become a professor in torturology. With torture it is so, that first it is a terrible shock, a terrible pain, and then let me say the torture to which Cardinal Mincenti has been submitted, he has 29 days and nights he was not allowed to sleep, and then after 29 days and nights he declared just everything, whatever they asked from him he declared.

Now what happens, after a few days of such non-sleeping, or after a few days of intensive physical tortures, and so on, then comes a moment when nothing counts for you anymore. You forget about duties towards your wife, and towards your children, and towards your church, and towards your own good name, and towards God, and towards it. You become absolutely indifferent to everything.

Now this is the critical moment which the torturer waits for. Now in this critical moment, learn already now to conquer doubt, to think thoroughly. In this critical moment when you arrive, there is this one moment of crisis, when you are ready to sign, or are ready to pronounce, the name of your accomplice in the underground work, or to say where the secret printing shop is, or I don't know, some of these things.

In this moment you have been so much tortured, nothing counts anymore. Well if nothing counts anymore, my survival also doesn't count anymore. If nothing counts anymore, the fact that I should not have pain anymore also does not count anymore.

Draw the last conclusion of the stage in which you have arrived, and you will see that you will overcome this moment of crisis. And if you have overcome this one moment of crisis, it gives you such an inner joy. You feel that Christ has been with you, that at a certain moment the communists are now trained and refined, and they realize that the moment has come when they can't get anything more out of you, and then they abandon torturing.

They know it is useless. I have been taught, since I was a very young Christian, to read every day, and to my son since he had the age of three or four. Every day I read a page of the Bible, and the life of a saint or of a martyr.

Fox books of martyrs, and you know there are many such books. And always I read both things. And so we bring up our children.

I thought, I have, I am the first, you will excuse all weakness, but I am the first lecturer who ever delivers a lecture about underground church. There has never been, in the whole world, a course about underground church. And I thought, how to begin it? And so I asked, how did Jesus begin to teach? Soul of Tarsus, the great sufferers who will receive so many stripes and be in shipwrecks, and then show him how many things he will have to suffer, and that suffering can be born.

There are a few little things in connection with torture. It is an old religious practice to breathe rightly. You all have studied comparative religion.

You know what the art of breathing means in Hindu religion and in Buddhist religion, in their exercises of yoga. But we read about different kinds of breathing in the Bible. He breathed upon them, or how do you say he breathed upon them? He breathed.

Well, you have such a funny manner to speak English. I never can guess how you will speak English. Well, it is said that Jesus breathed upon them the Holy Spirit.

So there is a certain manner of breathing which conveys the Holy Spirit. In the Orthodox Church, even now, at a baptism, the priest and the godparents breathe three times upon the children. They breathe carbon dioxide, because they don't know what to breathe.

Jesus, when he breathed, Jesus, when he breathed, he breathed the Holy Spirit. It is written, I believe, in Acts 9, if I can, yeah, soul breathing out threatenings and slaughter. Have you ever seen such a murderer, such a criminal? He breathes crime.

It is said in the book of Jeremiah about some names after their other men's wives. There exists the breathing of an adulterer. There is one breathing in silent and quiet prayer.

There is another breathing in high emotions. When you quarrel with a man, try once to quarrel with your wife. It's not difficult.

Try once to quarrel with your wife, and while you quarrel and while you bully her, that's one of the motives for marrying, while you bully her, try to breathe like this, to breathe quietly, rhythmically, and deeply. You will see you can't quarrel. Now, breathing, therefore, breathing is, right breathing, is one of the tricks, if you wish to call it like this, one of the means of resisting torture.

Betrayal, it means rupture with the whole past, no? I am a pastor in whom so many believe, no? I have been entrusted with the secrets of the underground church, and I give these up to imprisonment, to death. Now, this is such a powerful emotion. You know, it is like in moments of very great effect.

You can't quarrel and shout at somebody only on the condition not to breathe quietly, rhythmically, and deeply. And the contrary is true. Breathe as a traitor can't breathe.

Breathe rhythmically, quietly, very deep, if you can, deep to the heel, so deep you should breathe. First of all, the oxygenation gives you a resistance, gives resistance to the whole body, and this, it balances your reactions, it gives you a poised attitude. The first thing which an underground worker must not know with his head, but in his fingertips, his whole life should be based on this.

He should know, I belong to the body of Christ, which means I belong to the body, to a body which has been flocked during 2,000 years. It has always been flocked, not only on Golgotha, it has been flocked under the Roman emperors, under so many persecutions. It has been flocked in Russia since almost 60 years.

It has been flocked under the Nazis. And I have consciously become part of a body knowing that it is a flocked body, a mocked body, a body spat upon, crowned with a crown of thorns, with nails driven into hands and into the feet, and I accept this as my possible future fate. I will never think about Jesus only as having been crucified 2,000 years ago, but the suffering of Jesus in his mystical body must become reality for me.

The Bible teaches some words very hard to take, whosoever does not hate father, mother, child, brother, sister, can't be my disciple. These words mean really nothing in a country which is free like South Africa. They mean very much for us.

You probably know from our literature that thousands of children have been taken away from their parents in the Soviet Union and in Romania because they were taught about Christ. And you must love Christ more than yourself. There you are before court, and the judge tells you, if you deny Christ, here are your children, five or six, you go home with them.

And if not, that is the last time that you will have seen your children. And your heart may break, and you say, I love God. Nadezhda Sloboda left her house for four years of prison.

Her children were taken away from her, and she left singing. And the children, for whom the police waited already with a truck to take them away, the children told the singing mother, don't worry about us. Wherever they will put us, we will not give up our faith.

But Jesus, when he was on the cross, not only he suffered, but he had in front of him his mother suffering. And his mother had the son suffering. And the heart, they loved each other.

But the glory of God was at stake, and here any human sentiment has to disappear. And only if we take this attitude once and for all, if we think so and believe so, only then are we prepared for this underground world. Then Christ, the great sufferer, the man of sorrows, lives in us.

And there have been cases in communist countries when communist torturers threw away their rubber truncheons. They beat a Christian, and they asked, what is this hollow which you have around your head? How is your face shining? I can't beat you anymore. There have been such cases.

It is said in the Bible about Stephen that his face shone. And in church history we have had so many cases. We have known cases of communist torturers.

You were alone with him, and he told you, shout loudly, cry loudly as if I would beat you so that the other, my comrades, would know that I torture you. But I can't torture you. And you would shout, ha, ha, ha, ha, and it would be just fun, and nothing would happen.

There are other cases when you are beaten, when you are tortured. You are tortured to death. You have to choose between dying with Christ and for Christ, or becoming a traitor, and what is the worth of continuing to live when you will be ashamed to look into the mirror, knowing that the mirror will show you the face of a traitor.

So the first requisite for being an underground worker, and especially an underground pastor, and what is even more important, an underground pastor's wife, she plays an exceptional role, the underground pastor's wife. She has to strengthen him. She has to give him courage to do all these things.

If she asks him for movies and for, I don't know what, for enjoyments of life, he can't be an underground fighter. She has to push him to work, and to fight, and to sacrifice himself.

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