

NCAC Sunday School Class
December 2, 2018
WURMBRAND: Tortured for Christ



WURMBRAND

Session 1: Who will stand for Christ?

Developing an unshakable conviction to stand for Christ in the face of any opposition.

Introduction

The Pastor and His Wife Who Changed the World: The Wurmbands

On February 29, 1948, Richard Wurmbrand was arrested by the secret police for leading Christian worship and witnessing both of which were illegal under the atheistic Communistic regime in Romania. Richard spent fourteen years in prison. He was tortured, beaten, and locked into a solitary confinement cell. Sabina Wurmbrand spent three years in a labor camp, nearly freezing to death as she and other prisoners worked on the Danube Canal.

WHO WILL STAND FOR CHRIST?

The Communist Party launched a full-scale campaign against religion in Romania. Until this point, Richard's life as a pastor had been full of satisfaction. His salary could support Sabina and their son, Mihai, and his church family loved and trusted him. But Richard wasn't at peace. Why had God allowed him to love as usual while a tyrannical dictatorship was destroying everything around him and while other Christians were suffering for their faith. Many nights Richard and Sabina prayed for God to give them a cross to bear. Soon their prayers would be answered.

LET'S THINK ABOUT THAT ONE

Do you know of any Christians who have been so concerned by their own comfort that while their brothers and sisters in Christ were suffering they prayed for God to give them a cross to bear?

What feelings or questions does a prayer like theirs cause you to consider?

Can you picture yourself praying like that? Why or why not?

I. Video Discussion: Standing for Christ

1. It is not uncommon for followers of Jesus to talk about "standing for Christ" or "taking up our cross." When we say these words or hear them spoken by others, which images and thoughts come to mind, and what do those words mean to you?

2. In what ways might your understanding of taking up one's cross and standing for Christ differ from Richard and Sabina's understanding, or differ from the understanding of persecuted Christians today who live in places like China, North Korea, or Iran?

3. We know the cost the Wurmbrands (and many others) paid to stand for Christ at that time in Romania. What do you see as the pivotal choices and cost of standing for Christ in the culture in which we live?

II. Make it Personal: Matthew 16:24-26, 1 Peter 3:13-16

Richard sat in silence. Motionless as the stones surrounded him, he began to thank God for bringing him to this prison. Each passing second became an answer to his and Sabina's prayers to let them bear a cross. "What strange and wonderful opportunities would blossom within these walls. What friendships with guards could be build." Richard didn't know. But he hoped God would shine through him as he suffered in isolation in the foreboding Romanian prison.

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life[a] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?" (Matthew 16:24-26 ESV)

- What is it about carrying the cross that causes you to be afraid or ashamed?

- What is it that causes you to pick up the cross even when you suffer opposition for taking the stand?

- What are you utterly dependent on God to do so you can stand and bear the cross for his glory?

- What is it about the cross that fills you with hope and joy?

13 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone

who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame (1st Peter 3:13-16 ESV).

According to Peter, what are the perspectives and practices Peter lists that can prepare our hearts and minds to face whatever opposition may come our way?

Make it Personal: Billy Graham

"...but Jesus meant something far deeper than this when He told His disciples to carry their cross. He said to them, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). In Jesus' day, a cross wasn't just a symbol of pain and suffering; it was mainly a symbol of death. What Jesus was telling them is that they needed to put to death their own plans and desires, and then turn their lives over to Him and do His will every day."

III. I Will Take the Next Step: Acts 4:13-22

I can develop an unshakeable conviction to stand for Christ in the face of any opposition.

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. 14 But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. 15 But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, 16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." 18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old (Acts 4:13-22 ESV).

- What is it that makes an astonishing witness for Jesus?

- How important is it to stand unashamed and firm in our testimony about Jesus?

- How do we prepare ourselves to stand for Christ?

If you want to be an astonishing witness of Christ, then give yourself to God and let him use you!

I Will Take The Next Step: Joni Eareckson Tada

"Up until the diving accident that caused my paralysis, I assumed God wanted His children to live happy healthy lives that were free from trouble. But in reading *Tortured for Christ*, I realized that God's purpose in redeeming us is not to make life a soft bed of roses but to make us more like Jesus. Loss, grief, pain, and suffering are His choicest tools in accomplishing that goal.

Now, having lived fifty years in a wheelchair as a quadriplegic - as many years as *Tortured for Christ* has been used of the Lord - I can truthfully say that deep affliction in a Christian's life is what provides the most powerful platform for the success of the gospel."

You Can Take The Next Step By:

Developing an unshakable conviction to stand for Christ in the face of any opposition.