

NCAC Sunday School Class
December 30, 2018
WURMBRAND: *Tortured for Christ*



WURMBRAND

Session 5: The Pastor's Wife:

I can have active faith that takes the spiritual fight to the Enemy because God is greater.

Introduction

Reflections and thoughts from last week's lesson:

- Preparing for the privilege of suffering for Christ.
- Responding to terrifying fear in the strength of God's Word.
- A verse for this very day.

Today's Video: *The Pastor's Wife*

*"The secret police greatly persecuted the Underground Church because they recognized in it the only effective resistance left. It was just the kind of resistance (a spiritual resistance) that, if left unhindered, would undermine their atheistic power. They recognized, as only the devil can, an immediate threat to them. They knew that if a man believed in Christ, he could imprison the physical body, but they couldn't imprison a man's spirit - his faith in God. And so they fought hard." **Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ***.*

LET'S THINK ABOUT THAT ONE

What did Richard recognize about the reason behind the intense persecution he and others involved with the underground church suffered under the Communist regime in Romania and its secret police?

What insight does this give us into the nature of the spiritual battle that we, as followers of Jesus today, are engaged in against Satan?

How aware are we that our enemy is potent, active, and fighting very hard against us?

Why is loving God and seeking to love others, as he commands, such a great threat to Satan's agenda?

When the enemy fights very hard against us, what must we do if we want to survive, overcome the opposition, and advance the Gospel of Christ?

I. Video Exploration:

A. Video Notes:

- Take the fight to the enemy.

- Serve the Soviets or go to jail.

- Consequences for being a Christian.
 - In any circumstance we are victorious with God.
- **With the Lord we are fearless and strong to advance His kingdom.**
- Persecuted but not abandoned.
 - We can't make disciples if we don't go.
 - The price we pay is tied to eternal victory.
 - Passive perseverance versus faith in action.

B. Video Discussion

1. When we think of going on the offense and living out our faith without reservation, we often think of doing something big that gets lots of attention. Sabina's efforts to advance God's kingdom weren't like that. Instead, she offered continual expressions of God's love and faithfulness to people in every circumstance she could.

- *Did her "small" acts require any less courage or faithfulness to be a witness for God than if she had done something "big"? Why or why not?*

- *Were her "small" acts any less of a victory for advancing God's kingdom?*

2. Sabina also never stopped picking away at the enemy. One conversation at a time, one phrase from the Bible shared over and over, one person touched by the love of God - she never let the enemy rest.

- *What can we learn from her example about how to faithfully advance God's kingdom no matter how dire or hopeless our circumstance may be?*

II. Growing Into A More Biblical Faith Perspective

Our Study Together

Four years into his second imprisonment, Richard became terribly ill and was moved to a prison hospital. One day he and other patients were ordered to march into the courtyard and participate in a makeshift theatrical performance, the point of which was to mock Christianity. One by one the prisoners were forced to take center stage and repeat blasphemous slogans against Christ. "*We have to say these things until it's over,*" one of the prisoners said, clutching Richard with tears in his eyes.

When it was Richard's turn, he remembered Sabina's words at the Congress of the Cults: "*Wash this shame from the face of Christ.*" he began cautiously, "*It's Sunday morning, and our wives and mothers and children are praying for us, in church or at home. We should have liked to pray for them, too. Instead, we've watched this play.*"

Richard saw tears running down faces as he spoke about families. "*Many have spoken against Jesus,*" he continued, "*but what is it that you actually have against him? You talk about the proletariat [working class people], but wasn't Jesus a carpenter? You say that he who doesn't work shall not eat, but this was said long ago in Paul's second epistle to Thessalonians (2 Thess. 3:10). You speak against the wealthy, but Jesus drove the moneylenders from the temple with whips.*" (John 2:14-15)

The commandant scowled but listened, hoping Richard would say enough to warrant execution. "*You want Communism,*" Richard continued, "*but don't forget that the first Christians lived in a community sharing all they had (Acts 2:44). You wish to raise up the poor, but he Magnificat [magnifies: the hymn*

of Mary], *Mary's song at Jesus's birth, says that God will exalt the poor above the rich*" (Luke 1:52-53).

Richard went on to quote Karl Marx who wrote that Christianity is the most fitting form of religion. Before he could finish, the prisoners erupted with cheers. Richard's bold speech cost him his place in the prison hospital, a flogging he didn't think he would survive, additional intense beating, and blaring loudspeakers to brainwash him.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYTwpf10K30> - Carcer

A. In Matthew 28: 18-20, Jesus gave his disciples - and all who would follow him in the future - the assignment of an active faith, a faith that would take the fight to the heart of the enemy:

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

What is that fight, and by what power and presence are Jesus' followers able to carry out?

B. Jesus's commission to make disciples requires a faithful and active life of service:

20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:20-21 ESV)

What do we, as followers of Jesus, become when we accept the commission Jesus has given?

C. Thankfully, God's power is limitless, and His great loves ensures that he will take care of everyone who loves and serves him:

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (Romans 8:31-34 ESV)

What assurances does God's unlimited power combined with his unconditional love provide for everyone who walks with Him in faith when we take the fight to the enemy?

D. Paul's letters to Timothy provide essential instruction in faith and encouragement in service to God:

5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:5-8 ESV)

What reward did Paul anticipate for himself and for everyone who fights the good fight of faith and finishes well?

III. You Can Take the Next Step

A. I can have an active faith that takes the spiritual fight to the Enemy because God is greater.

No one can say it is impossible to take even one step forward in obedience or service to God. Consider the impact of just two steps - one hesitant step taken in the prayer of an atheist Jew, and one pleading promise uttered in the prayer of an old man to meet a Jew and lead him to Christ - that made possible the amazing story of Richard Wurmbrand:

In an isolated sanatorium, Richard prayed his first prayer, *“God, I’m absolutely sure you don’t exist,” he whispered. “But if, by some chance, You do exist, it isn’t my job to believe in you. It’s your job to reveal Yourself to me.”*

As it turned out, Richard wasn’t the only man praying to God in the rural hills of Romania. High up in the mountains, in a village as isolated as the sanatorium, an aged German carpenter named Christian Wolfkes had spent the entire night on his knees praying: *“My God,” Christian prayed aloud, “I’ve served You on earth, and I want to have my reward on earth as well as in heaven. And my reward should be that I shouldn’t die before I bring a Jew to Christ, because Jesus was from the Jewish people.”* He sighed. *“but I’m poor, old, and sick. I can’t go around and find a Jew. In my village, there aren’t any. Bring a Jew into my village, and I’ll do my best to lead him to Christ.*

We know the rest of the story. Christian Wolfkes found Richard Wurmbrand walking down a street in his village. God had answered his prayer, and the fight to advance the kingdom of God on earth continued in earnest.

B. What is your commitment to step forward and boldly express your faith:

- In prayer for the gospel and for your brothers and sisters in Christ who labor and suffer to make him known?*
- By diligently studying the Bible and faithfully sharing its truth and the promise of God’s eternal kingdom?*
- By boldly expressing God’s love for people who do not know him, especially for those who mock your faith or cause harm to the cause of Christ or to those who serve him faithfully?*

Standing Firm on the Word of God
(Ephesians 6:10-20)