

Christ is Victor

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“The LORD sets the prisoners free”

“The Lord looseth the prisoners” (Psalm 146:7).

I recall visiting a prison some years ago. A certain prisoner who was sentenced to death was awaiting the execution of the sentence. When I entered into a special high security block, a signboard read: “These men are condemned to die.” Those were terrible words and soon I passed cell after cell with prisoners. Their faces were a picture of death itself.

The cell to which I was taken was no less than the anteroom of hell. The inmate, a man who had killed his wife, was beside himself. The memory of his wife’s murder seemed to prey upon his mind. I could hardly speak to him, for he was in no condition to understand. But outside his cell I stood and prayed for him. Later I came to know that the Governor had stayed his hanging and had commuted his sentence to life imprisonment. There came a marvellous change in that prisoner’s life too.

I came face to face that day with the fear, terror, mental anguish and hopeless remorse in the minds of those who had to meet death, in a day or two, with a guilty conscience.

What a relief the commuting of his death sentence must have been to him. The Bible tells us emphatically: “The Lord looseth the prisoners” (Psalm 146:7). Yes, He the King of kings has the power and the authority to loose the

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“Look at the Cross”

“Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.

Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.

Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.

And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north” (Jeremiah 1:8-13).

God is speaking about the coming judgment of Babylon. Babylon had become a great city and was reigning over many lands. Though it had learnt to conquer and to rule over lands Babylon did not know how to cleanse itself. Babylon did not know the truth. It had its own philosophy. The prophet is seeing here what was going to happen to Babylon. Babylon conquered Jerusalem and destroyed it [in 586BC]. God allowed it because the Jews went against God in spite of being constantly warned by their prophets. When Israel was separated from Judah and from the worship at Jerusalem, it lost hold of God. Idols were substituted for the worship of God. Idols can provide nothing to cleanse the heart. Those that worship idols become like them, dead at heart and dead in the conscience. There will be wonderful philosophy on the lips but wickedness in the heart. When God does not have hold over us, Satan will take hold of us.

Why are you suffering? Is it because God has left you? The prophets were able to foretell the future of Israel. Israel would not continue as a kingdom. They were taken captive and became one with the heathen. They

intermarried among the heathen. So a part of this great nation that was chosen of God and trained by His law was lost.

God tried to help the kingdom of Judah. But their kings also brought in idolatry. Babylon conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the beautiful temple and carried away all the useful people. Ezekiel [a prophet] was also carried away to Babylon. It was a good thing because he continued to prophesy. But God knew what would happen to Babylon. Where there is no truth, there can be no revival. Babylon had no remedy now. “Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured” (Jeremiah 46:11). This balm was produced in Gilead. But could it save Babylon? What can save a nation? What can save a family? What can save an individual? Nowhere can a balm be found for the perishing but the calm of Calvary. There is a remedy for your family at that place. Look at Jesus on the Cross. He is dead but His blood is still flowing. Why is the mighty God so helplessly hanging and His blood flowing? Is it not to heal the nations? Look at the Cross. If you believe, a great change will come over you. Repent at the Cross and confess your sins. You can find balm only at Golgotha (Calvary). He that hides sin will not prosper. Confessing your sins, if you believe, the power of God will come on you. The great philosophy of Greece bowed down before the power released in the death of Christ. Look at the Cross. If you believe, a great change will come over you. Repent at the cross and confess your sins. Confession of sins by itself will not bring you salvation. It only prepares your heart for the gift of God. Many hide sin and want to prosper. God’s law cannot be changed. He that hides his sin cannot prosper! Confessing your sins, if you believe, the power of God will come into you. You can get balm only in Golgotha.

—N. Daniel

“The LORD sets the prisoners free”

prisoners. And He is releasing them now.

When I sit closeted with men, in heart-to-heart talks, when the veil is drawn away and they reveal the truth about themselves, invariably I find that in some quarter of their lives or some part of their personality they are prisoners. Then they tell me of their efforts at self-improvement and their desperate longings for release.

Some speak of booze and alcoholism, others of drugs which were too easily accessible in the hospitals where they worked and they were hooked; yes, even doctors were hooked. Still others speak of a long struggle to shake off tobacco; some tell of strange fears and nocturnal oppressions; many speak of sex-perversions of a seemingly infinite scope and variety; an increasing number of people have problems in their marriage; suspicion and strife is just killing them.

Most people have some measure of longing for release but when they look around them, they are convinced that there is simply no other way but to live with this inner bondage. Then to cap it all, they see some religious people too floundering miserably and putting up a false front of apparent well-being. Forthwith fatalism becomes the shrine at which they worship. “This is my fate, I must endure it,” they say, and thereafter they seek no deliverance from their misery, heartache and tears.

The ostrich method of escaping from its pursuers by burying its head in the sand seems to have become the universal method of escape for men today. “Try to forget your worries, shake off that cancer in your mind by the movies or by burrowing deep into the seat before the television. Or seek some variety in your sex life,” the devil and his friends tell you.

But the Bible says, “The Lord looseth the prisoners”.

Then I see men who are blind with hate. They are prisoners of hatred. Hatred is their religion. They hate the Lord Jesus, they hate men like me who speak to them of love. Hatred is the theme and ruling passion of their lives. A Hindu workman in a mill, paralysed by a long strike and crippled financially ... had suffered much, yet he was so well tutored in all the true and imagined crimes of the management against the workmen, that he could

give me today in a few minutes a convincing recital calculated to inspire hate, concerning the misdeeds of the management. He had been tutored to hate. He came to me seeking prayer.

The world needs love, not hate. But the friend who had brought this man to the meeting was himself one who had once hated Jesus. He had been given to drink and brought much suffering to his wife. The Lord Jesus had met him and transformed him. As a foreman in a factory, he is now helping to liberate many with the Gospel of love.

One of my listeners, who had chanced upon our broadcast, wrote: “Will you pray for me, here are my problems. I know that most broadcasters, broadcast for money. I was a communist but I have turned to Christ...”

I wrote him: “We will love you and pray for you even if you are the poorest man in the world.” Here is a fine, thinking young man beset with sorrows and problems. He had been tutored into thinking that all this service is done for money. If such were our motive, there would not be that blessing of God upon this broadcast.

What it costs me in terms of strength, time, prayer, thought and even money amidst my heavy schedule, people cannot know. Yet one soul liberated from sin and uncleanness is worth more than the greatest treasure on earth. Remember, to release a prisoner, a ransom has to be paid, or a Redeemer has to be found. I cannot think that anyone would like to take another’s place at the gallows or on the electric chair. But Jesus took your guilt and sin and your death upon Himself. Then why do you lie in irons still? The Bible says: “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered” (Joel 2:32). Yes, that “whosoever” includes you.

Call on the Lord Jesus and put Him to the test. Is this all just a piece of commercialism or is Jesus true and as good as His word? Souls, bound and chained and even incapable as it were of sane and balanced thinking, blinded by pride, hatred and prejudice were released in a moment, when they turned their eyes upon Jesus and believed Him.

This loving Saviour waits now for you to release you.

The great Gen. MacArthur, the legend-

ary hero who liberated the Philippines and finally ended the Second World War, has this to say of the release of the American prisoners of war, held in a camp north of Manila. A spectacular dash was made to capture the camp and to prevent a possible massacre of the 5000 POWs.

“When I arrived, the pitiful half-starved inmates broke out in excited yells. In their ragged, filthy clothes, with tears streaming down their faces, they seemed to be using their last strength to fight their way close enough to grasp my hand. ... I was kissed. I was hugged.”

Dear listener, the Saviour and liberator Jesus stands by you, He wants to be your Saviour too. Open your eyes and see His love now. Open your heart and kiss Him in. “The Lord looseth the prisoners.” Bow your head and let us thank Him.

Lord Jesus, you came to release us from our inmost bondage, we thank you, for your love.

—Joshua Daniel

Reality Check!

**THEN SAID JESUS TO THOSE
JEWS WHICH BELIEVED ON
HIM, “IF YE CONTINUE IN
MY WORD, THEN ARE YE MY
DISCIPLES INDEED; AND YE
SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH,
AND THE TRUTH SHALL
MAKE YOU FREE”**

(JOHN 8:31-32)

“Three carpenters”

Three carpenters played a big role in the life of Richard Wurmbrand, an international representative of—and voice for—persecuted Christians in the twentieth century. One of them was a praying carpenter. The greatest of them was the Carpenter of Nazareth. The third was a godless carpenter. The first helped him to the Greatest, and it was for the glory of the Greatest that he met the third.

A PRAYING CARPENTER

Richard Wurmbrand was a convinced atheist. Yet one day, he prayed to God. His prayer was something like this: “God, I know surely that you do not exist. But if perchance you exist, which I contest, it is not my duty to believe in you; it is your duty to reveal yourself to me.”

Richard was an atheist, but this gave him no peace in his heart. At this time of inner turmoil—as he later discovered—in a village high up in the mountains of Romania, an old carpenter prayed like this: “My God, I have served you on earth and I wish to have my reward on earth as well as in Heaven. And my reward should be that I should not die before I bring a Jew to Christ, because Jesus was from the Jewish people. But I am poor, old and sick. I cannot go around and seek a Jew. In my village there are none. Bring thou a Jew into my village and I will do my best to bring him to Christ.”

Something irresistible drew Richard to that village. He had nothing to do there. Romania has thousands of villages. But Richard went to that village. Seeing that

he was a Jew, the carpenter showed him love. He saw in Richard the answer to his prayer and gave him the Bible to read.

Richard had read the Bible out of cultural interest many times before. But the Bible that the carpenter gave him was another kind of Bible. Richard later learned that the carpenter and his wife prayed for hours for his conversion and that of his wife. The Bible given to Richard was written not so much in words, but in flames of love fired by prayers. Richard could scarcely read it; he could only weep over it, comparing his bad life with the life of Jesus, his impurity and hatred with His love, and He accepted him to be one of His own.

Soon after Richard, his wife was converted. She brought other souls to Christ. Those other souls brought still more souls to Christ and so a new congregation arose in Romania. Richard had begun a journey with the Son of God, Jesus the Carpenter of Nazareth.

JESUS THE CARPENTER

In 1944, Communists seized power in Romania and Wurmbrand was sent to prison four years later. Labelled “Prisoner Number One”, he was placed in a solitary cell. After eight-and-a-half years he was released, but then re-arrested a few years later and imprisoned for a further five.

The suffering was intense. Deep beneath the earth, Wurmbrand and fellow believers in prison saw none of creation’s beauty—no sun, no moon, no stars, no flowers, no rivers, no Bible, no book, no

child. They saw only the prison wardens and torture. The cells were soundproof. Perfect silence reigned there. There was almost nothing to eat. There was no colour, only the grey world of the prison.

Richard became tired, very tired. One night he said to the Lord Jesus, “Lord, you see, I have no brethren, no sisters, I don’t have your written word, I don’t have Holy Communion. I have none of these things, but you have spoken so directly to persons, even to very evil persons like Saul of Tarsus, who had been a persecutor and a killer of Christians, and you came and spoke with him. And as I have nobody to speak to me, would you speak to me tonight?”

It was an exceptional circumstance. When Richard said, “You, Lord, speak to me,” he heard the voice of Christ. His sheep hear His voice. Christ Jesus posed a striking question: “What is your name?” He asked.

Jesus knew the answer—but He wanted to make Wurmbrand think. In that moment, Wurmbrand could not reply to Jesus, “My name is Richard,” for he had once read of a Richard in church history, unjustly sentenced to death for murder in time of persecution. When the executioner had difficulty in fixing the rope, Richard had bowed before him, apologised, asked if he could help, and died with a big smile on his face. Wurmbrand feared to say “My name is Richard,” for what if Jesus should say: “Are you like that Richard?”

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CHRIST IS VICTOR

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This Fellowship is an inter-denominational missionary and prayer group working for revival in churches and amongst students in several countries. We invite every layperson to become God’s ally in changing his or her corner of the world. We train people in evangelistic work and to be self-supporting missionaries.

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He feared too to say "I am a Christian," for first-century Christians had gone to their death under the Romans saying "Christianus sum" ["I am a Christian"], and he was not as courageous as them.

"What is your name?" Jesus had asked. "Jesus," Wurmbrand replied, "Jesus, I have no name, allow me to bear your name."

"That is what He really wishes from us," Wurmbrand later commented, "Paul understood it: 'Not I live'—not the old Paul, not the new Paul . . . Not the wicked and full of vices, not the very good and full of virtues, the 'I' has been abolished, 'not I live but Christ lives in me.'" In the English language, 'I' is written with a capital letter, Wurmbrand would note: "I am something very, very important, capital letter. And Jesus tells us: 'Whosoever wishes to come after me should cease to write 'I' with a capital letter, whosoever wishes to come after me should deny himself'. His brother, his fellow men should come first, God should come first, and he somewhere in the rear."

Years of prison passed. The Christians faced hours of brainwashing daily. And they were hungry, hungry for Holy Communion, the remembrance of the broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. For years they had not celebrated it—and yet, they had nothing.

At once, the Christians had an illumination. They had! They had something called "nothing". What was the value of this "nothing"? The prisoners had nothing and were nothing to the wardens. Yet in those half-dark, subterranean prison cells, they began to think of the value of the "nothing". The beautiful world, the wheat, the vineyards—God had made them out of nothing. So "nothing" was a very valuable material, indeed, the basic material from which Holy Communion was made.

And in *Job 26* it says that "God hangs the earth upon nothing". "Nothing" was therefore the most resistant material upon the earth. To have "nothing" was to have something very valuable and resistant.

Then also there was St. Paul, who said "I am nothing". If Wurmbrand was nothing, then he was like St. Paul!

The Christians decided that they had been foolish not to rejoice in having and being nothing, and that on a Sunday morning they would take Holy Communion—with nothing. Having signalled to each other on the cell walls, they took in their hands "nothing", and thanked God for it. "Christians are simply thankful and grateful," Wurmbrand later remarked. They blessed the nothing, the beautiful nothing. They remembered the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, which had been broken for them; and then they took another "nothing" and blessed that, too.

"When you are a child of God who takes a cross upon himself," Wurmbrand continued, "and know, 'I am a nothing,' it's much too big a privilege for me even to say that 'I am a cross-bearer'. I would not dare to shout loudly 'I am a Christian', because I know what a great thing [it] is to be . . . a Christian. Then God takes possession of your soul, Christ reigns in you".

A GODLESS CARPENTER

One night, Wurmbrand was interrogated by a colonel of the Communist Secret Police; the colonel's name, in English, meant "carpenter". He threatened to shoot Wurmbrand if he did not betray all the secrets of the Underground Church (the Church of the persecuted).

At that moment, God gave Wurmbrand such quietness. "Put your hand on my heart, and if my heart beats frightened," he told the colonel, ". . . then you have the right to doubt that there is a God and there is eternal life, but if my heart beats quietly, serenely . . . I go to my Beloved One, then you should know there is a God and there is an eternal life."

"Never will I release you! Let Him, what is His name, release you! Never will you see Westminster Abbey!" shouted the colonel.

"Well, Colonel," replied Wurmbrand, "His name is Jesus, and He is the Son of God, and if He wishes, I will be released, and if He wishes, I will see Westminster Abbey too."

Years later he was released, but the colonel placed in prison—and Wurmbrand did see Westminster Abbey. There he bought a card and sent it to the for-

mer colonel: "Do you remember what you said to me? . . . Well, He has released me," wrote Wurmbrand, "He's Jesus, He's the Son of God, and I'm now at Westminster Abbey, and He can release you too, and you should also believe in Him, and if He wishes, you can even see Westminster Abbey," he wrote.

Jesus the Carpenter gave His life gladly for us, even singing to Gethsemane, the garden of agony. And He is coming again.

—See **Richard Wurmbrand, Tortured for Christ and "The beauty of nothing"** (recorded address).

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