

# Proceeding into Persecution

## By: Kim Alexander

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Thank you all for coming. This is exciting for me to be able to share with you guys.

Unfortunately, I didn't plan ahead, and I didn't request a VCR player and I've got the coolest little three-minute video clip that you don't get to see. So, I'm going to do my very best to kind of convey to you what goes on in this little three-minute thing. But first I want to start with prayer.

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Lord, thank you so much for this day and for this opportunity to share and I thank you for all the people that you've brought, and I just pray you would give me the right words to be able to adequately convey the message of the persecuted church and I just give you this time, Lord, and thank you for it. Jesus' name. Amen.

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Okay, now pretend the video is going. The scene opens in a little home Bible study type situation. And see, I haven't told the story for a long time. They're just reading God's Word and I think it's John 3:16 or something. There's like a young girl and a few and there's a fan going. You can tell it's just hot and kind of sweltering in there and maybe, I don't know, six people or so. And then all of a sudden, the door breaks open and these police officers come in with their guns and everything. They say they demand each person spit on the book of lies. That's what they call. And if they don't spit on the book of lies, they're going to shoot them. So, one by one you can tell

they're kind of hesitant and oh gosh, should we do this or not? And one by one they kind of come over and they spit on it and they're kind of sheepishly walk.

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Okay, go. They let them go one by one, maybe two or three do this. And then this little girl, she's probably twelve and she picks up the Bible and she kneels down on the floor, and she puts the Bible on her lap, and she just lovingly takes her skirts and wipes the spit off and she's praying, father, please forgive them. And it says this was her last prayer. And the officer puts the gun to her head, and they do it really well. They don't show anything, but you can hear the gun go off and the screen just goes white. It's kind of good I didn't show because I've seen that thing so many times and I can't watch it without crying. So, this is kind of nice for me to start speaking without crying.

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So, the hardest thing for me and sharing this message isn't talking in front of people. I don't really mind that. The hardest thing for me is getting everything I want to say crammed into the allotted time space. When I was being trained to become an area rep for the Voice of the Martyrs, I went through a correspondence course about three months. And it was books to read and tapes to listen to and videotapes to watch, and notes and questions and phone sessions. And at the end of this training period, you were to put together a 30 minutes practice presentation. And as long as you hit about eight certain points, you could put in any stories or points that you want us to back up those eight specific points.

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I just want to get everything in there. I tried to cram it all in there. Everything was so interesting and so good to me. So, my first practice presentation was an hour and a half. You're supposed to tape it and send it to the headquarters. And they're like, no, you have to redo it. I was like, well, can you help me know what to take out? And they said, no, you have to do that. So, it was hard. I had to ex this out cross this out. I finally gave it to my son ay Carl's Jr. I got it down to 38 minutes. So let me back up. At the time, I was reading in Isaiah or Jeremiah where God says, I put my words in your mouth. I was like, you're going to have to take some out. I've got too many.

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Anyway, I got it down to 30 minutes, and that was a go. I always thought that the word martyr meant that you died for your faith, and that does mean that, but it also means actually, in Greek, it means witness. I don't know if you knew that or not, but it could mean someone who chooses to suffer death rather than to deny Christ or someone who sacrifices something very important to further the kingdom of God. It could be their home, their family, their status, possessions, job, whatever, or someone who endures great suffering because of their Christian witness. And I like this little definition, one who bears witness under threat. That just says it all.

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And my awareness in martyrs and the persecution started when I read the book called Jesus Freaks. Have you guys ever heard that book? How many of you guys have read it? A lot of you? That's good. I read it maybe five years ago, and I was absolutely astounded at. I had no idea

these things were still going on. I'd read these stories saying, oh, this must have happened 100 years ago. No, 1997, 1998, China, Indonesia. It was just amazing.

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One story I remember in particular was I forget what country it was, but it was a family. It was made to dig their own. They were Christians, of course, and wouldn't renounce their faith, and they were told to dig their own grave. So, this family, for days worked on this big pit. And then at the end, they were going to shoot them. They were all going to fall into this grave that they had dug themselves. So, the time had come, and they were all gathered around this pit holding hands, and they had one last request and that they'd be able to pray. So, the officer said, all right, go ahead. So, they prayed, and they didn't pray, lord, get us out of this situation. We don't want to die. They were praying for the guys that were going to shoot them, that they would come to know Christ, and we love these guys and everything. And then when they were done praying, the young son sort of tore away from the group and ran off into the woods.

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And the officer was going to go after him, and the daddy said, wait, let me just call him back. He said, okay, so he's all, son, come back, what's a few days off in the wilderness by yourself going to get you? Come back and die with us. And we'll all go be with Jesus together. So, the son was all crying, and he came back, and they grabbed hands and they're like, Okay, we're ready. But none of the officers, the soldiers that had witnessed that scene, none of them could bring themselves to shoot them, they were so touched. But then some guy that hadn't witnessed the whole thing came and shot him. So just story after story after story like this, I just was

astounded. There were more Christian martyrs in the 20th century than the previous 19 centuries all put together.

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I'm not too much into statistics, that's hard to say, but that one just I couldn't believe that fact that there are almost as many Christians martyred every year as died in the tsunamis of a couple of Decembers ago. Every single year. That many people, almost as many people are martyred. There are countries where churches are burned down, Christians are actually hunted down and either put in prison or beaten or tortured, have all their possessions taken away, their countries where whole families are executed if one member is even suspected of being a Christian. And this is in countries where they say that they have freedom of religion.

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This is happening to our brothers and sisters. We are one body. I know you know that. Romans twelve five says, we, being many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. In 1 Corinthians it says members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. And I read this the other day. I liked it. Our unity among Christians comes from our unity with Christ. I thought that's just a neat picture of the connection we all have.

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In Hebrews 13:3, that's kind of the theme verse for the Voice of the Martyrs is, remember the prisoners as if chained with them those who are being mistreated, since you yourselves are in the

body also. And the part of that verse we tend to forget is the part as if chained with them. And when I speak to kids, I have my son's little handcuffs here he's 16. But yeah, I always swipe his handcuffs for my presentations. When I speak to kids, I'll grab a couple of kids and handcuff them together just for the analogy. I say, now could you go around in your daily business doing your homework and feeding the dog or whatever you do and forget about this other person that you're handcuffed to? No, of course not, because you're chained with them. And that's how we're to remember them, as if we were chained with them and to pray for them.

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Richard Wurmbrand, I'll talk about him in a minute. He's the one that started The Voice of the Martyrs in 1967. But in his book Tortured for Christ, he has a neat analogy. He says if you were hit in the toe with a hammer, your mouth would cry out. And he says, why would your mouth cry out? It didn't get hit; it was your toe. But see, if your body is all connected the way it should be, if one part is hurting, it's going to hurt all over. So, if we are connected to the body of Christ by his Holy Spirit, if you're connected right, you're going to feel their pain if you know about it, at least to the point where you'll pray for them. And that's their biggest fear. Their biggest fear is that we in the west, in the free Church, are not praying for them. Their biggest fear, they don't want to be abandoned or forgotten.

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Another analogy I read was in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus asked Peter, James, and John to stay awake with him and pray. They couldn't. They kept getting drowsy and falling asleep. Here they were a stone throw away from the greatest drama ever unfolding in history and

they couldn't stay awake. And even though what the persecuted Christians, it's not quite going through what Christ went through, but still they're going through agony and all they're asking is that we stay awake with them and pray.

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And that's why the Voice of the Martyrs exist. We exist to inform the world of treatment that Christians are going through and to help meet the needs of them and also of their families and to provide them with the tools they need to spread the gospel. They don't have access to Bibles and gospel tracks, but we can provide those for them and also to have fellowship with them. That kind of puzzled me. I thought, well, how can you have fellowship with people that you can't see?

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I would think you have to be face to face, have fellowship. But no, because those people, they provide the most awesome example of like the early church, the Christianity that we should be living out just no matter what. And that's the kind of example they're providing for us. And we in turn are providing prayer for them and support and materials that they need. So even though we don't see them face to face, we have a very close fellowship with them.

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We're currently serving in over 40 different countries. But before I get into that, I just want to tell you a little bit about the founder, Richard Wurmbrand. He's in heaven now, but I love people's testimonies. I love to hear how people came to know the Lord. And I especially loved his. He was born he was a Romanian Jew, and he was orphaned at a young age and was raised in an

atheistic household. So, the whole time he was growing up to an early teens young man, he just was a devout atheist. But he says that atheism didn't give peace to his heart. He wished somewhere deep down, he wished that there was a God that knew him and loved him, but he just knew there wasn't. So, he said that there was something unreasonable that always drew him into churches. He couldn't pass the church without going inside, so he would do that on a regular basis.

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And one time he thought, well, I wonder if I go in. Well, he went into this one church, and there was a woman kneeling, praying, and he thought, well, I wonder if I kneel down kind of close enough to hear what she's saying. If I say what she's saying, I wonder if something will happen to me. So, he got close enough not to make her uncomfortable, just kind of listening to what she was saying or whatever she said he said, and kind of waiting for something to happen, and nothing happened. So, he laughed. He's like, I knew it. There's no God. So, he still was just he was in this time of turmoil. We know the Holy Spirit was causing that turmoil.

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But one day, being a devout atheist, he prayed, and it was something like, God, I know you don't exist, but if per chance you do, which I know you don't, but if you do, it's not my job to find you. It's your job to reveal yourself to me. So, about the same time, there were like 2000 little villages up in the hills of Romania. And there was this little old man, and he said, Lord, I know I'm going to get my reward in heaven, but there's a reward I'd like to have here on the Earth, and I would love to bring a Jew to the Lord, because Jesus was a Jew, and he decided that'd be really neat.

So, he prayed, Lord, you know, I'm old. I can't leave the village, and there aren't any Jews here. You're going to have to bring a Jew to me. If you bring me a Jew, I'll try my very, very best to win them to you.

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So, okay, back to Richard with a little turmoil going on, there's no reason why he had to go to this village, but he did. God brought him to this one village, and when he showed up so that little old man, he just thought, this is my Jew. He was so excited God brought him his Jew and he and his wife had been praying over this old Bible and he gave it to Richard to read. And the way he describes it and tortured for Christ. He said it wasn't even written so much in words, but in flames of love. That's how he described he said he could hardly read it. He was just weeping and comparing just the hatred in his heart with the love Jesus had and the wretchedness in his own being with the perfection of Jesus. And yet Jesus would claim him as one of his own children was just too much. So, he surrendered his life to the Lord, went home, he was married to a woman named Sabina, and that's a whole other other story. But eventually she came to know Lord and they immediately just start going out sharing the gospel.

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Now, this is about the time of World War II, and first the Nazis invaded Romania, and then soon after the Russians. And he says that's really when their nightmare began. Now, of course, Communists are atheists, and they not only don't believe in God, they don't want you too either. So, they want to be the highest authority. They won't tolerate any allegiance or devotion of any entity or person above themselves. They just won't allow it. So that's how it was there. And here

they were not only believing in Jesus but telling everybody else about him too. So, if you're a Christian, you love the Lord, you just can't contain it.

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So, they just couldn't not talk about them. So, they did some of the things that they did were in the open. It wasn't just them. The church kept multiplying and they would all do this. Some of their efforts were out in the open. I love this story. You couldn't distribute any little books or pamphlets without the government stamp of approval. So, what they did is they wrote this little pamphlet, and the cover was like Karl Marx or something. The first ten pages were all these quotes from Lennon and Stalin and Marx's, and he got to about page ten, it started sharing the gospel. And so, they just were praying. And so, the censors are looking at all this looks pretty good. Gave their state of approval.

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So, they go to these big Communist conventions and things, gatherings. They'd be passing out these government approved little pamphlets and by the then they'd move on to another town and by the time they're like, what's this? They were off in another town. So, some of the things were out in the open like this. They would use their children; I'm amazed at how protective people are of their children overly so. And here they would use their kids because they know these Russian soldiers. They were away from home; they missed their children. And whereas they would get in trouble if they went up and gave them a gospel track. They'd send their children up there, and the Russian soldier would give them chocolate, and they'd give them this little gospel track so the kids could get away with more things than the grownups could.

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And then a lot of the things were in the underground, very secretive, and sometimes they were caught and beaten heavily for these efforts. But they said they were willing to pay the price. They just said they'd go through anything for the Christ who died for them. I love this. They said that they would pray that just as a man can be so blind as to not see the hand of God at work, that perhaps they wouldn't see their work either.

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They were reckless and bold and daring. And during this time, thousands of believers were sent to prison, including children. And on February 20, 1948, Richard was walking to church. It was a nice, bright, sunny day, and this van pulled over, and a couple of men got out and shoved him in the van, closed the door, and off he went. And he knew where he was going. He was going to one of these Communist prisons. And it was neat because he was scared. He was frightened. And on the way to the prison, God put on his heart that 366 times in the Bible, it says, don't be afraid. And he thought that's one for every day of the year, plus one extra for leap year. And that was the day it was leap year that he was arrested. So, he knew that God is saying, I'm with you. I'm with you in this.

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So, he just said there were just unspeakable tortures. Some of it he couldn't even tell because he said he can't sleep at night if he recounts some of them. And this is all in the book, Tortured for Christ. And I love it because he just tells us not to listen to what happened to us. It was horrible.

Just enough to kind of give you a little taste of what they endured, but also how God was with them and strengthened them and used them. I taught Sunday school for many years, and one of the analogies I like to use was like a drinking straw. If you take a plastic drinking straw, it's kind of bendy and flimsy, and you can bend it over. But if you stick a nail down in that straw, it looks the same from the outside, but it's strong. You can't bend it because of what's inside. And that's like Jesus was in them. He was the nail in their straw, and he kept them strong.

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One of the things, this sounds awful enough, many times they had to eat onions and unwashed intestines. I don't know what they were intestines of. And there were times when they were given one piece of bread a week, and he was a big, tall man, one piece of bread a week, and they told him that they were just giving him enough calories to keep him breathing. That's all. Because they didn't want them to die. They wanted to keep torturing him and trying to get information names out of them. He spent years in solitary confinement and drugging and brainwashing and just horrendous torture and beatings.

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There were times when they were told to write postcards home all the prisons, see, there were the political prisoners, which were the Christians, and then there were the common criminals. But they told the political prisoners to write postcards home that there was going to be a visiting day and all their loved ones who come and see them. So, they wrote these postcards, and the guards took them and everything. And then they tried to get all fixed up as best they could. And then the day came, and nobody came. And of course, they hadn't mailed the postcards. It was just a ploy

to discourage them. They'd say, nobody loves you anymore. They've forgotten all about you. And it worked.

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They said they had a deal with the guards, too, because the political prisoners, the Christians would preach to the common criminal. So, God used the mightily in jail, but the guards would beat them for it. So, they made a deal with the guards. We'll preach and you can beat us. So, he said many times they'd be in a cell preaching the gospel to some people and the guards would come and haul them off and begin to do a bloody pulp and throw them back in the cell. When they get there, they kind of get up and kind of straighten their clothes a little bit and they'd say, now, where was I? And they just keep going. So, he said they were happy beating them and they were happy sharing the gospel, so everybody was happy.

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He said it's interesting that they could feel, I mean, they could feel the torture on their skin. But he said it was almost a thing in the distance. He said the thing that was most present and most real was Jesus with them. He kind of likened it to Stephen when he was being stoned that he couldn't see the man. He couldn't see the stones. What he could see is Jesus sitting, standing, sitting. What is it? Sitting or standing? Standing. Thank you. Standing at the right hand of God. And there were times like that where they couldn't even see their surroundings. He said one time the jail cell looked like it was shining with diamonds. He said they were like the bride in the arms of the bridegroom. This is what they call the miracle.

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He said when the torture got so bad, they could hardly even stand it. He says that's when the miracle happened and he says that he likened it to a flower that if you take a flower and you crush it and bruise it and kind of tear it up, it just emits more fragrance. He said the more they were beaten, the more they were tortured and ridiculed and everything, the more love they had for their tormentors. He just said it was a miracle. It was really cool. And they'd pray how they could and ask God how they could reach these men for Christ. There was a story where an officer came to Richard Wurmbrand cell and all his pomp and finery, and here Richard hadn't had a bath in like three years or something, and the officer was just amazed. And he asked him, he said, how can you have love for us? I don't understand. If it was the other way around, I would hate you. How can you have love for us?

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And this is just an open door for Richard to share about God's love and how it comes into your heart and gives you a new heart and love for people and the hope of heaven. So, it was really neat how God used them. There was another story where a man was going to be beaten to death, and the guy that was going to beat him said, I have all the power, I am almighty. I've got the power the way you suppose you're God to have. And the guy said, no, the power is on my side because I have the power to love you while you beat me to death. And they could see that these weren't just words that were spoken. They could see it actually lived out. They saw it demonstrated there was another man that was going to be beaten, and they let him have one last conversation with his wife.

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And there was an officer standing listening, a prison guard, and the things that he told his wife, he just said, I don't want you to have hatred or bitterness for these men that are going to kill me. I die with love in my heart for them and just pray for them and I'll see you in heaven. The guy that witnessed this was telling that story in prison where he had been put for being a Christian just because of that little scene that he had witnessed. So, the witness had, and prayers had deep effects on people, and there was a lot of fruit to it. So, after a total of 14 years passed, he had served his term and he was released. Now, I don't know about you. Do you think after going on, you'd think, okay, I've learned my lesson? I'm just going to kind of put a lid on it now. But no, he just went right back at it. And then teaching in the underground and telling the beauties and the dangers of this work.

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There were two mission organizations that caught wind of him, and they came, and they wanted to get him out of the country, and he didn't want to go. He loved the Russians, he loved the fellow Romanians, and he wanted to stay. But they said, you know what? Somebody has to go out to the west. Somebody has to go share this message of what's going on here and how they can help and pray in the free world. So, for that reason alone, he agreed to go. Now, the going rate for a political prisoner was 1000. He was \$10,000. So, these two organizations raised this \$10,000, paid the government, and they told him to go. And before he left, they called him into the secret police three times, and they told him, you go preach just Jesus all you want, but you don't breathe a word to anybody out there.

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What's going on here? And they said, if you do, we'll hear about it. We can pay anybody \$1,000 to come find you and either kill you or start a rumor about a girl or money or whatever. So just watch it. The last thing he did before he left Romania was, he went to the grave site of the officer that had ordered his years of arrest and torture. And he put a flower on that grave just to show that he had no bitterness in his heart and that he was going to dedicate the whole rest of his life to sharing the spiritual light that he had with those who lived in spiritual darkness. So, he came. This was in December 1965. He left Romania. He traveled around a bit, eventually came to the United States, and in May 1966, he testified in Washington, DC before the Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee.

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I always have to write that down, just telling of the horrors and revealing these 18 deep torture wounds. So, his story just spread like wildfire, and he and his wife, Sabina got offers to speak all over the world. The secret police in Romania did catch wind that he wasn't keeping a lid on it, that he was telling these stories, and he heard that they were plotting his death. But that didn't stop him. And obviously God protected him.

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So, they've been doing this a while, and they just had a strong desire to serve in another way. So, in October 1967, with \$100 and 500 names on an old typewriter, he typed up the first Voice of the Martyrs newsletter. At that time, it was called Jesus to the Communist World. And this newsletter was just dedicated to telling the stories of the trials facing our brothers and sisters and

what they could do and just their neat testimonies. Now, of course, this newsletter was like no other newsletter. And people had one of two reactions. The first reaction was, I can't believe this is happening. I'm shocked by this. What can I do to help? And the other reaction was, I don't want this anymore, it's giving me nightmares. I'd just rather not hear about this stuff. It's the people that can see beyond the torture. They can see that there's a beauty to these stories of these men and women and children that love Jesus. So much, they won't deny him, no matter what.

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It reminds me of the Passion of the Christ movie. I mean, that was hard to watch, really hard. But there was such a beauty to that. I thought, look what he went through for us. That's a beautiful thing. So, it's kind of again, it's not quite what he went through in a lesser degree, but some of these stories, they're hard in the pictures, they're hard to read and hard to look at. But there's a beauty to them of these people. They're not just hopeless accounts of torment. These people are more concerned about others knowing Jesus than with their own safety. And they're more concerned with their tortures being saved than saving their own lives.

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I like this quote; fear of death does not rule over them. I really like that. I work in a Christian school, and I hate to criticize people's prayers, but I can't tell you how many times I hear kids pray, Lord, give us a good day and keep us safe. Keep us safe, keep us safe, keep us safe. And I just want to scream. There's more important things in praying for our personal safety.

Persecution has never been foreign to the church, and it never will be while we're on this earth.

Sabina went home to be with the Lord in August of 2000, Richard in February of 2001. But Voice of the Martyrs just continues to serve wherever the persecution may be found.

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So, like I said, we're currently serving in over 40 countries. They're restricted nations and hostile nations. The restricted are where the Christianity and Bible distribution are restricted by the government. That includes the communist nations and the hostile areas where the government sort of kind of offers protection. But these hostile groups go around, predominantly the Muslim groups, burning churches and killing evangelists, and that's anybody who shares the Gospel, they're considered an evangelist and they're a target. Communism is not dead, I'm sure you know that.

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Vietnam, Laos, Cuba, China, North Korea is kind of a category of its own. I'll touch on that later. There are churches in these communist countries, but they've got to be registered with the government. The preachers are either government employees or else if they're not, they're just highly monitored and watched and restricted. In China, the registered church is called the Three Self Patriotic Movement, and it's more of a political watchdog than anything else. And it's kind of for the purpose of making visitors think that they have freedom of religion there. Outside the registered church, no activity whatsoever is permitted. To have a Bible study group at home is absolutely forbidden. Sharing the gospel with the youth, anybody in under 18 is illegal. Sunday school teachers are regarded as dangerous criminals.

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It's illegal to (a little laughter there must be a Sunday school teacher). It's illegal to teach from Revelation. Any teaching that Jesus is going to come back, they look at that as a threat to their authority. They can't teach about Jesus' healing, none of that stuff. It's just very controlled. You can't distribute Bibles or evangelize outside the registered church walls. So, there are many restrictions. I just read the other day, so I'm always reading stuff and I want to add things to my talk, but then I have to take stuff out or else you would be here an hour and a half.

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This says every student from kindergarten. This is in China. Every student from kindergarten through 12th grade is required to study the dangers of evil cults. Those are the unregistered churches for 5 hours each semester. And it's got a couple of little cartoon things of excerpts from these books. And it just has like, a pastor in a saying he's dangerous and don't listen to him. And it has a little cartoon where he's like behind bars and he's all repentant and saying he's sorry.

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So, this is the kind of stuff that they feed the kids with until they're 18. There was something else here too, in addition, more than 300,000 full time net police filter emails and monitor websites for discourse and activities running contrary to communist beliefs, keeping a close eye on Christians. I had the opportunity of smuggling Bibles into China this past summer. And when we'd email home, we had to be really careful what we said. We said like, dad is taking good care of us and things like that. Because it's kind of creepy knowing that some of these 300,000 of these net police are monitoring what you say.

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So, they say there's freedom of religion, but it's within their own little boundaries. Again, when I speak to kids, I've got this big fat blue tape and I'll tape off a blue square on the floor and I'll have somebody come and stand in and I'll say, now if I told you, you could go anywhere in this whole room as long as you didn't come out of that box. Now, is that freedom? No, it's kind of a false freedom. I know it was a little over a year ago, Vietnam passed a new law stating that they had freedom of religion. And there were 41 articles in this new law, the first article stating that there's freedom of religion, and the other 40 stating all the little restrictions.

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So, if a Christian is going outside that little blue box, outside those restrictions, they're breaking the law. And they're most likely part of the underground church because you can't stay within those confines and within those boundaries. So, they're the ones that meet secretly in homes and in the woods at three in the morning and one in two at a time they gather, in fields or riverbeds or warehouses or wherever they can. And they do evangelize, they do distribute Bibles, they do tell the youth about Jesus. I like this too. I read this the other day. They say they don't need permission from government to do what Jesus commanded them to do 2000 years ago. It's like, Oh, yeah. But they often paid dearly for it, though.

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There was a woman in China, and this is just one of many stories. She was distributing Bible tracks in the marketplace with her mother-in-law. And she knew that there was a danger to that.

She thought we could get arrested. Well, sure enough, they were arrested. Well, they killed her. They beat, like the next day, they beat her to death in her jail cell and they tried to say she came down with some sudden illness. But her mother-in-law was in the next cell over and she heard the whole thing going on. And then the husband wanted an autopsy done. And then he was in danger of being arrested just for causing a little ruckus regarding this whole case. And that the police wanted to hurry up and cremate her body so there wouldn't be any evidence, things like that go on.

[00:29:35.330]

They're often arrested for disturbing social order or being involved in an evil cult or tax evasion or illegal business management, something like that. Because it just sounds better coming from a country, especially the ones that say they have freedom of religion. A man, Pastor Kai, he was arrested for illegal business practices even though he was printing and distributing for free a Bible study called Experiencing God. Well, the Chinese government doesn't want China experiencing God. So, he was sentenced to three years and ordered the harshest treatment that they had. And he had a couple of attorneys representing him. And the main attorney was his law firm was closed down for a year by the government. That made me mad. And there are many Pastors Kai's in prison over there.

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And the thing is, all they'd have to do, how to get out of this is just deny Christ. It's so easy. Just sign their little document saying, I renounce Christ, okay? I don't believe anymore. Off you go total freedom. But they won't do it. But the atheists, they're amazed when these Christians are

ready to sacrifice their life rather than deny a God that no one can see. And because of that, the church grows.

[00:30:45.330]

I read this the other day too, brother Chen. He was 74. He was arrested for sharing Jesus with youth. And while he was in prison, I don't know how long he was in there, he led more than 50 inmates to Christ. And for that he was beaten maliciously by ten guards. They broke both his legs and they threatened to beat him to the point of death. And in his weakened state, he told his daughter this. This is his quote, it's an honor to suffer for Christ. Pray for me, take heart, because the Lord is with me. My chains will increase the kingdom.

[00:31:16.400]

And that's so true, because it wasn't until the chains tightened around China about halfway through the 20th century did the church really start to grow. It reminds me of Pilgrim's Progress. I don't know if you ever read that, but when the enemy was throwing water on the fire, the more water he threw on it, the bigger the flames got. So, it's totally a case like that. There was a Christian leader in China who said, China is a growing power, a strong military and nuclear force. They send men to space, but they cannot stop the Bible. I just love that they just think it's some regular book and they think that their authority is stronger than God's. This was his quote. He said, this is stupid. So, he said, all attempts to chain Christianity have only ignited the fire.

[00:32:02.990]

The funny thing is, these Christians that have this kind of attitude and this fortitude and determination to live for Christ, they claim they're not super Christians. I listen to these stories like, oh, my gosh, I could never do that. They say they're not super Christians. They're just regular Christians that love the Lord. But when they're in those situations, God fills them with his power to love their tormentors and to be strong.

[00:32:25.980]

It's that straw analogy again. He's the nail in their straw, and he encourages them and strengthens them just in little things. There was a story I read about a guy in Cuba, and he was thrown in this jail cell. I forget what he was doing, dropping pamphlets from the plane, and the plane went down, and he was thrown in the jail cell, and he was afraid. And when he was put into cell, he was on the bottom bunk, and he looked up and there was a little tiny mop string cross hanging from the bunk above him. And he was so encouraged by that because he felt like God put it there just to encourage him, just to let him know that he was with him. And then the guard saw and tore it off, but it was too late. He had already been encouraged. So, God keeps them strong and usable.

[00:33:06.590]

Okay, that's the restricted nations, and there are the hostile nations. These are the Muslim strongholds like Bangladesh, Nigeria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, and much of the Middle East, where a person can be put to death just for converting. The most dangerous thing a Muslim can do is to convert from Islam to Christianity, no matter what the reason. You've probably heard that story about the man from Afghanistan who was in danger of being

put on trial for becoming a Christian, for turning away from Islam, and he was turned in by his own family members.

[00:33:40.080]

There was a story, a similar story that I read a few years back, about a man who rejected Islam and became a Christian, and his whole family was all up in arms, and so much so that he had to flee the country. He left. He was gone, I think for three years and everything. But he missed his family and he heard that they wanted him to come back for a visit. And he thought, well, time heals all wounds. I'll go back and see how it goes. So, he went back and oh my gosh, they embraced it with open arms and we're so glad to see you again. We've missed you. And they prepared his favorite dishes and this big spread, and they all sat down together and ate. They just didn't approach that whole subject. So, he left, and it was all wonderful.

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And then he left and went to some friend's house. And after he was there a while, his stomach started to feel kind of weird. And here they tried to poison him. It was poisoning the food. So, there are stories of new Christians from Islam that are years on the run. They change their name and everything. And even after 20 years, they're not safe. Their family members are still after them. They've been known to cut off the legs and arms of Christians, Christian converts who ride their bikes around distributing gospel tracks. They just don't want to hear it. The Quran says that Jews and Christians and infidels, and that's anyone who rejects the teaching of Islam that they should be killed.

[00:34:53.370]

And I came across this verse in John 16:23. It says, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think he offers God's service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the father nor me. That just really jumped out. You know how sometimes you read the word and some new verse like, when do they put that in there? I don't remember that one. That was when I was like, oh my gosh, that has to be talking about Muslims there. I think that's it because they have not known the father normally, they just don't know him. They don't know the true God. And it's really sad.

[00:35:23.470]

Muslims call Allah by 99 different names, none of which are love. They just don't have a personal relationship with God, obviously. And the only way they can be guaranteed of going to heaven is to die in jihad in a holy war. Otherwise, they just don't know that all is going to weigh out the good and the bad. And they're just kind of uncertain. They just don't know. And it's such a shame. We just need to pray for them. Islam isn't the enemy. Satan is.

[00:35:47.870]

There's a great prayer in John 17:3, that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. So, I try to pray that every day for the Muslims and the communists too, that they would know him, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. And there are Muslims coming to Christ because their souls, down deep, of course, their souls desire to have a relationship with Him.

[00:36:09.560]

Richard Wurmbrand used to talk about a book that some communist guy wrote about how to be happy. And the guy ended up committing suicide because you can't be happy without Christ. And he said, because of the living testimony of some of these Christians, there were many Communists that died with the name of Jesus on their lips. So, I'm sure it's the way with Muslims, too. They have to touch on North Korea, a country close to my heart. I've never been there, obviously, but it's the number one country in persecution. It's extremely restricted and isolated. It's beyond communism. It's a one-man dictatorship.

[00:36:45.830]

In the early 1900s, there were like 300,000 Christians. It was a big revival in the church, flourished. And then after the Korean War, a man named Kim Il-sung rose to power. This was in the 1950s, and he ruled for 40 years. And he just set himself up to be their deity. He was their god. And he introduced an ideology called *juche*, which means self-reliance, which is kind of scary. And he led the government and destroying churches, killing pastors and Christians and pastors, and sending them off to these labor camps where they would just basically starve them and work them to death and trying to re-educate them and change their thinking. Christians were considered anti-national criminals and were dealt with as such, and many were publicly executed, kind of blended those two words.

[00:37:35.510]

There was a story I read. I know it happened in the 1950s and again in the 1970s. And those are just the two times we know about where the one in the 50s, the Communists or the North Korean

government was building a road, and they had their bulldozers and bulldozing the path, and they came across this underground, like a cave thing, and there were a bunch of Christians that were living in there and meeting in there. So, they dragged them all out in front of this big public arena thing, a bunch of people, thousands of people watching, and they had them lie down, and they ordered a steamroller be brought in, and they just rolled over them with the steam roller in front of it because they want to show people, this is what will happen to you if you defy our government.

[00:38:13.060]

If you become a Christian. This is you. So, when I first read that story, I was absolutely horrified. And I don't know why. I just pictured the steamroller going this way, and that'd be bad enough, but it'd be over pretty fast. And then I read a more detailed account, and they started at their feet. I don't want to cry. And you just picture all these people line up, and it's coming at their feet, and it's going and then they were singing that's the thing, too. They were singing this old hymn, more love to thee, Lord, more love to thee as they were being rolled over with this steamroller, and your mind starts going, at what point would you not be able to sing anymore? When it gets to your stomach or your lungs or your head, I don't know.

[00:38:47.600]

But your mind thinks are weird things like that. But then I think, how many people watching them? But what do they have? I want that that can enable them to sing these praises to their God while they're enduring such horrific treatment. So, again, I know what happened in the 70s too. It just kind of exemplifies the kind of treatment that they give the Christians. I know they use the

kids there too because they can't inspect every single house. So, they use the excuse me, the children.

[00:39:16.350]

There was a story I read of a girl who was at school, and her teacher said, we're not going to have any regular homework today. We're going to play a game. She's like, oh goody. She loved games. And the teacher told all the students to go home and to look for this book. And she held up a book, and it was, of course, the Bible, but they didn't know it. And they just said, we want you to wait till your parents are asleep. And it's a big surprise. It's a secret, and it's a game. And just look under the beds and in the cabinets and everywhere you can and see if you can find one of these books. And if you find one, bring it to me tomorrow, and I'll give you this pretty red scarf. So, she was all excited, and she went home that night and couldn't wait till her parents went to sleep. And she waited till she couldn't hear him talking anymore, and she snuck out of bed. She looked here and there, and she found one. She's so excited.

[00:39:56.630]

So, the next day, she brought it to school and showed it to her. She's all, good girl and she gave her a pretty excuse me, red scarf. And then when she got home, she couldn't wait to go show her parents the scarf and everything. And she got home, and they weren't there. And she waited and waited and waited hours went by it started getting dark, and she was getting hungry and scared. And then the police came to the door and took her off, took her away to a labor camp, and she never saw her parents again. And she was telling the story of an old woman, and she said she still had trouble finding forgiveness in her heart for what they had done. So, it's pretty horrendous.

Now, Kim Il-sung, he died in 1994. And his son, Kim Jong-Il, he just took over. And he took over, just fallen in his father's footsteps. So, he claims he's still the ruler. Now he claims to have gotten rid of Christianity. And today there are only about 1% Christians. Many have never even heard the name of Jesus. Kids go to school, and they sing praises and songs to Kim Jong-Il. Again, he's kind of like their deity, although they call the dead dad guy, the great leader.

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Another aspect is they're starving. I mean, they're literally starving to death. If you live in the capital, you have to be invited to live there. It's like sports stars and things like that. But outside the capital, they have enough to eat. But outside the capital are literally starving. They perform cannibalism, and yet they're shot for doing so. They're starving. And yet 25% of the country's revenue goes to the military. Over 900 million has been spent on monuments and Kim Jong-Il's personal pastime of palace building. And I know he brings in, like, wrestling people to entertain them and things like that. I have a hard time praying for the guy, but I do.

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There's a multibillion-dollar mausoleum housing the dead dad guy, and if people walk by, they stop and they bow four times. I saw this political cartoon about a year ago, and it was Kim Jong-Il, and I don't know, his right-hand man or whatever, and all these people were down on the ground before him, and he was saying something like, look at how they're worshiping me. And the guy whispers to him, he goes, I think they're eating the grass. So, it's sad. If you confess to being a Christian or even suspected of being one, the result is imprisonment or death.

[00:42:14.270]

Owning a single Bible is enough, like I said in the beginning, to get three whole generations jailed or executed. I read a story about a whole family that was arrested, and they put the kids in one cage and the parents in another cage, close enough that they could see each other, but not to offer any words of comfort or, of course, touch each other. And they let the kids starve to death while the parents watched. It was just awful. And I think, how long would that take?

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There was another story, too, of a thief that broke into somebody's house, and they were looking around for stuff to steal, and they were looking here and looking here, and while they were searching for things to value to steal, they found a Bible. So, they took that too, and directly from that house with all the goods and the Bible, went to the police station, showed them the Bible, and they let him go with all the stuff and went and arrested that family that had the Bible.

[00:43:01.590]

One woman was brutally kicked and left unattended for days because she was caught praying for a child who was being beaten. It's just unreal. Christians that have been caught looking up into the heavens have been known to have their head cut off. My youngest son, he's 16, and he's kind of a nut. He said, what would happen if they were looking up at a blimp that said, worship Kim Jong-II? Like, I don't know. Anyway, and yet with all this going on, North Korea, they still deny any reports of human abuses, and they still say that they guarantee freedom of religion. There are three churches in the capital.

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Again, that's all for show. Often the people in there are government workers. If people go from church to church to church, they'll see the same people sitting in there because they're just hired again for visitors to appear like they have freedom of religion. The real Christians are in jail with all these horrible stories.

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There are neat stories, though, too. There was a story about a businessman who was in North Korea, and with their official guide you can't go anywhere without this official guide. And even then, you have to only allowed in certain areas. Anyway, this rail thin 17-year-old young man came up to the guy that was telling the story, and he grabbed the guy's hand. The skinny guy grabbed the businessman's hand, and he grabbed. And his first reaction was, what are you doing? But he let him do it, and he did like, a cross in his hand. He's like, oh my gosh. And he didn't go into detail, but somehow for the next day, he got away from the official guide, and they were able to meet with this 17-year-old guy. And here, his father was a pastor. He had been arrested and put in prison years prior to this, and he had four requests.

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Number one, he had saved up tithe money. He wanted to give them his tithe money to take back and put it to good use. Second, he wanted a Bible. Third, he wanted to be baptized. And fourth, he wanted to take communion, I think. Man, this guy, I mean, he was so skinny. He could have asked for food or clothes or something, but it's like he knew that the heavenly things are more important than the earthly things. So, although there are no words to describe the pain and

suffering that goes on in North Korea, I just can't accurately portray it. We also need to remember that Christ love still shines there in that spiritual darkness.

[00:45:18.570]

After hearing all this, (how am I'm doing on time, oof) after hearing all this, your response may be one of the two things that (we're not wording that very well) of that early newsletter. Richard Wurmbbrand first newsletter, two responses either, oh, my gosh, I had no idea this was going on. What can I do to help? Or number two, you know what? I don't really like this, it makes me uncomfortable, gives me nightmares. My friend said there's two, ignorance is I don't know, and apathy is I don't want to know, because then you're responsible if you know, or I don't care. Some just want to decaffeinated Christianity, one that won't keep you up at night.

[00:45:55.290]

But as children of God, we have a responsibility to help our brothers and sisters who suffer so much. They're the part of the body that bleeds, but we're not. They're restricted, and they're limited, and they're chained, but we're not. We're free and they need our help in prayers. And the cool thing is you don't need to go anywhere. You don't need to go to China, if God calls you, that's one thing. But there's so much you can do right here. Galatians 6:10 says, therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good, especially to those who are of the household of faith. These are definitely of the household of faith.

[00:46:28.410]

So, if your response is, what can I do to help? There's three things. What's number one? Yes, pray. I think I forgot to tell you the number one request from us in the free world is just that we're praying for them and even at that, not that they'd be kept safe or anything, just that they'd be strong and a good witness and that they wouldn't buckle under the pressure. That's the number one request from us.

[00:46:51.570]

Jesus said to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. One woman said she wanted her country's leaders to get saved so she could praise God out loud. That's one thing. Ever since I read that story, I've never been the same in church when we just have the freedom to sing out loud and there are people going, I don't like this song, or whatever, it's like, you know what? You don't realize the privilege to just sing out loud and have nobody come arrest you or whatever because this woman, they'd meet secretly in the woods or whatever and they'd have to just whisper and mouth these praise songs. So that was on her heart. Her leaders get saved so she could worship out loud.

[00:47:24.510]

One last thing about prayer I want to say is in Exodus 17, where the Israelites are fighting the Amalekites and Moses has his arms up. And when his arms are up, they're being victorious. And when they drop and get weary, then they start to kind of lose and Aaron and Hur come alongside and help hold his arms up. Well, as believers in a free nation, we've got to stand beside our persecuted brethren and hold up their arms. So, as they get weary, we can just come alongside them and pray and support and hold their arms up.

[00:47:53.430]

Number two is to read. Number one, pray. Number two, read stay informed and up to date. We have out at the table out there the Voice and Martyrs Table. We have a free monthly newsletter, so just sign up for that. If you don't do anything else, I strongly encourage you to do that and just have it delivered to your home or your dorm or whatever and just read the stories every month. It'll give you current things to pray about and you know what the situations are.

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And number three, if you want to do more, you can take action. We've got a website on the back of the newsletter. It's called Prisoner Alert. And you can write a letter to a prisoner and as you're typing out automatically will translate it into their language. Even if that prisoner doesn't get the letter, somebody's going to get that letter. Some government official in some office is going to get that letter. And it really, really makes a difference in the way they treat the prisoner or with how long they detain them, or if they kill them or not, or if they let their family members see them. We get these news releases about once a week, and I can't tell you how many times we've gotten a news release, you know write a letter on this guy's behalf and like two weeks ago, we'll get another news release saying, okay, thank you this guy was released. So, it totally makes a difference. It's been so easy online.

[00:49:04.410]

Another one. This is my personal favorite. I was telling a couple of people about this. These are scripture balloons. It's just plastic. And these, they go to the northern border of South Korea, and

they float them over into North Korea, and they do it at night. They wait till the wind is right. I love that. It's like his wind carrying his word to his people. So, they fill it up with helium. They poke either one, two or three holes in it, depending on how far north they want it to go, so they can kind of distribute it throughout the country. And this is the only Bible some of those people will ever, ever see. Like I said, some of them have never even heard the name of Jesus. And I've even heard stories of the guards that are instructed to destroy these things. And because of just human nature, human nature was, well, what's this all about? What's the big fuss? And then they read it, and it's God's word, and it doesn't return void, so radar doesn't pick it up. I forget if I said that. So, I love those.

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We also have these are called action packs, and they're \$5. And it just has, like, suggested things, blankets, a jacket, sweaters, gloves, socks, towels, sheets, bar soap, or whatever. And so, you get this, and you fill it up, and then you send it to the Voice of the Martyrs. And they put this, nothing goes out without God's word, this is a booklet in, I think it's Farsi or Arabic or something. It's called He Lived Among Us. And they put that in every single one of these, and they take those to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. And I was reading a story where in Pakistan, where that big earthquake was, they've been distributing those, and there are so many Muslims coming to the Lord just because it makes me want to cry just because of these action packs. And there was one Muslim man, he was so excited about this. He wanted everybody in his village to get one of these books.

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And he said his quote was, I thought Christians were bad, but you guys were the first one here to help us. That really touched me. One more thing I'll touch on is we have a brand-new program called Bibles Unbound and I think it's like 35 a month or something like that, but they will send you, I think it's like five Bibles with the shipping envelope and the address label and you pray over each one and you send them out individually. For the last few months, there have been underground pastors collecting names and addresses of people in their country that they wanted them to receive a Bible. And I guess you're more likely to get a Bible individually from one individual to another rather than ship whole boxes over.

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So that's really cool. Or you can become an area rep. I love doing this. I've been doing this about three years. Anyway, I just wanted to stress that that you don't have to go to another country.

There's so much you can do to help our persecuted brothers and sisters right here. In closing, I just want to say that you have no idea what your help can do. Whether it's praying or reading or sending a letter or sending a 50-cent scripture balloon, anything. Your help can make all the difference in the world, and it goes on into eternity. I tell kids sometimes, because I encourage kids if I do, like, drives at school, mission projects, I tell them to go home and wash the car or rake the leaves or whatever and earn those fifty cents and bring them in and we'll send a bunch of balloons off and I tell them, you may get to heaven and find a whole family or old village of people that got saved because you went home and washed the car.

[00:52:15.110]

So, it has eternal benefits. I don't know about you, but I always tend to analyze everything in terms of does this have any eternal significance to it. And I get so frustrated because so many things I look around and including things I do, I'm thinking, no, well, this does. This has eternal significance. I already said that part. I'm done. And I didn't keep you here an hour and a half. I want to pray though, too. Thank you, thank you. I just meant I'm done because I could have kept you here for another hour. So anyway, let's pray.

[00:52:53.590]

Oh, Lord, I just thank you again for this time, God. And I thank you for each person that's here, Lord, and this time we had together and thank you for helping me share. And God, we do lift up our persecuted brethren. And I think, Lord, if these were our flesh and blood brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers, there's no way we could go a day or even an hour without remembering to pray for them. But they are our brothers and sisters. They are our mothers and dads. So, help us to remember them as if we were chained with them. Help us not to be so wrapped up in our own little lives that we forget about them and help us to be connected to the body of Christ enough to the point that we do feel their pain. So, we will pray for them.

[00:53:35.890]

And Lord, I know they don't ask for protection, but we ask that you would protect them and provide for them for their needs. And the widows and the orphans. I know so many of the pastors in Muslim areas, they get killed for preaching the gospel. And then the widows and the orphans are left to fend for themselves. So, I pray for those people that you would take care of them.

[00:53:55.960]

And we do pray, Lord, that you would be that nail in their straw, whether they're in prison or out and about or whatever God, just facing these horrendous circumstances, that you would be that nail in their straw and help them to not be afraid but be filled with Your Holy Spirit and be that channel of love. I know from Richard Wurmbrand's book that he said that love was not from them, it was from you. But they were willing channels of that love to their tormentors. So, help them to just be those channels of love because you love those people. You died for them too.

[00:54:29.020]

And we pray for their salvation. We pray for all the kings and those in authority of these nations. We do pray for Kim Jong-Il of North Korea, that you either bring him to knowledge of you and bring him to salvation or remove him from office. We pray for the North Koreans, Lord, and their needs. God, there's just so much. I thank you for the freedoms that we have. God help us not to be afraid to share the gospel. We have nothing to lose. There's nothing that can happen to us. I don't know what we're afraid of it's silly. So, help us to use our freedom to proclaim Your gospel boldly. Help us to appreciate having Bibles as many as we want and to be able to sing Your praises out loud with no fear. So, thank you for our freedoms and help us to use them. And God, put on our hearts whatever it is that you would have us to do for our persecuted brothers and sisters. And we lift this all up in Your name, God. In Jesus name, amen.