

Communism, Islam, Sept 11, Sovereignty of God - Part4

by Josef Tson

The speaker shares his experiences with communism and mission conferences, emphasizing the importance of joy, support, and partnership in reaching the world.

Duration: 38:07

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:10, Matthew 6:33, John 15:11, Romans 14:17, Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 1:6

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "Evil And Redemption"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of support and partnership in reaching the world with the word of God. He compares the downfall of communism to the potential transformation of Islam into a mission field. The speaker shares a personal story of being interrogated and the impact his sermons had on one of the interrogators. He emphasizes that joy should not be lost in the face of martyrdom and shares a powerful story of God's intervention in his own life. The sermon also touches on the nature of evil and God's unconventional approach to defeating it through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Transcript

1981, the communist secret police in Romania told me I had three weeks to pack, take my wife and daughter, leave the country, never go back there. We came to this country, we settled in Wheaton, Illinois. My plan was to produce in Romanian language textbooks to teach young people in Romania theology.

We were producing the books in Wheaton, Illinois, print them in Holland, and then smuggle them to hundreds and hundreds of young people in Romania who wanted to study. Now, I needed a lot of money for making those books and then smuggling them in. So, I was told by somebody that from now on I shall go to mission conferences and present my work there.

Mission conference, what's that? I expected conference, you know, conference means delegates, debates, elections, that's a conference, that was my mental picture for it. So, I went to that church, it happened to be a church in Minneapolis in a suburb, a very affluent suburb church there, and just one church conference, mission conference. A lot of missionaries, and I sort of laid back and said, what is a mission conference? I love to give definitions, my own.

And eventually I said, oh, I know what's a mission conference. A mission conference is a foreign invasion. Look at these affluent, peaceful people, and we come from all the continents to tell them how dark it is there, and to tell them that darkness is your business, and the Lord will punish you if you don't do something for that.

Foreign invasion, a disturbing event, and when they started to ask me to be the keynote speaker, I said, well, wait a minute, what's my job as a keynote speaker? Oh, I said, I know, my job is to do the disturbing. So, if at the end of this sermon you will say, sir, you certainly disturbed me, I will not apologize, I'll just say, praise the Lord, I succeeded. Now, as keynote speaker, I also have the job to speak on behalf of the other missionaries.

And you know they have two great desires. One of them is that at the end of the service you run to their tables, pick up their mission literature, newsletters like this, or whatever other publications they have, and you go home, forget about football, and read their mission literature. And pray for them.

How can you pray for them if you don't read that? And you know their biggest disappointment is when you pass by their tables, go home, and don't even look. The place where the missionary is the loneliest is at mission conferences when he is alone at the table. Not on the mission field.

So, don't make them feel lonely in your church. The other big desire they have is that you rush to Stephanie and say, Stephanie, how much do you need? And immediately give her, she only has 20% raised. She needs another 80%.

Don't ask me how much I need. Because we just started a new ministry in Romania. Romania is going into European Union.

Plunging into this secular Europe. Whoa on our universities. So we start a new ministry to the Romanian universities to equip the evangelical students to know how to face the assault of secular Europe on them.

I will be able to do only as much as I can raise money for. So, our need is your support. That's why we are here.

For friendship, for prayers, and for support. And if we achieve this, then we become partners in reaching the world. Now when I was asked to give three talks to this mission conference, Friday night, Saturday morning, and Sunday morning, I conceived them as one message.

So if you are only here today, you may take the tape of Friday night and Saturday morning, and you will see the ending of the message today. But very, very important was what I said on Friday. Because I made the comparison between communism and Islam.

How God brought communism down, but not only brought it down, it transformed it into the greatest mission field on the planet. Thirteen time zones, that evil empire overnight became a mission field. The hungriest minds for the gospel on this planet are in the former communist world.

All that was done through communism by God. Now God has turned his attention to the Muslim world. One billion, two hundred million people, closed countries, totalitarian, evil, and America couldn't care less.

So God had a problem. How to turn America around and only think Islam, dream Islam, do everything for Islam. And God smiled and said, this will be so simple.

He raised a man called Ayatollah Khomeini, who spoke in Iran in the 80s, we must kill America. Everybody laughed. But there was a young man whom God raised, who said, I have to do the job.

I'll build an army of suicidal people with whom I'll kill America. September 11 was the beginning of their war on America, to kill America. And all of a sudden America woke up.

It's real. They will kill us. If we don't open their minds and hearts for the gospel, we perish.

And now all your greatest theologians and all your greatest preachers think Islam. Write books on Islam, tell you how to reach the Islamic peoples. And you know, all the might of broadcasting of America is going towards Muslim countries.

And you have to be on those broadcasting systems and see how you can use them. In the 80s, I preached the gospel to Romania through Radio Free Europe, which was an American radio. They gave me 50 minutes every Sunday to preach the gospel to the entire country of Romania, with American taxpayer money.

Can you believe that? Now, this will happen for all the Muslim countries. Because at that time, President Reagan said, don't just criticize communism. Offer them alternatives, including the religious one.

And on that basis, they said, well, let's invite Joseph to preach. And it's the same now. God is opening new possibilities, unbelievable possibilities.

Yesterday morning, I spoke about these evil empires and how we have to conquer them. And basically, what I said is that Satan always has three weapons. The lie, hate and violence.

That's its nature. The lie, hate and violence. And when God started His war against evil on the planet, and when He told the whole heaven, watch out, I start the war against evil.

There was a long army of evil beasts there. And to the dismay of heaven, they saw a little lamb going towards them. Imagine.

Fragile, gentle, delicate, defenseless. Here I come, beast, to destroy you. It was, the whole heaven was in dismay.

You know, Paul says that was the foolishness of God. In Greek it is the madness of God. To send your son to be crucified, it's madness.

But that was the wisdom of God. You know, God has three weapons to conquer the world. The truth, love and self-sacrifice.

Truth, love and self-sacrifice. The Son came to give us the truth, Himself. But He spoke in love.

And then He died for it. And when I am lifted up on that cross, I will attract the whole world to myself. And just as the centurion, as he saw how Christ died, he said, this was the Son of God.

His eyes were opened when he saw how He died. And that has been the pattern for two thousand years. Because Jesus said, my Father sent me as a lamb.

As my Father sent me, now I send you. I send you as lambs. To give them the truth in love and then die.

And as you die, their eyes are opened. And for two thousand years, this is how God has been conquering. I want to tell you that this was the most liberating thing for my entire ministry in Romania.

When I understood that dying for the Gospel is not a tragedy. It's part of the job. And it's the most important part of the job.

That's why eventually I studied the whole issue and wrote it in this book, *Suffering, Martyrdom and Rewards in Heaven*. Now, as you hear me speak about martyrdom, it includes tortures, being savagely beaten, and then, in a way or another, killed. They don't limit themselves just to killing you.

Most of the time, it's introduced by torture, by being smeared. Isn't that horrible? Isn't that dreadful? As I was sharing with the church in, I think it was in Arizona, a young man came to me and said, Sir, you certainly went through a lot of things there. But tell me, did you ever have fun? I smiled.

You see, this is a fun-oriented society. And I said, I don't think, I don't know if we ever had fun, but we had joy. Enormous amount of joy.

And he sort of stood up and tried to make the difference. Well, let me, this is very important. When I speak about martyrdom and about this possibility of being killed, I don't want you to remain with the idea that this is a morose, somber, joyless person who just wants to die for Christ.

Let me tell you a story. One of the greatest happenings in our lives. On the 4th of October, 1974, at six in the morning, seven policemen came at our door, had me open the door, pushed in.

They had a warrant to search our house, and for eight years they turned all our house upside down, from the attic to the cellar. When they come like that, it's very traumatic. It's scary.

You don't know why, you don't know what they look for. And anyhow, it's shocking. By nine o'clock, one of the things they told me was that they just decided to confiscate all my library.

I had a huge library, one wall was completely just shelves. And you should know that for a pastor, his library is sort of his lifeline. And my library was all smuggled in by friends from the West.

So it was even more precious. And to hear that they confiscate all my library was absolutely knocking me down. But imagine this.

They had me sit at my desk. A policeman was taking the books from the shelves, put them at my left-hand side, had me open the book and write there on the front page, found at my place on the 4th of October at the house search, and sign. Put it on this side, the policeman was putting them in a bag, and when the bag was full, take them to the van.

Can you imagine what it is like to sign away all your treasures, all your books? You know, you call them bookworms. In Romanian we call them library mouse. I'm a library mouse.

And library mice, plural. Okay. Painful to sign away.

I was looking at each title and groaning and signing it away. But after a while, a book came with this title. *Joy, Unspeakable and Full of Glory*.

The words are from 1 Peter 1.8. Joy, Unspeakable and Full of Glory. Under a title with smaller letters, is it yours now? Imagine the question there. I said, Lord, if it's not mine now, it will never be.

Please make it mine now. And that moment, I had the impression that sun came out. Well, sun came out in me.

All of a sudden I was overwhelmed with light. Joy, Unspeakable and Full of Glory. All of a sudden I realized that I was the host of this gentleman.

So I turned to my dear, beloved wife, Elizabeth. I said, Elizabeth, this gentleman needs a cup of coffee. And she immediately picked it up, went and made a big pot of coffee and held them.

And from that moment we were hosts. I didn't let them go until I gave them a little sermonette. One of them interrupted me and he said, well, we'll have plenty of time.

He knew it was going to be six months of interrogation. A long time of interrogation. And so we'll have plenty of time to talk.

But he himself didn't have time. Because among other things, they confiscated all my tapes with sermons. And four days later, he took some of those tapes at home.

And he listened to one of my sermons. And while listening to that sermon, he had a heart attack and died. So watch out, my sermons are dangerous.

As they left, what I was left with was the subject of joy. Joy. Now imagine, I was under house arrest.

My library was gone. I was allowed to preach every Sunday. We lived at the church.

So they said, well, you cannot leave the compound, the courtyard. But you can preach in your church. And from Monday to Friday you have to be at the interrogation every day.

In preparation for a trial. No literature, no books. Five days in interrogation.

And have two sermons ready for Sunday. So I started to think of joy. I went immediately to Nehemiah 7.10 or 8.10. The joy of the Lord is your strength.

When the joy of God is in you, you are strong. Then Jesus says, John 15.11, I want my joy to be in you. And then 1 Thessalonians 1.6, in a lot of suffering and persecution, you receive the gospel with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

You have the joy of the Lord, the joy of Jesus, and the joy of the Holy Spirit. But then I saw, you can grieve the Holy Spirit. When you sin and you live in sin, the joy of the Lord is gone.

And you are paralyzed, weak. Because you carry in you a grieved and grieving God. Isn't that shocking? Why are you so weak? Why don't you have life? Because you don't have the joy of the Lord, you have a grieving spirit in you.

Well, it's your fault. Recognize your fault. Confess it.

And restore the joy of the Lord in you, as David puts it in Psalm 51. Restore in me the joy of salvation. So, what if I had the sermon ready? All the points were there.

And I'll tell you another thing. As I was on house arrest, preaching every Sunday, people from all over the country started to come to listen on Sundays. And that Sunday morning, as I preached on joy, I was thundering about joy.

In the evening, as I was shaking hands with people from different places, and my own people in the church, I saw a good friend from my childhood there. And I did something that, I don't know how, but preachers never do that, they shouldn't do. I said to him, how did you enjoy today's preaching? He looked at me and said, Joseph, to tell you the truth, I don't know what you preached today.

What? He said, Joseph, I came here out of curiosity. I said, what can a man who was all week where you were in interrogation, what could he preach on Sunday? I imagined I was going to see a tired man or a wreck. But you came thundering about joy.

And I saw it shining on your face. And it blinded me. I only said, if a man in that situation can preach on joy, it's real.

And that's the only thing I remember. That's what I go home with. Well, joy unspeakable and full of glory.

I learned it there in one of the most miserable days of my life. One of the greatest lessons was there. So, I learned that this type of ministry, when you are ready to die, it has to be absolutely full of joy.

Joy unspeakable and full of glory. And you know, God kept it with us all that time. No sad faces.

No, whoa, they will kill us. No, joy unspeakable and full of glory. Let me go one step further and share with you Paul's view.

I give it to you first in Philippians 3, verse 10. He says, I have four purposes in my life. First purpose is to know Christ.

Second is to have in me the power of His resurrection. Remember this too. These are the most important.

That you know Christ and you have the power of His resurrection in you. What for? So that I join in the fellowship of His sufferings. As I go as a missionary, my sufferings is just a share in His sufferings.

What for? So that, the four things. I may, if possible, die as He died. Now we translate it to be conformed to His death and we spiritualize it.

Paul wanted to be a martyr. That was his desire. And let me add something very interesting there.

Why did he want to die as a martyr? So that if I can, I reach the resurrection of the dead. Now the difficulty there is that everybody will reach the resurrection of the dead. The point, the problem is that the translators don't want to translate a little thing that Paul wrote there.

He didn't say resurrection there, Anastasia. He said ex-Anastasia. The extra resurrection.

Which is the resurrection of the martyrs. You have it mentioned in another place about the martyrs. It's in Hebrews 11.35. They were offered freedom if they worshipped the emperor.

But they refused that and they accepted to die so that they obtain the better resurrection. That's why they accepted that. Because according to John in Revelation 20.

The martyrs and only the martyrs were raised to rule with Christ for a thousand years. It's not written that Christ comes on the planet there. The martyrs go up to reign with Him.

And it was the belief of the martyrs from the apostolic times onwards that the martyrs are risen immediately to go to reign with Christ. They rule with Christ immediately. Now that was the vision in the first centuries.

This is how those texts were understood. You find all that in this book. So why accept to die? Because then I get the greatest honor.

Ruling with Christ. But there is another reason for which we should not be afraid of dying but run for it. Let me tell you another story.

We went through that six months of interrogation. Came victorious from that. About three years later I was arrested again.

Put on interrogation again in preparation for a trial. The first day of interrogation a general came in and beat me. Savage beating.

Four days later, three days later I had the chance to talk to him again there. And I thanked him for beating me. Because in the meantime it dawned on me that that was the Passion Week.

And I said, Mr. General, for a Christian there is nothing more beautiful in the world than to suffer when his Lord suffered. I am sorry for screaming when you beat me. I should have just thanked you for the most beautiful gift you could have ever given me.

You see, I see in that event the most beautiful event of my life. Because it was the Holy Week. And I suffered when my Lord suffered.

Not a big tragedy, but a great beauty. But then it was five weeks of harsh interrogation. After five weeks I realized that they squeezed out of me all the information they wanted about that issue for which I was arrested.

And now they were asking me questions about other people that I shouldn't ever answer about other people because that's betraying other people. So I decided I will not answer their questions anymore. And I prayed with Elizabeth and I went that Monday back to the interrogation.

And I just announced to the interrogator, Sir, I will not answer your questions anymore from this moment. I am not talking with you anymore. He went to his boss and reported and came back.

First of all, for about half an hour or so, he just cursed me. With the most ugly and violent and pornographic language you could imagine. Now by that time I developed a technique.

When I didn't want to hear them, I started to sing songs in my mind. I was singing songs of joy and at one point as he was cursing me, all my face was shining. And he just said, you smile at what I say.

And they sort of said, oh, no, no, no. But all in me was joy. Then he said, now listen, tomorrow morning be back here.

And I promised you tomorrow morning you will speak to me everything I want you to speak. You will answer all my questions. You understand? I understood his language.

He threatened to torture me. I went back to my wife. I told her the situation.

I felt I needed more help. Although we were under house arrest, I called the medical doctor, a very devout Christian. And I just said, are you at home tonight? He said, yes.

The owner picked up a taxi and we went to him. I shared my problem. I told them tomorrow they will kill me.

Torture me and they will not answer. So they were finished with me. So please help me to prepare.

They ministered wonderfully to me and we went to pray. It's amazing as I look back because when I prayed, they didn't say, Lord, defend me. Don't let them do it.

It didn't cross my mind to pray that. I just said, Lord, tomorrow morning they will take this body and crush it under their boots. All I want, Lord, is to offer you a clean sacrifice.

Will you please wash me in the blood so that tomorrow I offer you a clean sacrifice. As I prayed that, I felt I was lifted up. I felt I was no more on the ground.

I was up somewhere, up in sweet communion with God. Never experienced that before. When I said Amen, I felt like I came down.

They were so sorry I said Amen. I went the following morning there, ready to be tortured. To my surprise, when the interrogator came, he came smiling, casual, Mr. and so on, the interrogation is over.

They dropped the charges and you are free to go home. I went home and said, Elizabeth, the Lord knew that it was going to be over. Then why did he take me through this preparation for dying? Oh, I think the Lord wanted me to finish in a note of victory.

Elizabeth is much wiser than me. She just said, Joseph, it's not that. Let me tell you what it is, because I watched you and me.

Joseph, it wasn't a battle with the interrogator. God had a battle with you. His battle with us is until he brings us to that point where we give him absolutely everything.

And last night, he brought you to that point where you really gave him all. And when he finished, he had the victory in you at that moment. There was no need of interrogation anymore.

It was over because he won the victory in you. And here I come with the last point in my talk. God has a lot of work through my suffering so that others hear the Gospel.

God works so much through my testimony and through my suffering. God even prepared me for ruling. But there is another thing.

Paul speaks to us in Philippians 2. Develop the mind of Christ. What is that? Look to others as more important than you. Live for them.

Because that's what Christ did. Although he was equal with God, he became a slave. And he lived for us and he died for us.

And I realized that in that process, all that process was to transform me into his image. It is only when you really come to that point and say, My life is not important. Other lives are important.

I am here to build them and to die for them. In that process, you become like Jesus. And that's his ultimate purpose in you and me.

To transform us into his image. Now let's wrap it up. A mission conference.

All of a sudden we see that our new job in the world is to reach the Muslim world. We are not going to conquer that world if we hide our faith. Those people are ready to die for their faith.

Misguided martyrdom. Because they believe that if you hate other people, and if you force by war, by sword, your faith on them, and if somehow you die in the process, you are the martyr. That's a perverted martyrdom.

The true martyrdom is when you go in love, giving them the truth and accepting to die for the very people who want to kill you. If we have an army of that kind of people to go to Saudi Arabia, they may kill us ten, fifteen, a hundred, but eventually they will have to open up for the gospel. Just as the Romans had to do eventually.

We couldn't kill everybody. And eventually the Roman Empire was conquered by these Christians who were not afraid of dying. The Muslim world will be conquered for Christ if he has an army of lambs who go there with the truth, in love, and accept to die.

But remember, breathe joy. Because you go to rule with Christ. And remember the deepest thing of all.

In the process, you become like Jesus. Let's bow our heads. We thank you Lord for opening our eyes to see what you are doing in the world today.

Thank you for waking us up to the reality of the Muslim world. And now Lord, raise an army of people who are equipped with the truth. Flooded with your love through the Holy Spirit.

And ready to go like Jesus. To proclaim the truth in love and die for it. Take me Lord.

Take every one of us who is ready. Equip us. We praise you.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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