Captivated by God's Love

When my wife, Dori, and I were in the first years of our marriage, we had the privilege of meeting Richard Wurmbrand and his wife, Sabina when they visited our Church in Schenectady, NY. Richard was a Romanian Evangelical Lutheran minister of Jewish descent who lived from 1909 til 2001; Sabina passed in the year 2000. They became renowned for standing for their faith when the Soviet Union invaded the Kingdom of Romania during WW II & maintained a policy of state atheism.

Richard publicly stated that Communism and Christianity were incompatible. He preached at bomb shelters and rescued Jews. For their resistance, they were captured & imprisoned. Richard was severely Tortured for Christ, which is the title of his classic book. However, he would continue his witness for Christ in prison regardless, and so much so that guards wanted to know how he could still love them in spite of his sufferings. Some of them converted to Christianity and they, too, were put in prison cells, the same as Richard. He told us in service of His tortures that were so bad that he forgot all the Scriptures he knew, and all he could remember was that "God loves me." After serving a total of 14 years, he was ransomed for $10,000. Urged on by his colleagues to leave Romania and plead the cause of religious freedom from a safer country, he & Sabina emigrated to the United States after spending time in Norway and England. Here they founded The Voice of the Martyrs to aid the persecuted church. Richard said to us that when he came to America and saw the lukewarm state of the church, he was so grieved that he sensed he was better off in prison where Jesus would manifest His presence right in Richard's cell.

I tell you these things so that we can not only understand the sufferings of Christ in His body today, but also to realize the

power of the love of Christ that compels us to love others as Jesus has loved us and still loves us. That all-compelling love is often misunderstood or seldom realized, covered up by religiosity, legalism, unconscious self-centeredness and the like.

Beware of Your Desires

Fear, in general, is a persistent enemy of man. It first reared its ugly head in the Garden of Eden of all places, when Adam & Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. **Gen. 3:6-8 NKJV** *"So when the woman saw that the tree* was *good for food, that it* was *pleasant* (Lit. *a desirable thing*) *to make* one *wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.* **7.** *Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they* were *naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.* **8.** *And they heard the sound* (or "*wind, breeze*") *of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD god among the trees of the garden.* **9.** *Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where* are *you?"* **10.** *So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and* ***I was afraid because I was naked****; and I hid myself."*

Sin brings with it a sense of "nakedness" or inward awareness leading to fear of outward exposure. Therefore we can tend to hide behind excuses or shifting of blame to defend or protect ourselves. Adam did this very thing in **vv. 11-12**, "*And* [*the Lord*] *said, "who told you that you* were *naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"* **12.** *Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave* to be *with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."* "It's Your fault for giving her to me and it's her fault for giving the fruit to me!"

Unrepentant, unconfessed sin, which springs from desires of the senses in the heart & mind, is the wellspring of so many issues plaguing mankind. Fortunately for us, there is a costly remedy. **1**

John 1:8-9 NKJV *"If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* **9.** *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us* our *sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* **10.** *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."* **The costly remedy** is the blood of Jesus that allows for the forgive-ness of sin & the cleansing of all unrighteousness! That's one reason why **Rev. 12:11**says that "*And they overcame him* (v. 9 "*the Devil & Satan*") *by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death*." **SFLB note:** "**They overcame him** by appropriating the victory of the finished work of Christ, by the public confession of their faith, and patient endurance, even in the face of martyrdom (note on **Rev. 1:9** – "John experiences with his readers **the tribulation**, or persecution on account of their faith, with **patient endurance, which is steadfast courage under unjust suffering**. However, attendant to the trials involved in the Christian life is the glory of the **kingdom.**").
If we refuse to acknowledge & confess our sin, then we live with guilt & shame that alters our true personality. We mask & cover up because of fear.

The antidote of fear is love. **1 John 4:18** says "*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."* **TPT** says, "*Love never brings fear, for fear is always related to punishment. But love's perfection drives the fear* of punishment far *from our hearts. Whoever walks constantly afraid of* punishment *has not reached love's perfection."*

Be Strong in Christ's Grace or Suffer the Costliness of Fear

Selwyn Hughes (Oct. 30) quotes **2 Tim. 2:1** in his devotional called "**Fear and Cold Feet"**: *"You, therefore, My child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."* He writes:

"When Simon Peter stepped out of the boat and attempted to walk on the water to Jesus, he was afraid. "*And beginning to sink he cried out 'Lord, save me!'"* (**Mt. 14:30**). **Fear makes you sink.**

"When Jesus healed the paralytic, His first word was, "*Have courage, son*," and His second, *"Your sins are forgiven"* (**Mt. 9:2**). When Jesus lifted the guilt, this lifted the fear which, in turn, lifted the paralysis.

"When the disciples fell on their faces at the top of the Mount of Transfiguration, terrified because they had heard the voice of God, Jesus said: "*Get us; don't be afraid*" (**Matt. 17:7**). **Fear puts you down; faith lifts you up.**

"The man who brought back the unused talent said: "I was afraid & went off and did your talent in the ground" (**Mt. 25:25**). His life investment was in a hole in the ground! **Fear did it**.

Selwyn goes on: "Again, it was said of the disciples that they were gathered "*with the doors locked because of their fear of the Jews* (**Jn 20:19**). **Fear always puts you behind closed doors; it causes you to become an ingrown person**.

"Joseph of Arimathea was "*a disciple of Jesus – but secretly because of his fear of the Jews"* (**Jn 19:38**). **Fear always drives a person underground.**

"A man I know says that fear gave him cold feet. Prior to the Lord delivering him from fear, his circulation was so bad that he had to wear socks in bed. "Now," he says, "my circulation is normal. God took away my fear and gave me warm feet."

"**Fear is indeed costly. It is so costly that [we] dare not keep it**. But [we] cannot easily get rid of it, for it has put its roots deep within [us]. [We need to pray that the Lord Jesus will] "…help us to tear it up, root & branch."

Gaze Upon God's Loveliness

Let **Jeremiah 31:3 TPT** speak to you today. It says, "*YAHWEH appeared to me from another* realm and said, "*I have* deeply *loved you with a forever-love* (or "*everlasting*

love"); *that is why I have been so patient and kind to draw you* to My heart*."*

Theologian **Arthur W. Pink** explains why spirituality is at such a low level in today's church. He says it because our hearts are occupied so little with thoughts of His divine love. *"How little real love there is for God. The better we are acquainted with His love – its character, its fullness, its blessedness, the more will our hearts be drawn out in love to Him."*

Changed Into Christ's Image

2 Cor. 3:18 TPT "*We can all draw close to Him with the veil* [of the law] *removed from our faces. And with no veil we all become like mirrors who brightly reflect the glory of the Lord* Jesus. *We are being transfigured into His very image as we move from one brighter level of glory to another. And this glorious transfiguration comes from the Lord, Who is the Spirit."*

On this Sunday that we remember "The International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church", remember Richard Wurmbrand's sufferings and how, when he forgot every Scripture he knew, the thing that sustained him was **"God loves me."** And He loves us as well.