



# E-Worship 4:23

An online resource for officers and worship leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

"A time is coming...when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." - John 4:23

## Worship in Suffering: How?

"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" - Phil. 1:29

"...This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained."

- 2 Timothy 2:8b-9

"We sent Timothy... to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them." - 1 Thes. 3:2,3

Though the fig tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail, and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

- Hab. 3:17,18a

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

- Phil. 1:21

"I have found truly joyful Christians only in the Bible, in the Underground Church, and in prison."

- Pastor Richard Wurmbrand "Tortured for Christ"



I've just finished reading Pastor Richard Wurmbrand's "Tortured for Christ", in which he recounts his fourteen year prison term in Communist Russia, and during which he was routinely tortured and placed in solitary confinement.\* For fourteen years he never saw sunlight, as his prison cell was located underground. Since the cell and all uniforms, including the guards, were grey, not even colour was gifted to him all those years. Yet his faith grew, and on his release God allowed him to emigrate to America to begin a world-wide ministry now known as "Voice of the Martyrs", a ministry that keeps the "free" church informed of Christian persecution world-wide, advocating governments in restricted nations for the right of every Christian to worship freely without fear of imprisonment, torture or death.

As I read about Christian martyrs throughout the centuries, and other stories of Christians who have suffered under illness, loss and other tragedies, I am struck over and over again by the joy overflowing into their writings, a joy inexplicable by human and especially Western thinking. I often contrast what I read with faces I see in my own congregation, faces that seem to reflect boredom and disinterest in the predictable and perpetual routine of "church".

\* "Tortured for Christ" can be downloaded for free from the internet, by downloading the free Bible program "E-sword" ([www.e-sword.com](http://www.e-sword.com)). After downloading, click onto 'extras' to find the book. Some of Richard Wurmbrand's videos can also be viewed on YouTube.

So the question is begged to be asked: What sets these suffering Christians apart, that enable them to exude such joy, compassion, and even lack of bitterness for what God was allowing them to experience on a daily basis? How could they continue to exuberantly worship a God who had seemingly 'destined' them for a life of ongoing suffering? Listed below are the commonalities I discovered in my research, traits that were evident in every sincere worshipping believer, no matter what category of suffering God had portioned them in life:

### 1) Transformation

The day they converted to Christianity and found a living relationship with Jesus Christ, was the equivalent of turning on a light in a soul that previously knew only darkness. It was a day they discovered experientially the overwhelming love of God in their lives, a day of release exactly as scripted in Isaiah 61:1-3. It is seen when Jesus cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene, and when He healed the woman who had bled for twelve years. [next page]...

E-Worship 4:23 is a product of the Music and Gospel Arts section of Corps Ministries The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda Territory  
2 Overlea Blvd. Toronto Ontario, M4H 1P4  
Phone: 416-422-6108 Fax: 416-422-6109  
E-mail: [Kim\\_Garreffa@can.salvationarmy.org](mailto:Kim_Garreffa@can.salvationarmy.org)





**Nothing** they experience outwardly afterwards comes close to the darkness felt in their own souls before encountering Christ. Inwardly they are transformed, and they can never go back.

## 2) Transfixed

Their eyes are focused on Christ: Their love and passion for Him supercedes anything this life has to offer. Christ and His Word are their meat and drink, their daily sustenance. Suffering in this life is an opportunity to share in the suffering of Christ, and they actually welcome this privilege. Listen to the testimony of Varia, another prisoner in communist Russia:

*I asked through the iron bars: "Varia, don't you regret what you did?" "No," she answered. "And if they would free me, I would go again and would tell them about the great love of Christ. Don't think that I suffer. I am very glad that the Lord loves me so much and gives me the joy to endure for His name." [from 'Tortured for Christ']*

## 3) Thankfulness

They notice the smallest blessings in their lives, and see Christ in 'ordinary miracles'. One Salvation Army officer who was imprisoned in Czechoslovakia for ten years was enamored by a simple leaf that floated into his cell. That leaf became his lifeline to sanity, and for several weeks was an endless source of entertainment and blessing to him. It was a simple gift from God that enabled him to endure endless days of unjust incarceration.†

Corrie Ten Boom recalls the time that her sister Betsy admonished her to thank God for the fleas in their bunker in the Nazi concentration camp during World War II. She didn't understand how she could possibly thank God for those awful fleas... but it was only later on she realized that women prisoners were often raped by the guards. Because of the fleas, guards stayed away from their bunker, and they were even free to hold Bible studies there without repercussion.\*

During the Beijing Olympics this past summer, the wife of a Chinese Pastor in an underground Christian church was interviewed by our own CBC radio (anonymously, to protect her identity). She spoke of being constantly watched by Chinese police, and occasionally being picked up for questioning. She told the reporter she thanks God when she is picked up... "Free taxi ride home. I don't have to walk!"

† "In My Enemy's Camp", by Josef Korbek and Frank Allnut, published 1976 by Christian Resource Communications

\* "The Hiding Place", by Corrie Ten Boom and John Scherrill, reprinted in 1984 by Bantam Publishing.

## 4) Transcendence

There is a recognition that they don't have the whole picture, that their story hasn't ended, that their present circumstance is only 'momentary' in relation to the eternity to come (2 Cor. 4:16-18). They have faith that God will use their current situation to His glory, and that there is purpose and meaning behind God's incomprehensible will.

The apostle Paul had no way of knowing that by God appointing him to extensive imprisonment, his ensuing letters would become part of God's holy Word to the Christian church for all the centuries to come.

Joseph had no way of knowing that his being sold into slavery by his own brothers, and being thrown into prison for a crime he didn't commit, were just stepping stones used by God to orchestrate his becoming second in command over all of Egypt.

## 5) Trust

Because past experience has shown them that God does indeed answer prayer in His good time, often in amazing miraculous ways, and that God has **always** met their needs as they needed it, they have complete faith in God's sovereignty over the situation. If God calls them to suffer, He will provide them the strength to bear it. They only need endure the present moment as God calls them to, with no worry about tomorrow. They have an ability to 'let go' of their own agenda and expectations, and seek out God's will in each moment, as it happens. Richard Wurmbrand states that he felt no fear when he was arrested, for he **knew** that God was with him.

## 6) Truth

Suffering tends to strip away all the frivolities of life, taking it to the bare bones of what really matters by eternal standards. Suffering also reveals the character of the person who suffers: Am I courageous, or a coward? Do I count the cost and take my cross, or cower and conform under peer pressure? Am I a real Christian or a hypocrite? Suffering reveals the truth of our own frailty, fragility, and utter dependence on God. The truth is that I have little control, and that life can cave in around me with a flick of circumstance. God is the only constant, unchangeable, dependable Rock of Hope there is. Richard Wurmbrand constantly saw that even die-hard atheists began to pray in times of crisis.

## 7) Tutelage

Life is just one big learning-curve, preparing us for eternity and giving us opportunities to grow more and more like Christ. The focus is on spiritual growth, and not on the physical limitations of the situation: [next pg]



"God, what do you want me to learn in my present predicament? Teach me!"

## 8) Testimony

Every circumstance was seen as an opportunity to be a living witness of Christ to their generation: of His reality, His grace, His goodness, His compassion. "What I experience, others are experiencing, and God can use me to inspire, strengthen and comfort others (2 Cor. 1:3-7), and even lead them to Christ." Why was Richard Wurmbrand compelled to share his testimony to the world on his release? And why does his story still circulate today? Because, although we may never have been tortured or imprisoned, there is a commonality in suffering, and our own faith is strengthened by his testimony, to press on as set by his example. If he endured **that**, I can endure **this**.

## 9) Tenacity

By crying out to Christ, they found they could be strong, self-controlled, disciplined. By His strength they could stay the course, see the suffering through. They had the end goal in sight, so Satan couldn't thwart them.

Through suffering, we learn endurance, to finish the race, one step, one day, one moment at a time. We are not chaff, blown about by the wind, but trees, rooted and grounded in Christ and His Word. In Christ we cannot be shaken. In Christ we are triumphant.

### **More quotes from Richard Wurmbrand**

*"Persecution has always produced a better Christian—a witnessing Christian, a soul-winning Christian. Communist persecution has back-fired and produced serious, dedicated Christians such as are rarely seen in free lands. These people cannot understand how anyone can be a Christian and not want to win every soul they meet."*

*"Neither prison nor torture can frighten the Christians of the Underground Church. Just as in the Early Church, persecution only deepens their dedication."*

*"Never imagine a prison as in the West when you hear about a sentenced brother in a restricted nation. Prison there means starvation, torture, and brainwashing."*

*In a letter smuggled out secretly, the Underground Church said, "We don't pray to be better Christians, but that we may be the only kind of Christians God means us to be: Christlike Christians, that is, Christians who bear willingly the cross for God's glory."*

*"Western Christians can help us by praying for the persecutors that they may be saved. Such a prayer may seem naive. We prayed for the Communists and they tortured us the next day even worse than before the prayer. But the prayer of the Lord in Jerusalem was also "naive." They crucified Him after this prayer. But only a few days later, they beat their breasts and five thousand were converted in one day."*

***Excerpt from the writings of Roy White, who suffers from an incurable illness that leaves him in constant pain and torment\****

Worship. I believe that this is what I was truly made for. This is the highest expression of my being and the most completely fulfilling occupation of my life.

To worship when the sun is out, the feel of the wind on my skin. To worship as I descend on my bicycle after a long hard climb up Summit Loop road... To worship in the sanctuary comfortable and centered in my being, feeling the goodness of God released in my life simply by the blessing and joy of being alive. I am dead now to this sort of worship. This touchy-feely worship. These are all easy roads of worship and in the past, worshipping in the church, feeling good physically, I've worshipped with much joy.

Now...

Now when the pain becomes so severe that I can not clap my hands together, (I just sort of touch them together in time to the music.) When the big, giant, "WHY?" question leaps to mind in the middle of a song, and tears of the deepest bitter pain flow and all I can do is sing with quaking voice, worship is nothing but a ton of work, and yet worship is one of my only true places of refuge.

Worship, when His presence descends like a cloak and I know that my life, health, and entire being is in His hands and all is ultimately well. Worship, when nothing and no one else matters. Worship, when His mighty dynamite blows off the 'roof' of my spirit, and my heart is wide open and alive before my maker. Worship, when I shut my eyes and imagine heaven and my heart and mind's eye looks directly at God Himself.

I can't help myself. My entire being thirsts for His presence, His touch, His approval, His help. Just to love Him more, to know Him more, and to be conformed to the image of Jesus more.

His is an active love that is always interacting with my soul. His is a faithful love that always helps, always blesses, and always speaks, though not always in words. His is a love that will never fail, never stop, never give up. His is an eternal love that will always be pouring out of His inner being, even as it wells up within mine.

For this love I can stand any pain, pay any price, bear any burden, and follow him into and through any icy or fiery trials He leads me through.

**\* For his whole story, visit  
<http://net-burst.net/pain/pain.htm>**