



Missions is Answered Prayer

By Cheryl Odden

Samuel M. Zwemer, a missionary and Christian scholar on Islam, said: "The history of missions is the history of answered prayer...it is the key to the whole missionary problem. All human means are secondary." J. Oswald Sanders said: "[Prayer] is fundamental, not supplementary.... All progress can be clearly traced back to prevailing prayer."

VOM could diligently publish the addresses of Christians imprisoned in restricted nations and deliver Bibles inside those nations. Such efforts, however, are fruitless without prayer. Missions is answered prayer. VOM's work is answered prayer. VOM's work was petitioned years, perhaps even centuries ago by men and women who tarried on their knees for the persecuted church. One of these men was Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand.

Pastor Wurmbbrand shares: "You can move God. Remember how God decided to destroy the Jewish people after they had worshipped a golden calf, and through Moses' prayer, God changed His mind? To produce changes in heavenly decrees is much more important than moving mountains [of difficulty]." God was testing Moses, who knew God had promised to make Abraham into a great nation (Genesis 12: 1-3). Moses knew that if God were to destroy the Israelites, they would not become a great people. What kind of image would the Gentiles have had of God? Would many have wanted to follow Him? Moses knew the heart of God. He knew the promise that God had made with Abraham and reminded Him. Therefore, God changed His mind.

Are there times when we can "move God" as Pastor Wurmbbrand shared? Change his mind? What's holding us back? Are we afraid of manipulating God? He can never be manipulated. Do we fear we will ask too much of God? As we read and observe what is happening around the world today, would we rather be guilty before God for asking too much of him than asking too little? There is no formula in ensuring that we are not asking too much from God. That comes only through our relationship with him as we spend time in his word, becoming students of his will. I once heard a pastor share that most prayers are asking for God's will, not praying according to it. Which category do your prayers fall into? And why?

We can pray for God to move in restricted nations around the world. We can pray for God to move in the hearts of atheists, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, so that they may come know Christ (1 Timothy 2: 4). We can pray for God to move in the hearts of governmental authorities (Proverbs 21: 1). In Romania, Pastor Wurmbbrand was interrogated many times during his 14 years in prison. One of his interrogators, Lieutenant Grecu, questioned Pastor Wurmbbrand about his activities with the underground church. Wurmbbrand described Grecu as "a tough young man... indoctrinated with the belief that he was making a better world." After accusing Pastor Wurmbbrand of lying about his contacts, Grecu ordered him to write out all the rules that Pastor broke in prison. Pastor Wurmbbrand willingly sat at the table to write out his "declaration." It had been two years since he had held a pen, so it was difficult to write. He persisted in writing all the rules he had broken, ending his "confession" with: "I have never spoken against the Communists. I am a disciple of Christ, who had given us love for our enemies. I understand them and pray for their conversion so that they will become my brothers in the Faith...."

When Grecu read the "declaration," he was overwhelmed that Pastor could write of his love for a government that had put him in prison and tortured him. Grecu said, "This is one of your Christian commandments that no one can keep." To that, Pastor lovingly responded: "It's not a matter of keeping a commandment. When I became a Christian, it was as if I had been reborn, with a new character full of love. Just as only water can flow from a spring, so only love can come from a loving heart."

Over time, Pastor had more opportunities to talk about Christ with Lieutenant Grecu. One day he had the wonderful privilege, in his own prison cell, to see Grecu come to Christ.

We can pray that God will change the hearts of more Grecus who work in prisons in restricted nations around the world.

Pastor Wurmbbrand wrote, "Manacles hurt not only the wrists, but also the soul." When we "remember them that are in bonds as bound with them" (Hebrews 13: 3), we enter into the "fellowship of His sufferings" (Philippians 3: 10). When they hurt, our souls hurt. When they are beaten, our souls are beaten. When they are isolated in a dark cell, our souls share in that darkness. However,

with prayer we can rub the feet of those in shackles. We can put a blanket over those shivering with cold on the icy cement floor. We can feed a spirit starved for fellowship and God's word. We can nurse the wounds of a back bruised and cut from being whipped. In the late 1970s, VOM's Executive Director Tom White was arrested and sentenced to 24 years in prison for violating Cuba's literature laws. (Tom and Mel Bailey routinely flew over Cuba dropping gospel tracts.) During his time in prison, Tom was placed in a refrigeration cell for one week. This cold cell was designed to keep prisoners from resting. That same week, his mother prayed that he would get some sleep. He did.

Christian Wölfkes of Romania prayed daily: "O Lord, I pray that I may not die before I have converted a Jew to the faith.... You are all-powerful. Bring a Jew here to me in my village, and I promise I will do my utmost to convert him to the faith." In 1938, Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand, both Jewish, arrived in his village and placed their faith in Christ. May we also pray as Wölfkes did that we would not die until we convert a Muslim, a Buddhist, a communist or terrorist, to faith in Christ.

VOM invites you to join us on the front lines in prayer to experience with them the joys of "fellowshipping in their sufferings." VOM invites you to join them in seeing persecutors come to Christ. VOM offers a pull-out prayer map in our free Special Issue newsletter. You can display it wherever it will remind you to pray for our persecuted family. You may also wish to keep some paper handy while you read VOM's monthly newsletters and online articles at www.persecution.com to jot down prayer requests and verses of Scripture. You can also cut out pictures from our newsletter and place them in your Bible as a prayer reminder.

Each time you pray for one of our brothers and sisters in bonds, remember that some day we will all be together before God's throne singing praises and "comparing notes" from when we prayed and rejoicing in how those prayers were answered (Revelation 7:9). Remember, as we look into the future, VOM's mission is your answered prayers.

