

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 20 September 2020. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Cost of Sending the Light

In the late 1930's, a young Jewish man named Richard Wurmbrand was working as a communist agent for Russia in his own home country of Romania. Wurmbrand was a dedicated communist. He had been trained in communism in Bucharest as a teenager; and he now received his pay directly from Moscow. However, in 1938, something happened in Wurmbrand's life that transformed him forever. A born-again Christian named Christian Wolfkes (a carpenter by trade) shared the Gospel with Richard and his wife, Sabina; and both of them surrendered their heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, needless to say, these were dangerous times to be a true follower of Jesus Christ. However, Wurmbrand and his wife did not hide their light under a bushel. During WWII, they were deeply involved in their church's outreach to Jewish people. Wurmbrand also studied for the ministry, and became an ordained pastor. However, in 1944, as the war was winding down, a new horror struck his country: the Soviet Union occupied Romania, and brought it under the iron grip of communism.

Wurmbrand was now faced with a choice: would he try to cling to the light of Christ, yet bow to the satanic darkness of communism at the same time? Or would he stand for the Light? Wurmbrand and his wife both chose to stand for the Light. The communist government soon clamped down on all churches. The churches were ordered to pledge their loyalty to the godless communist party; and regulations were placed upon them which, if obeyed, would make them no true churches of Christ at all. Wurmbrand and his wife immediately plunged themselves into establishing underground churches; and, in a meeting of church leaders, Wurmbrand bravely stood up and denounced the government's control of the churches. On February 29, 1948, while he and his wife were on their way to church, they were arrested.

Wurmbrand and his wife both spent the next 14 years in prison; and during the first 3 years, Wurmbrand was in solitary confinement. For three years he was in an underground facility, 12 feet below the ground, with no lights, windows, or sound. During these years, Wurmbrand's faith in God didn't waver. He kept his sanity by composing sermons in his mind, and delivering them out loud at night time, when the guards weren't around. (Years later, when he gained his freedom, he remembered 350 of these sermons, and published them!) However, Wurmbrand wasn't content to refresh his own soul with the Light of God's Word. When the guards weren't nearby, he tapped out Morse Code on the cell wall, so that the prisoners in adjoining cells could hear the Gospel!¹ Although Wurmbrand was in perpetual physical darkness, his heart was filled with the Light of Christ; and he did everything in his power to "send the Light"!

Last week, we talked about the condition for sending the Light. In order to send the Light, you must first *have* the Light of Christ in your own life (you must be saved). Then, as a believer, you must *fuel* the Light of Christ through prayer, Bible reading, and submission to the Holy Spirit. You must also personally let your Light shine to those who are nearby, and to those who are far off. However, as we will see this morning, there is a *cost* for sending the Light. If we, as a church, and as individuals, desire to send the Light to this sin-darkened world, then we must be willing to *count* that cost. The title of this message is ***The Cost of Sending the Light***.

Read Philippians 2:15-16.

I. The cost of sending the Light

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Wurmbrand

Read Acts 15:40 - 16:11. (Keep your finger in this passage. We will go back to it several times.)

In this passage, we read about a period in Paul's life when, for a little while, things seemed to be relatively "stable" in the ministry. Paul and Silas were busy travelling around and visiting the churches which Paul and Barnabas had already established in a previous missionary journey; and as they travelled, they were "confirming" and strengthening the churches. During this journey, Paul met a young Christian named Timothy; and Timothy soon proved to be an invaluable addition to the missionary team. Churches were being established, and souls were being saved every day. It seemed that things were going smoothly. We have no scriptural record of any major opposition or hindrances to the missionary work at this time.

However, all this was about to change. As Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke, and the others were preparing to go into the province of Asia, the Holy Ghost forbade them to go into that region. Now, we don't know *how* the Lord forbade them. Perhaps the Spirit spoke directly and audibly to Paul, as he had often done before. Perhaps divinely-orchestrated circumstances made it impossible for them to go there. Perhaps Paul and Silas simply sensed, in their prayers, that God was not leading them there. However, regardless of how God communicated to them, He had clearly closed the door to Asia.

However, this was not the end of the uncertainty. Not only did God forbid them to go into Asia, but He also forbade them to go into Bithynia. Two times, God closed a door. It wasn't until they had come to the city of Troas that God clearly spoke to Paul in a dream, and told him what He *did* want him to do. God now wanted Paul and his missionary companions to set sail across the Aegean Sea, and to go into Macedonia. **(Read verses 6-8 again.)**

Now, why was it such a big deal that God was calling them to Macedonia? Because Macedonia was not merely a Roman *province*; it was a Roman *colony*. The greater part of the people in Macedonia were actual Roman citizens; and they were very much Roman in thought, culture, and religion. Paul and Silas would now be on *Rome's* turf, and would be subject directly to Roman laws and customs!

"So, what's the point, Pastor?" The point is that in sending the Light, there is always a cost. In this case, the cost was that **God disrupted Paul's plans, and took him and his companions out of their comfort zone.** Things had been going well for a little while. They had been experiencing "sunny days" in the ministry. But now, God was changing their plans. There were souls in Macedonia that were perishing, and who desperately needed to hear the Gospel. Undoubtedly, the man in Paul's dream who was calling for "**help**" was a real person, whom Paul and his companions later met somewhere in Macedonia. How could Paul ignore this man's cry for help? Most importantly, how could he ignore *God's* call? He had to obey the Lord, regardless of the dangers that he might encounter by walking onto Roman soil.

You know, this is often the case when we truly endeavour to "send the Light." Oftentimes, **God disrupts our plans.** You see, we like to serve God in our *own* way. We like to settle into a comfortable routine. Yes, we may be sacrificing a little bit; but not overly much. We might say something about the Lord now and then, or hand out a tract to someone who looks pleasant and agreeable; but what if the Lord were to tell you to go give a tract to someone who looks as though he might rip your face off if you try to talk to him about Jesus? What if God were to call you to commit yourself to an evangelistic outreach that requires much more of

your time and effort, and in which you might face actual oppression and hostility from people? In fact, what if God were to call you to change your whole life's plans and ambitions, and to be a full-time pastor or missionary, or a pastor's or missionary's wife? Young person, what about it? Timothy was a young man, with his life before him. *He* could have stayed relatively close to home, and near familiar surroundings; but instead, he left his family and loved ones, and went with Paul into the hostile region of Macedonia, to take the Gospel to lost souls. Would *you* have done this? Are *you* willing to have your life's plans turned upside-down, if God were to call you to do so? One thing is for certain: anyone who is truly resolved to be Jesus' disciple must count the cost, and be ready to "**forsake all,**" and follow Him!

Read Luke 14:25-33.

Christian, when you are truly willing to "send the Light," it will cost you something. It will cost you the surrender of your plans, your ambitions, and your comfort zone. But what else will it cost? **It will also cost you your possessions.** It will cost you something materially.

Read Acts 16:14-15.

Lydia was a brand-new Christian (the first one in Philippi, in fact); yet, immediately after her salvation, she was willing to open her home to Paul and his missionary partners, for as long as they were in the area. I'm sure that this cost her something! Should we be surprised, though? Should we be surprised that she wanted to sacrifice something in order to help "send the Light" of Christ to others? The mark of a true believer is that he now desires, out of a heart of love and thankfulness to God, to give of his wealth, so that others might come to know Christ. By the way, Lydia was not the only person in Philippi who was willing to give of her wealth in order to send the Light. Years later, when Paul was writing a letter to the church of Philippi, he reminded them of how, in the early days of their church, just after he had left Philippi to take the Gospel to other cities, their church had voluntarily taken it upon themselves to give to him on a regular basis, to support his missionary work. He said, "***Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity***" (Philippians 4:15-16).

From the time when Jesus was on earth, God's people have always been willing to sacrifice their money and possessions in order to advance the Gospel. As Christ and His disciples travelled about Israel and preached the Gospel, godly believers opened their homes and lodged them for as long as they were in the area. There were some believers who physically followed Jesus and His disciples in many of their travels, and who supported them with whatever substance they had. (And not all of them were rich!) They gave out of a heart of love and thankfulness. Jesus had saved them from the awful dungeon of sin; and they wanted to offer up their lives as "***living sacrifices***" for Him. To them, it was a "***reasonable service.***"

Read Luke 8:1-3.

Brethren, we are approaching our missions conference. Once again, we are seeking the Lord, to see what He would have us to give to missions in the coming year. There are four missionaries whom we, as a church, have committed to support on a regular basis, so that they might reach lost souls in Hungary, Honduras, Tallaght, and Kerry. Will we continue to step out in faith, and to give of our wealth, so that they might take the Gospel to regions beyond us? The question is not, "What will I do with *my* money?" Your money is actually *the Lord's*

money; and He has made you steward of it, so that you might use it for the advancement of His Kingdom. In **Luke 16** Jesus said, ***“And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon (money) of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.”*** In other words, “There’s nothing ‘righteous’ about money, in and of itself; but you can use money for God’s glory. Use the money that God has entrusted to you on this earth to win people to the Lord, so that one day, when your life on this earth fails, and you go to heaven, the friends whom you have won to the Lord will be there to meet you in heaven.” Jesus went on to say, ***“If ye therefore have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”*** In other words, “If God can’t trust you to use the money that He has given you for His glory, then how can He trust you with even greater things?” We have a great responsibility, brethren. God wants us to use *His* money and resources (which He has entrusted to us) in order to “send the Light.”

What else will it cost you to “send the Light”? Well, if you are truly willing to “send the Light” into the darkness, then **you had better be ready to do battle with powerful demonic forces!** Let’s go back to our passage in **Acts**.

Read Acts 16:16-18.

Put yourself in Paul’s shoes. Here is a woman who is possessed with a demon. This demon knows *exactly* who you are; and he is ready and waiting for you. Everywhere you go in town, this demon, speaking through this poor, enslaved young woman, is telling people, ***“These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.”*** Now, oddly enough, these wicked spirits were making a true statement! Paul and Silas *were* the servants of the most high God, and they *were* proclaiming the way of salvation. Why would Satan’s demons say this? Well, it’s simple. You see, everyone in town knew that this young woman was possessed by an evil spirit; and by speaking *well* of Paul and Silas, this evil spirit was causing people to associate *Paul’s God* with *Satan and his demons*. He was dragging God down to the level of Satan’s filthy, fallen angels; and he was making Paul and Silas look like nothing more than common pagan soothsayers. He was causing confusion in people’s minds about who the true God is, so as to undermine the Gospel of salvation.

Now, you’ll notice that Paul and Silas didn’t cast this demon out straightaway. They were Apostles; and, as such, they had the God-given authority to cast demons out of people. (This is one of the gifts that uniquely set the Apostles apart from other Christians.) Yet, they allowed this to go on for days before they finally cast out the demon. Why? I believe it is because they were taking time to pray and fast. Jesus said that there are some demons that are so powerful, that they come out only ***“by prayer and fasting”*** (even for the Apostles)! Paul and Silas knew that the whole town was watching, and that souls were at stake; and they dared not be hasty and presumptuous. They knew that they were fighting a powerful enemy.

Brethren, if we are going to send the Light, we must be ready to wage real warfare. We’d better be weeping over lost souls, and watching, fasting, and praying continually against the forces of darkness that are keeping people in bondage. We must be ready to pray in the middle of the night, or even through the night, when the Spirit leads us. We cannot approach this war casually! The world has always been spiritually dark; but we are heading into a time of unprecedented spiritual darkness. In 2019, the *New York Times* published an article entitled “When Did Everyone Become a Witch?” In this article, the author reported (with an obvious tone of glee) that the practice of witchcraft is now exploding everywhere. Simply put, the “Harry Potter generation” has grown up. I can personally testify that in my 14 years of being a

pastor, I have increasingly come face-to-face with demonic forces as I endeavour to reach people with the Gospel. I have seen and heard supernatural things a number of times. Several times I have confronted demons who were speaking through people, and cursing me and my God. I can testify that this battle is very, very real. People think that they are getting “power” by surrendering themselves to demonic forces; but they are selling themselves into horrible bondage, from which only Jesus can rescue them!

Tragically, many young people in our Western world have grown up in broken, unloving, abusive homes; and they are hurting, broken, and intensely angry. They want to feel as though they have “control” of their sad, empty lives; and the witchcraft that they have learned about in public school classrooms, and in Hollywood’s godless movies, and in their wicked Rock music, looks very attractive to them, because it promises to give them “power”--a power that they have never seen in dead, lifeless, apostate Christianity. Sadly, even many genuine, born-again Christians are manifesting little of God’s power in their lives, because they are *not* taking spiritual warfare seriously, and they are *not* praying and filling their minds with God’s Word as they should, and they are seldom filled with the Spirit.

Brethren, *we are at war*. Our enemies are not the witches, or the LGBTQ activists, or the abortionists, or the communists, or the anarchists that are looting and burning down cities: on the contrary, these people are souls whom Jesus loves, and for whom He died, and whom He longs to save. Our true enemies are Satan and his angels. They are “*principalities,*” “*powers,*” the “*rulers of the darkness of this world,*” and “*spiritual wickedness in high places.*” We cannot retreat in fear from sharing the Gospel with certain people because they are “too far gone” in Satan’s grasp. We have all power in heaven and earth on our side! However, we *must* be on praying ground. We *must* be clad in the armour of God!

Read Ephesians 6:10-18.

What else will it cost you to “send the Light”? **It will cost you shame and persecution.** Let’s go back to our text in **Acts**, and see what happened next to Paul and Silas; and then, we will go to the book of **John**, and remind ourselves of what Jesus said concerning persecution.

Read Acts 16:19-25.

Read John 15:18-25, 16:1-3.

Jesus promised that those who follow Him, and who proclaim His name, *will* suffer persecution. The question is not “if” we will suffer persecution for Christ, but rather *what measure* of persecution we will suffer. For Paul, suffering was a regular thing. Imagine being publicly whipped, and then thrown into a dark, dirty “*inner prison*” (where there is no daylight), with the lacerations from your recent beating still raw, open, and bleeding; and then, your feet are placed in stocks. What would *you* do? The Bible says that Paul and Silas *sang praises!* Rather than complain about their ill treatment, they praised the Lord. Though they were in physical darkness, they “sent the Light” to their jailor, and to the other prisoners.

Earlier in the message, I told you about the suffering that Richard Wurmbrand endured for Christ. However, solitary confinement was only the “tip of the iceberg” of the persecution that he endured. After suffering for 8 ½ years in prison, Wurmbrand was finally released in 1956--but with strict warning not to preach anymore. Of course, he disobeyed this order, and went right back to establishing underground churches; and in 1959, he was sentenced to 25 more years in prison. During his imprisonment, he was beaten, mutilated, burned with rod-hot

okers, and placed inside a large frozen icebox. He was also often placed inside “the box” for days at a time. (The “box” was a common Soviet torture device. It was a tiny room, just wide enough for a person to stand upright, with sharp knives jutting out from all four walls, so that a person could not fall asleep without being cut.) On one occasion, they beat the soles of Wurmbrand’s feet for several hours, until the skin tore off his feet. The next day, they resumed the beating, until the bone was exposed. The scars on his body were horrific, and lasting; and he never was able to walk right again. As for his wife, she was forced to do hard penal labour on a canal.² Once an officer tripped her, so that she fell into the mud; and then, to give her a “bath,” the officer threw her into the icy river. As the officer took her hand to lift her out, he asked her why her God hadn’t gotten her out of the river. Her answer was, “He did. He used *you* to get me out!” Wurmbrand and his wife were severely beaten if the officers caught them praying, or talking to anyone about the Lord. Yet, they didn’t stop. Once, an officer saw Wurmbrand praying; and he mockingly asked why he kept praying for help to a God who doesn’t exist. Wurmbrand responded, “I wasn’t praying for *me*; I was praying for *you*.” Brethren, are we willing to suffer in order to “send the Light”? How can we say we would die for Him if we aren’t willing to *live* for Him? How can we say we would die for Him if we won’t go to *church* for Him, or read His Word, or tell anyone about Christ?

In 1964, Wurmbrand was, by miraculous Providence, released from prison, given amnesty, and enabled to migrate to the West; and in one of the books that he wrote about his experiences (*If Prison Walls Could Speak*), he said this: “A faith that can be destroyed by suffering is not faith.”³ Do *you* have real faith, Christian? Would your faith stand up under real suffering? (The way things are unfolding in our world, we may soon have a chance to find out! As we speak, communist revolutionaries are only beginning their reign of anarchy, mayhem, and terror in the United States; and they have made it abundantly clear that they wish to destroy Christianity.) If your faith be real faith, then it will not produce fear; it will produce *love* for our enemies. In his book *Tortured for Christ*, Wurmbrand gave this testimony about the love that his Romanian brethren had for souls: “I have seen Christians in Communist prisons with fifty pounds of chains on their feet, tortured with red-hot iron pokers, in whose throats spoonfuls of salt had been forced, being kept afterward without water, starving, whipped, suffering from cold--and praying with fervour for the Communists. This is humanly inexplicable! It is the love of Christ, which was poured out in our hearts.”⁴

II. The reward of sending the Light (vv. 25-34)

We have spent most of this message examining the cost of sending the Light. However, before we close this morning, I would like to examine the *reward* of sending the Light.

Read Acts 16:25-40.

What was Paul and Silas’s reward for sending the Light? Their reward was that the jailor saw the love of Christ in them, and ended up receiving Christ as his Saviour. In fact, his *whole family* got saved that night! Also, they saw a new church established there in Philippi before they left the city. Christian, apart from the joy of your own personal relationship with the Lord, there is no greater joy that you could ever experience than that of seeing a person saved through your witness--and of knowing that you will spend eternity with him. In 1812, **Adoniram Judson** (the first American missionary to Burma) wrote a letter to his future

² *Ibid.*

³ https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Richard_Wurmbrand

⁴ *Ibid.*

father-in-law, to ask him for his daughter Ann's hand in marriage; and he made it clear that Ann would suffer great hardships, privations, and dangers in southern India--and that she may even die a violent and premature death. However, he also reminded him of the reward that he would receive if he were to give up his daughter for the sake of the Gospel. He said, "Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with the crown of righteousness, brightened with the acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Saviour from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair?"⁵ Is it too high a cost to give up your own son or daughter for Christ? Christ didn't think so. In fact, He promised that those who give up their own family for the Gospel will gain *new* family!

Read Mark 10:23-31.

Jesus promises that those who part with their loved ones in order to preach the Gospel in distant lands will receive "*brethren*," "*sisters*," "*mothers*," and "*children*." Now, what does this mean? How can you receive another "mother"? Obviously, Jesus isn't talking about biological family members, but *spiritual* family members. Christ Himself once pointed to His followers and said, "***Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.***" Those who leave their loved ones in *this* world in order to preach the Gospel may be assured that their family members will be replaced with *new* "family" members--*spiritual* family members. The best part is that as you proclaim Gospel, and people get saved, your "family" increases. I can honestly say that although I miss my family in the States, the Lord has given me spiritual family members here in Ireland who have become as dear to me as my own family.

What else does Christ promise? Christ also promises "*houses*" and "*lands*." Now, are these not material things? Yes, they are. However, Jesus is not promising great material wealth. This isn't the "name it and claim it" Gospel! How do I know? Because Jesus also promises "*persecutions*." Persecution and material prosperity don't go together! (Paul said that he and his missionary companions were often without any "*certain dwellingplace*.") What Jesus is saying is that if you leave your house and your own land in order to preach the Gospel, God will see to it that you *have* houses where you may lodge and enjoy the family ties of a home, and new lands to call your home. As Christ and the Apostles went out preaching the Gospel, *many* homes were opened to them; and they had sweet fellowship, to boot.

Of course, the greatest promise for those who give their lives to preach the Gospel is that of "*eternal life*" in the "*world to come*"! Yet, even in the "*world to come*," many of our rewards will be direct reflections of our efforts to "send the Light" when we were on earth. For example, one of the five crowns that believers will receive is what we call "the soul-winner's crown." Paul wrote, "***For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.***" Even our resurrected bodies will reveal how faithfully we "sent the Light." Our resurrected bodies will literally shine in glory, in accordance to how much we endeavoured to win souls to the Lord. Jesus said, "***Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father.***" Daniel 12:2 says, "***And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.***"

Conclusion: We who are saved have been given the sure promise that one day we will dwell with the God "***in whom is no darkness at all***," in the city where there is no need of the sun, because the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the Light of it. However, until then, we must live in this dark world; and

⁵ *Ibid.*

God wants us to shine as lights in this world. Christian, will *you* “send the Light”? Will this church resolve to give, and to pray, and to sacrifice, and to do all in our power to “send the Light”? I would also ask: “**Are you saved?** Do you *have* the Light? Has there been a definite time in your life when you came to the Light of the world, Jesus Christ, and asked Him to forgive you of all your sins, and to be your Lord and Saviour?” If not, I urge you to come to Him today! Jesus promised, “***I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life***” (John 8:12).