

## The Greatest Story (Part 32):

The Risk & Reward of Worship

*Daniel*

*Memory Verses: Galatians 2:20*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Though some believe the writing is on the wall, we do not yet live in a country where we are in danger of imprisonment, torture, or death for worshiping Jesus Christ. In fact, it still costs us very little to be a Christian in the United States. We may very well be excluded or ostracized from certain groups or activities because of our beliefs. In addition, we may very well be discriminated against because of our values and the truths we hold dear. Many of us are not allowed to share the Gospel in the workplace for fear of losing our jobs and in the most extreme cases some of us have lost our businesses because we refuse to compromise our faith in God.

But still, these repercussions stand in stark contrast to the cost that has been demanded of our brothers and sisters around the world for centuries. In the time of the Old Testament the prophets were murdered because of their message of repentance. In the New Testament the early believers were killed en masse by Roman leaders such as Nero and Domitian who would march these believers into their coliseums, tie them to poles, and set Lions loose to rip their bodies apart limb from limb. Through the middle ages the Roman Church became the largest persecutor of Christians as it sought to establish it's own brand of religion apart from scripture and would burn at the stake anyone who opposed their heresy. In the 1800's Japan slaughtered, tortured, and killed thousands upon thousands of Christians all but obliterating the religion from their country for 200 years. And, in the 1900's with the rise of Communism thousands of Christians were imprisoned, tortured, killed, or all three by the regimes of China, Russia, and Romania.

I would like to tell you a story about one of those men. His name is Richard Wurmbrand and he wrote dozens of books, but his most famous is called "**Tortured For Christ.**" I would like to tell you his story in his own words as we look at a portion of that **book**. He was a Romanian Christian minister during a time when Communism took over his country in the 40's. Because of Communism's tenant belief in the eradication of all religions, Christianity, which was a large part of the life of most Romanians, was targeted the most heavily. Wurmbrand was told that if he continued to preach a message of salvation in Christ alone, which was in direct conflict to the Romanian authorities, that he would be

imprisoned; which he was... for almost 9 years. During this time he received tortures too horrible to imagine. After his release he immediately began to preach again, sometimes in the city square where everyone could see him. It wasn't long before he went to prison again where he was tortured for another 5 years before being ransomed by Christians who paid \$10,000 for his release.

Today the Center for the Study of Global Christianity estimates that around 100,000 people are tortured, imprisoned, and killed each year around the globe simply because they refuse to denounce Christ as their Lord and Savior. Why? Why do these believers, men like Richard Wurmbrand, continue to preach, worship, and live for Jesus Christ's glory when it costs them so much? And why... why do those of us in a country where we do not live in threat of death or torture or imprisonment chose to be closet Christians, rarely preaching the Gospel to those we fear, often living lives in which no one would see us as any different than the masses who outwardly reject Christ with their lives?

Because it could cost us. That's very true... it could most definitely cost us something. It would most certainly take a measure of risk to live lives of worship after Christ in this world. But isn't it worth the risk? In fact I would contend that there is nothing worth risking more. **The Worship of Christ In This World is Worth Risking Anything & Everything For... Even If It Costs Us Our Lives.** This morning I want you to know that as a believer in Christ, your life is on the line! **Galatians 2:20** says that I have been crucified with Christ and my life is not longer my own. My life is his and I live it according to faith in his direction. When you become a Christian you forfeit you right to live your live however you want. You are his and you were bought with the price of the death of the son of God. So the question that you must answer this morning... the question I must answer is this. Why are we unwilling to risk our lives for the sake of Christ's glory? My prayer is that by the end of this sermon you would be willing to risk it all!

Today we are going to be looking at the Book of Daniel and seeing how Daniel and his friends risked everything for the worship of our God. Go ahead and turn with me and lets read **Daniel Chapter 3 and Chapter 6.**

#### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to recognize is... **The Worth of God Glorified Outweighs The Worth of Our Earthly Lives.** God is ultimately worthy of all worship. If you have been a part of our church for any length of time you've this is not news to you. Our God is worthy. But don't take it from me... let's see the words of the Pagan Kings in this passages we just read. First let's examine the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was the first and most powerful of all of the Kings of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was a blatantly pagan king who worshipped

many foreign gods, but through a couple of encounters God transformed his way mind and the direction of his worship. Following the events of the three Hebrew children in Chapter 3 we see him say this in **Da 3:28-29**; "Bless the Lord." So instead of worshipping foreign gods or having people worship an image of him as King Neb now tells everyone to worship the God of the Hebrews. This is astounding. Why does he feel that our God is now worthy of worship. He continues... he is worthy because he is a deliverer of those who trust him and because No other god can rescue in this way. He has seen God do what only God can do and now there is no reason to not give him the glory that he is due.

This bleeds over into chapter 4 where we again see Neb ascribing glory to our God. Look at **Da 4:2-3** where he declares that our God is: the Most High God, the God of great signs and wonders, the God of an Everlasting Kingdom and Everlasting Dominion. It would appear that Nebuchadnezzar feels that our God is worthy of all praise.

But then Nebuchadnezzar starts to slip a little, as some are prone to do and he decides to once again exalt himself above this one true God. Because of this God has to humble Neb by basically causing him to lose his mind and act like an animal for 7 periods of time. Most theologians believe that this means 7 years. So for 7 years the greatest man on the Earth was made like a beast so that God could show him that he alone is worthy of praise and glory. After this time we see Neb's response in **Da 4:34-37** he says; Blessed the Most High (praised, honored) for he has an Everlasting Dominion and an Everlasting Kingdom. He is Sovereign according to his will and his hand cannot be stopped. This is a God that shouldn't even be questioned. When Neb was restored he once again declared the glory of our God as if He was the only one worthy of any worship.

Next we have the testimony of King Darius who witnessed the deliverance of Daniel from the Lion's den in **Da 6:25-27**. He says that our God is a God to be feared and trembled before. He is the living, everlasting God who delivers, rescues, and saves. He works signs and wonders in heaven and earth. If these pagan kings can be overwhelmed with the worth and glory of our God then shouldn't we?

God is worthy and we are not. In fact we are nothing if not worshipers of this God. Nebuchadnezzar himself testified to this. Go back to **Da 4:35**. Here he says that humans are nothing compared to God and that God does what he wills with the inhabitants of the Earth. And what is that will? This will is for us to bring him Glory. Look again at a verse we have looked at a couple of times this year already. **Isalah 43:7, 21**. We were created for one purpose and one reason only and that was to bring God glory and worship him. So we are literally nothing in the view of eternity if we are not dedicated to the worship of this God.

So is God worth more than our lives? I think that is a given right?

But thats not the question most of us are asking ourselves right now is it? The question is; "is our lives worth one praise to this God?" What I mean is this; "does God need all of my worship or can I, say for the sake of my own life, choose not to worship him one little ole time? Surely God will not hold that against me right? Well, let's weight the weight of our lives verses the glory of God. God is ultimately worthy times infinity right? Next to him we are not worth much if anything at all. If the only thing in our lives that gives us value is to accomplish the purpose of worshipping this God then if you could only worship or praise or bless his name one time... that one time would be worth it right? If you are willing to deny Christ with words or with your life for the sake of the fear of men one time... you will most likely be willing to do it two times, three times, and on and on until it becomes all times. Those willing to deny him once are most likely willing to deny him period. I want you to hear from the words of Jesus himself concerning this issue. We find it in **Matthew 10:33** where he says that if you deny him before men he will deny you before God. The question shouldn't be are you willing to risk your life for the worship of our God. The question should be are you really willing to risk denying him once given what Matthew 10:33 says. So what is the value of your life compared to God. **Your life is only worth the amount of worship you are willing to risk for God**. There can be no doubt that... **The Worship of Christ In This World is Worth Risking Anything & Everything For... Even If It Costs Us Our Lives**.

Next we need to recognize that **God is Worthy Of The Risk Regardless If We Live Or Die**. It should be noted here that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego all knew that God was able to deliver them. And notice this... they didn't know that he would. I guess this is where I struggle the most with the name it and claim it group. Here we don't see these men declaring that God WILL save them, only that the is able to. Where did this faith come from? Well Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were known as men who did not compromise their beliefs in the one true God. They were hebrew captives; young men who had determined to live according to the Law of God regardless of the situation they were in in Babylon. Because of this God blessed them and they all rose to great heights within the Babylonian kingdom. Of course their ranking did not insulate them from persecution and thus the stand they were forced to take in Daniel 3.

Look again at **Da 3:14-18**. They were resolute. "We will not bow down." Why would they not bow down to the gods of Nebuchadnezzar? Because of a few reasons; 1) they are not worthy of worship, 2) our God is jealous and will feel rejected, and 3) they cannot compromise their beliefs for the convenience of their own lives or comfortable living.

Then they declare the worth of their God again. He is able to save us. Why? Because he is the creator of all of earth and the lives on it. He is

the sustainer of those lives. He has determined the days of our lives. If we truly believe these then we must believe that he is able to deliver us from any circumstance. But get this... they were not putting their trust in God to save them in this lifetime. They said boldly: "even if he doesn't we will not worship you." Even if God choose to not save us from earthly persecution and death our lives are not worth denying him. Perhaps some of us feel that we can follow him as long as he delivers us from all persecution. Thats not the way this works. He may decide that he will receive more glory by not delivering you. And we as worshipers of this God must be okay with that. He is able but he might not; and you know what we will still not compromise. We will worship him regardless.

Now, we know that Daniel was delivered from the Lions Den, and we know that the Hebrew Children were delivered from the fiery furnace... but once again... that doesn't mean you and I will be. If God wants us to be delivered for his glory we will worship him here in this life. And if God wants us to die for his glory we will worship him in the life to come. **This side of eternity or the other side of eternity... it doesn't matter; we were made to worship him forever** **The Worship of Christ In This World is Worth Risking Anything & Everything For... Even If It Costs Us Our Lives.**

The last thing we need to recognize is that... **All Risks For The Sake of God's Glory Are Not Risks At All.** Why worry about risking your life when it's no risk at all? What do I mean; of course there is a risk of pain and persecution... but we must put it all in perspective. Is it really a risk if the worst thing that can happen to you is that you die and live in eternal bliss forever in heaven?

Let me put it to you like this. When I was about 14 years old and was spending a couple of weeks with my Father in Denver, me and his next door neighbor, who was my age, challenged our fathers to a game of basketball. We were way too cocky and thought we could beat the old men soundly. We bet 10 dollars on it, which at the time seemed like a lot of money and a huge risk. Well we got our butts beat bad and I'm pretty sure the next door neighbor is still made at me 25 years later. But what if my dad said... here's the deal. If you win we will pay you 10 dollars and if you lose we will take you out for pizza. I mean thats a win no matter if you lose right? Thats not really a risk at all. Now what about this. What if instead of Pizza he said if you win we will give you 10 dollars and if you lose then we will give you a million dollars. You say, Shevi, thats ridiculous. Exactly, thats totally stupid. And yet that's what you are risking by living your life in unashamed worship to God. If you worship him and you are allowed to live without persecution then thats all fine and dandy... but if you worship him and it costs your life you get eternal rewards and bliss forever. Thats not a bad deal... in fact thats the best no

risk deal of all time. It is not a risk at all.

Listen, there may be temporal pain but there is everlasting joy and reward coming. So risk you life every second for the Glory of God. Perhaps you aren't still convinced that living your life in worship to God boldly is worth it. Let's examine the word risk. Here is your lifelong risks of dying. There is a  $1/103$  chance of you dying in a car crash. Are you willing to take that chance. Of course you are willing to risk it. To my knowledge everyone here this morning drove here. Did you know that the odds are  $1/114$  of you dying because of a fall. Let's just go through these...  $1/1,123$  of drowning,  $1/84,079$  of being hit by a bolt of lighting, and  $1/115,111$  of dying from a dog attack. But we risk it right? We still walk even though we could fall and die, we still go outside even though we could get hit by a lightning bolt, we still have dogs even though they could bite us and eat us, and a lot of us still go swimming even though we could drown. Why do we risk it? Because living life is worth the risk. Now if we are willing to take those risks why not risk you life devoted to the worship of Jesus in this life? Do you know the odds of dying from worshipping Christ in America?  $1/0$ . Thats a 0 percent chance. But what about outside of America. In your lifetime if you lived in another part of the world you would run the risk of a 0.096% of dying for your faith... even if you were extremely bold about Jesus. Thats less than on tenth of one percent. It's basically 0. Of course some places that percentage probably goes way up but you get my point. But here's the only statistic that matters; 100% of people who know Jesus and live their lives for him will die and go to and eternal reward. It's not even a risk man! **We take risks everyday. Make your risks mean something more... Risk everything for the worship of Jesus Christ.** **The Worship of Christ In This World is Worth Risking Anything & Everything For... Even If It Costs Us Our Lives.**

### Application (Resolution, You)

So how do we process this? Listen, It's all about a transformed mind to see a new perspective. What if you could fathom the worth of our God? What if you could fathom the reward of Heaven? What if we adequately understood our purpose on this Earth? And what if we knew how short and inconsequential our lives truly were apart from God? If we knew all of that then it would lead us to believe one thing... **The Worship of Christ In This World is Worth Risking Anything & Everything For... Even If It Costs Us Our Lives.**

So... this morning if you aren't there yet, if you aren't convinced that living every moment unashamed for the glory of Jesus is worth the possible risk then I implore you to do this... pray that your mind would be transformed. Pray, that God would cause you to be bold; that you would live your lives boldly for the worship of our God holding nothing back and rejecting a fear in what men can do to you.

## Conclusion

When I think of risking it all for God I think of Jesus. Jesus risked the pain of this world versus the glory of the salvation of God. In a sense he risked it all for you. This morning would you be willing to risk it all for him?

After all the torture in prison you might expect Richard Wurmbrand to say... forget this Christian stuff... it isn't worth it. But here's what he said he learned; **"A faith that can be destroyed by suffering is not faith" "A man really believes not what he recites in his creed, but only the things he is ready to die for."** **The Worship of Christ In This World is Worth Risking Anything & Everything For... Even If It Costs Us Our Lives.**