

HELP FOR REFUGEES, INC.

A tax-exempt, non-profit corporation

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We help orphans and elderly Christians (many in their 80s, even 90s) who had been imprisoned for their faith in present or former communist countries



November 2019

"Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, (a well) and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?"

(Luke 14:5)

Late Reverend Richard Wurmbbrand spent 14 years in Romanian communist prisons. Mrs. Wurmbbrand was imprisoned for nearly three years, also for her Christian faith in some of the same communist prisons.

From an unpublished Bible meditation by late Reverend Richard Wurmbbrand

God Demands Urgency!

The Orthodox Jews of Jesus' time were extremely reluctant to allow any work be done on what they used to consider the seventh day of the week. The Sabbath was a day for worshiping in the temple. At first glance, many words of Jesus seem to us childishly simple to understand, and we marvel why His contemporaries had difficulty with their meaning. Jesus healed several sick people on the Sabbath and, as if this were not enough to upset the religious authorities, He even commanded one of them to carry his own bed during the Sabbath day. While those around Him may have wondered why healing could not be postponed, these people had been sick for years, Jesus treated the afflicted as total emergencies. He illustrated the same urgency on other occasions, as well. When the Jews were upset that His disciples ate with unwashed hands, when they plucked ears of corn on the Sabbath day, Jesus compared their action to King David's who when fleeing in great haste from Saul's wrath, ate of the consecrated temple bread. (Matthew 12:3) The same theme is used in the parable of the ten virgins. If we look superficially, like the Jews of Jesus' time, we too will fail perceive the urgency. Why not postpone by one day the healing of a condition that existed for many years, or the carrying of one's bed? Why not take the little time needed to properly organize a meal after one has washed hands? What could this hurry mean? What is its spiritual lesson?

The falling of an ox into a well, was indeed a dire emergency that would not have allowed its owner to have an easy day. In fact, it might have wrecked more than the Sabbath, and perhaps his whole livelihood. A drowned ox was a big loss, for it was the animal used to pull the plow and thus obtain a crop of wheat to feed the family. If the ox had not drowned, imagine the disturbance created by the bellowing of the desperate animal. How could the owner tried to pray or rest? The donkey was used for transportation and for carrying loads. Its falling into a well must have been, in those times, a bigger disaster than wrecking a car nowadays. Also, how long could a family survive without water? Thus, the situation could not be ignored or postponed. There is no step by step procedure on how to hoist an ox out of a well, yet great skill is needed. The animal could not be made to climb or back out of the well. Known tricks to entice the animal with food or beating it, any threats would be useless. The one suffering the loss would try all orthodox and unorthodox methods, use all approved and unapproved, pleasant and unpleasant means, in order to get his animal out, in whatever shape. There is no indication as to how much time or financial and emotional effort the task would take. No expense would be spared for the situation would be desperate and the only wish would be for mercy. The owner would work frantically against time and most likely alone, for the place is narrow. Such a disaster occurs suddenly. A small slip and the damage is done. It is necessary to consider all these angles in order to grasp what Jesus tried to reveal; how dependent we are on God's help and mercy. A man who had been totally paralyzed for 38 years had not the remotest chance of jumping into the pool, for divine healing. Yet suddenly, because Jesus intervened, he was walking, even carrying his bed. (John 5:4) This unheard-of event was interfering with religious practices that demanded total rest. Christ's contemporaries, in their religious fervor, were performing their routines, while many a cripple attended the Sabbath temple service. Such suffering did not disturb them. Under the 'Pretense of keeping the Sabbath' the contemporaries of CHRIST were unwittingly denying the sick unique opportunities to be healed and praise God for such miracles. Jesus reproached the Pharisees for not entering the Kingdom of Heaven themselves and as well preventing the entrance of others. This is why the Lord Jesus told His generation that there is no time to rest so long as everyone of us, so to speak, has his ox down the well. Are we better than the Jews of old in perceiving the urgency of the situation and changing our set routines? Like the Jews of old we need the reminder of Jesus to understand that love for our brother has a worth without measure, a worth that transcends all petty concepts which relax our alertness. Apostle Paul, interpreting an Old Testament verse regarding oxen asks, "Doth God take care of oxen?" (I Cor. 9:9), and appropriately reinterprets it spiritually. Those who are spiritually alert will figure out that "the falling of an ox into a well" is not a Jewish problem of 2,000 years ago, rather confronts us unceasingly. The very moment we open our eyes, forms confuse our sight, sounds enchant our ears. Selfishness occupies our narrow views. Jesus told His contemporaries that there is no day of rest so long as suffering exists, since it can spoil such rest. Let us not just seek Christ and take advantage of the salvation He freely grants us. Let us also see Him in our suffering brethren. Unless we consider any suffering as an urgent predicament, we have not even started to fathom what religion is all about, as Jesus so graphically illustrated.



The Communist Jilava Prison.
Entrance to the underground cells.



Prison cell with bunk-beds with no mattress, prisoners were obliged to sleep on. Stove for show only,



Mug-shot of Late Reverend Richard Wurmbrand when held in the Jilava prison,

never heated in cold winters.

in communist Romania.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father are this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (Apostle James Epistle 1:27)

Some pictures of Christians Imprisoned for the Faith, Helped with your Gifts!
Read their testimonies in our past newsletters at <http://helpforrefugees.com> (third column!)



**Baptist Minister
Zaharia Oselsky**

was imprisoned 4 years in the former Soviet Union and subjected to the tortures of a harsh climate at the border of Mongolia. Read his testimony in the 11/2016 Newsletter.



**Baptist Minister
Mikhail Horev
(deceased)**

suffered 12½ years of communist prison in the former Soviet Union. He was in hiding 7 years, leading the underground church. Read his wife's testimony in the 11/2016 Newsletter.



**Baptist youth minister
Baklajansky Vladimir**

Was imprisoned 2½ years for his underground Christian activity in the former Soviet Union. Read his testimony in the 11/2016 Newsletter.



Pastor John Clipa

Was a Gospel Believing Minister and noted Bible Smuggler in communist Romania. He was tortured and killed by the Romanian communist secret police. Read his son's and wife's testimonies in the 11/2016 and 6/2017 Newsletters.

To All Donors: A Few Messages of Thanks Received Past Month,



“I thank you from my heart for your care, for your sacrifice, for your help, for your kindness. May God bless you fully with His heavenly blessings.”

From sister Dudenkova Natalia – She was sentenced to 3 years of communist prison for reprinting and distributing surreptitiously the New Testament in the Moldavian language. Read her testimony in the 4/2017



“Thank you very much for your support! May God bless you in the service you and all of your team do. The joy of salvation is in our hearts. We are waiting for Christ!”

From Kruchinina Ludmila – Husband was sentenced to 6 years of communist prison for conducting home church services. Read her husband Nikolai's testimony in the 9/2019 Newsletter. *



“Thank you very much for your sacrifice, your work and your support! Full blessings from our heavenly Lord!”

From Pastor Vladimir Ratikov – He was sentenced to 3 years of communist prison (at the border of Mongolia) for conducting Sunday Schools. Read his testimony in the 2/2018 Newsletter. *



“Peace to you! Sincere thanks and gratitude for your work in the field of the Lord! May God bless you fully!”

From Turkevich Vasile – He was sentenced to 3 years of communist prison for Christian youth activities. Read his testimony in this 11/2019 Newsletter. *

*Read these Testimonies in our past newsletters at <http://helpforrefugees.com> (third column!)

Christians Helped with Your Gifts

Two and a Half Years Communist Imprisonment for Conducting Sunday School



Wall-sign reads: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" From Joshua 24:15

"Peace to you, dear brethren and sisters! My name is Pavlenco Alexandru Ivanovich. I am the father of 10 children.

Throughout the Soviet Union, meetings of believers in unregistered churches were subjected to constant harassment, dismissal, fines and arrests. Since 1982, I have served in the church as an evangelist. At that time, the Church was constantly subjected to persecution and oppression. At that time, being a servant in the church meant being a candidate to chains, such as myself. After many fines and "searches" by the Soviet Secret Police, the KGB, I was called into the prosecutor's office and arrested on the spot. On March 21, 1984, in the city of Cherkasy (previously in the Soviet Union, now in Ukraine) I was arrested and interrogated. Although the court supposed to be open to the public, it was held behind closed doors, within one of the factories of the city of Cherkasy. Many faithful brethren and sisters could not reach it and those who came were not permitted entrance. They accused me of preaching the gospel, conducting divine services, and meeting with believers while children were present. These Christian activities, like Sunday schools, were forbidden under the communist Soviet code. The court delivered the verdict and I was sentenced to 2.5 years of prison under article 178-

3 of the Soviet Penal Code, a sentence that could be extended (at the whim of the communist authorities.) I served the sentence in colony 77 in a labor camp of general regime in the city of Berdyansk (Ukraine.) The prisoners in these camps, did not have the opportunity to hear the living Word of God, but our presence as Christians was a living ray of hope for the people who do not know God.

I want to confess that in every trial I saw God's help and His hand. God was with me in every moment. Throughout this time, I have experienced the blessing of God and I can say with Psalm 16:6, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

Three Years of Communist Jail for Spreading the Gospel



Nagornai Anatolii Konstantinovich (born 1956) writes: "I was arrested on April 20, 1982 in Zaporozhye city (formerly in the Soviet Union, now in Ukraine) and was sentenced to 3 years of prison. I was sentenced to prison because I was distributing the surreptitiously printed Christian literature of the "Khrestianin" (The Christian Publisher which issued an underground Baptist magazine forbidden under communist laws. It regularly featured pictures and information on Christians imprisoned for the faith. N. Ed.) At that time, many brethren and sisters were imprisoned in the prison-camps of

the Soviet Union. In this way I met brethren in the Lord like Kharkovii Pavel, Antonov Pavel, Chepetz Ivan Filatovich, Chiovgan Fedor Kuzmich, Timchuk Vladimir.

Before I was arrested and afterwards, our church was subjected continuously to harassment, numerous fines, many arrests and convictions of our brethren. In order to carry on the divine services, the members of the church were obliged to assemble in open fields, in the surrounding forests, etc. constantly changing meeting times (so as not to end up arrested by the Soviet Secret Police, the KGB.)

I was released from prison on April 20, 1985. Then my friends from Zaporozhye came to meet me, but the KGB and the labor-camp administration decided to take me by bus away from that prison, so that my meeting with my brethren would not take place close to the prison. My brethren and friends were thus forced to travel by bus 25 miles away from the prison to meet me."

Disadvantaged Children Helped with Your Gifts Student at the Richard Wurmbrand Christian College (High School) In Iasi, Romania, now British Policeman



Daniel Prisacaru, former Richard Wurmbrand College student, is being welcomed into the United Kingdom Hertfordshire Police Department.



Daniel Prisacaru's Family

→ The academic part and all the other activities contributed in shaping my character and in making me who I am today. Back then, the school was at the very beginning and there were a lot of challenges, but we were children and did not know, nor care. Our teachers did a great job of filtering the bad and planting in us seeds of grace, love and truth.

Daniel wrote to Michael Wurmbrand: “It was quite the unexpected surprise to hear that you wanted to know something about the students that have attended the school named after your father, and that I have been asked to write a few words.

My name is Ionut Daniel Prisecaru and I started as a student at the Richard Wurmbrand High School in 1995. I was part of the first generation that started the school and graduated in 2003. I have to say that has always given me a sense of pride because we laid the foundations of the school that everyone in Iasi, and in all Romania, knows of or has heard of. I remember hearing first time about the opening of a new Christian school in Iasi which needed students to fill two classes. I was at First Pentecostal Church in Iasi with my family when someone gave a short talk about the opening of the Richard Wurmbrand College. I do not remember exactly who it was... What I remember is that my mother wanted me to attend after she heard the speech. **My mother knew she would not be able to afford the tuition, but by God's grace, I know somebody paid for me. I was just a young boy back then and did not realize it at the time, but now, looking back, I understand the immense price somebody else paid for my education and development. We were poor as a family and there were many unmet needs.** I remember the math classes with Mrs. Romaniuc* which we all dreaded at that time but were thankful-for afterwards. →

* After the fall of communism, Baptist sister Ileana Romaniuc, a math teacher and school inspector, was the founder of the Richard Wurmbrand College. While Romania was under communism, Mrs. Romaniuc was moved by reading smuggled-in copies of pastor Richard Wurmbrand's books circulated in greatest secrecy inside the communist country.

Throughout the years I had a great relationship with the school and tried to be involved as much as possible in helping the school in its development. Some of my colleagues and their parents and I were part of the team that helped with the expansion of the school when we prepared the move to the site at Tehnoton High School, where I believe you have visited as well whilst I was still a student there, if I remember correctly. Other places, other challenges to face, but all those are sweet memories. What I remember the most is the atmosphere and the pleasure to go to school.

After graduating from the Richard Wurmbrand High School, I moved to the United Kingdom, where I still live currently. I am a Police Officer with the Hertfordshire Constabulary. It is not a job that is for everyone and requires strong will, conversational skills, and good morals which I believe were instilled in me by the teachers and mentors at Richard Wurmbrand High School, as well as by my family.

I have now been married for ten years and have three beautiful daughters. I have sent a couple of photos of my family.”

The Richard Wurmbrand College in Iasi, Romania is an accredited Christian school (kindergarten-12th grade high school) with over 560 students. School Principal Cristian Lucaci PhD and wife Rebeca, school-teacher for English.



Christians Helped with Your Gifts



Baptist brother Vasile Turkevich writes:

“Greetings in the love of Christ! I greet you with the words of Christ "Peace be with you"!

I, Vasile Tarasovici Turkevich, was arrested on February 21, 1982, during the divine service and with me were arrested three more brethren. Being interrogated for 4 months, I was often visited by KGB agents who asked me to give up my faith in God or become an undercover informer-agent. To all their proposals I replied that I do not want to deceive God and I am ready to suffer for my faith.

On May 10, 1982 I was tried and the verdict was “sentenced to 3 years of prison.” This term I had to spend it in a common communist prison-camp in the **Vinnytsia region** (formerly part of the Soviet Union, now in Ukraine. N. Ed.) Life in prison is not the same as life in freedom. Even though I was not married at the time, nor had a family, I endured many hardships. I also received many blessings. Many times, I have heard the prayers of God's people, who together prayed for the unwavering faith of the Church.

At present I am 61 years old and have a family, children, grandchildren, and we all serve the Lord for His glory. At this moment I am going through a difficult period of my life. On March 19 of this year while working, I fell off the roof of a house and I was traumatized with spinal fractures. Now I am in the hospital and I do not know if my condition will improve, but I believe that God will help me in all because He is Almighty. Doctors say that now, I have to plan a long-term treatment. Throughout my life I have never asked for financial help, but now I have to ask not from strangers but from my brethren in faith. * If you have this opportunity to help me then God bless you in this.

With love, your brother Vasile Turkevich

* Help for Refugees sent US\$800.00 help

Christians Helped with Your Gifts

409	Власенко	Валентин	Мефодьевич	1958	Украина
410	Вольф	Андрей	Корнеевич	1958	Казахстан
411	Куркин	АЛЕКСЕЙ	ЯКОВЛЕВИЧ	1958	Россия
412	Левин	НИКОЛАЙ	ВИКТОРОВИЧ	1958	Казахстан
413	Романов	Владимир	Николаевич	1958	Украина
414	Тиссен	Давид	Давидович	1958	Россия
415	ТУРКЕВИЧ	Василий	Тарасович	1959	Украина
416	Бичков	Степан	Павлович	1959	Украина
417	ДРИСВЯННИКОВ	АЛЕКСАНДР	АЛЕКСАНДРОВИЧ	1959	Россия
418	СКВОРЦОВА	ЛЮБОВЬ	НИКОЛАЙВНА	1959	Россия
419	Варовин	Виталий	Федотович	1959	Россия
420	Дубицкий	СЕРГЕЙ	АДАМОВИЧ	1959	Россия
421	Лашенко	Борис	Владимирович	1959	Украина
422	Татченко	ИВАН	ИВАНОВИЧ	1959	Казахстан
423	МАРЧЕНКО	Станислав	Павлович	1960	Украина
424	Донченко	Александр	Максимович	1960	Украина
425	Смаков	Венедикт	Александрович (Валерианов)	1960	Узбекистан
426	Савченко	Михаил	Михайлович	1960	Эстония
427	Федеева (ШВЕЦОВА)	ДИНА	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1961	Австрия
428	ШВЕЦОВА	АННА	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1962	Австрия
429	Богородице	Александр	Валериевич	1962	Эстония
430	Миников	Павел	Дмитриевич	1962	Эстония

Above, a sample only of a long list, our mission was able to compile beside other lists, of over 480 elderly Baptist Christians still alive, who suffered for the Christian faith in the former Soviet Union. The prison sentences amounted from 2 years, to as many as 18 years of communist prison. If considered together, their years of prison-sentences shown in our abbreviated table, would most likely add up to over 2,000 years of prison. The 4th and 5th column together, show year of birth and the most recent country they live in (like Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, etc.) We try obtain exact addresses, so we may be able to send encouraging help to those still alive. We were able to send help to about 120 such elderly Russian-speaking Christians and over 110 of other languages. Many of their testimonies you can read in the monthly newsletter. Testimonies available also on the internet at:

<http://helpforrefugees.com> (3rd column.)

Help for Refugees, Inc. PO Box 5161, Torrance, Ca. 90510, USA. Email: hfr@helpforrefugees.com, website: http://helpforrefugees.com (EIN: 95-3064521) is listed in Publication 78, Cumulative List of Nonprofit Organizations described in Section 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Service. Gifts to Help for Refugees are US tax-deductible.