

Red Lights and Buckets of Urine

We had received many opportunities to evangelize in other cities throughout Germany. We felt that if the tent would not be effective there we would try another method, and left full of zeal aboard our Scania Cruiser for Nuremberg.

A small church let us use their building to live in. There was a small kitchen in the back. During the day we conducted street meetings on the great walking street, and invited people to the church for special meetings every night. There was a little problem though; the pastor took me aside and informed me that he had to leave for the entire week we would be there. "I will hand the church over to you, and you do as the Holy Spirit directs." Oh boy! I had never had a church before.

The first meeting was a get-to-know-you affair. Everybody was older than we were, but full of life. Most of them had lived through the war. And even though there were only about twenty people, there was a beautiful Spirit in the meeting. I felt like I had inherited a church of grandma's and grandpas.

There was this very "on fire" brother named Bruno. He had been with the SS during the war... he showed me the tattoo. He had marched with the one hundred thousand storm troopers that invaded Russia; and he was one of only a thousand who returned. He choked up just talking about it. Bruno had gotten saved in his later years, and truly was *on fire* for the Lord. He was the first to go with us on the streets to evangelize.

It was in this time that I met a hippie named George. He had just gotten saved and followed us back to the church. George joined our ministry and later become one of our leaders, and went with a team to Afghanistan. After eighteen years he was captured by the Taliban, but was marvelously saved from harm. He is still there today with a team, preaching the gospel to the Afghan people.

In the church service I preached from the book *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, by Jonathan Edwards. Afterwards I felt I should gear down my next sermon a little, as I had scared a few, and at their' age a message like that was not advisable.

My next message was about going out and preaching the gospel. I explained that, to make this message more real, after the meeting we would all go to "The Wall" to witness. This was the red light district where prostitutes would sit on display behind shop front windows and sell themselves. Men would come and stand in front of the windows and choose their girl. It was like the *Cash and Carry* of human beings. There were small rooms inside with a bed, and when a customer entered they would just pull the curtain shut and do their business. We actually had a sister in our ministry who had come from one of these areas, and her testimony revealed the terrible evil and sadness of such a life.

Being there you could feel how deeply God loved and had mercy on these people. At first everybody seemed scared at the prospect of entering the area, but everyone got into the bus anyway. I must say they seemed more than just a little scared... they had never even seen this place before.

That evening we passed out tracts and talked to the girls. They came out and took our tracts. It was like church right there on the streets. We prayed for a number of people. The next day a young man who had repented came to the church. The brethren were full of joy, as this had been the first convert in many years. They next night they were ready to go. I saw these older sisters weeping and pouring out their hearts to these young men and women. We cranked up a street meeting and Bruno fired off a gospel message, and we prayed for more people. The next night they didn't want to hear me preach in the church at all, they just wanted to get back to the wall!

But this evening was different. The girls said that the pimps were going to hurt us. I felt worried for the older brethren and decided we would leave, but they would have nothing of it. They hit the area like gangbusters! There were some threats, but we still cranked up another street meeting. Some of the antagonists turned a strong water hose on us, aiming it at our mouths. But that couldn't stop Bruno. Then they got serious, and started throwing buckets of urine on us. My wife got an entire bucketful on her head, and they left the bucket right there. Then it became more violent. I got punched to the ground. The older brethren stepped forward to shield us. They dared the pimps to come out and get some of us... and they took up the offer! But it amounted mostly to a lot of yelling, and throwing some of us down, but there were no major injuries.

"Tomorrow night is death night," they said. Still, we were able to pray for some people, and more followed us to the church. That night we all sang and felt like we were real soldiers of the cross. The next night I knew it was going to be bad, but everybody was so pumped up that there was nothing to do but go.

As we arrived there was a group of policeman lined up with Billy clubs, blocking both entrances to the zone. "Any one who passes will be arrested," they said, "and those who resist will be dealt with." The older brethren tried to break the line and gave themselves to be arrested. The police chief took me aside and said that they had gotten word that the pimps were going to kill us, and also that we were interfering with "legitimate business." He also informed me that in just four nights we had almost shut down business in the entire zone!

The next day the pastor arrived and, upon hearing all this news, was very upset. I thought he would be happy as we had a real revival on our hands. He came to me saying, "What if someone had gotten killed? Or arrested? It will take me months to get everybody back to normal. What kind of testimony is this?" It was visibly clear that most of the brethren there didn't have long to live anyway. I guess he just wanted them to go peacefully. We had no choice but to leave right away, but not before shedding many tears, as we kissed our grandpa's and grandma's in the Lord goodbye. Bruno wanted to go with us but he suffered from a serious intestinal problem he had received as a youth carrying this big Nazi flag in Hitler's parades. Leaving, we felt we would never see them again... and for sure the pastor never wanted to see us again.

Chapter 15

Strange Lessons

When we got to Dusseldorf, the host church put us up in an abandoned building. It was just like home... if you had grown up in an abandoned warehouse. We quickly hit the streets again, but didn't see any of the brethren. In one of the street meetings a man who was reviling God and us as we preached, fell out right in front of us. Within minutes an ambulance came and hauled him off, and we were told later that he had died. People seemed more attentive after that.

When the pastor came we were impressed that he was so young, and he showed a lot of love. It was good because after a few days in this abandoned warehouse we were starting to feel a little lonely. We shared a bit during the Sunday service and were told they had a good offering for us.

I proceeded up the stairs to the office. The pastor's wife was at the typewriter making the check. It was evident that she was very pregnant. I was just trying to act spiritual and said, "Praise God! Jesus is coming back soon." She stopped typing and said, "I don't want Him to come back!"

I didn't know how to respond. I could see she was visibly upset. Here I am trying to be spiritual and end up offending the pastor's wife as she is preparing our offering... what luck. She went on to say that she wanted to see her new baby; to which I quickly replied, "Amen sister!"

"I want to see my baby grow up. I want to care for him and send him to school. I want to see him go to college." I didn't say a word, but I was thinking, "This woman is really backslid." She handed me the check and I was down those stairs in a moment. The team was waiting in the bus, and with a "Praise the Lord!" we were off.

As we went down the road I felt a voice inside me say, "At least she's honest." This kept coming back to my heart, over and over. Then some other words... "Do you really want me to come back now?" I felt convicted as the scriptural admonition to "love not the world, nor the things in the world" came to my mind. I knew I had a lot of love left for things that I shouldn't have. I asked for mercy and thanked God for that truthful sister.

Bad Breath Dog

Later we went on to Langenfeld, and to Hanover. Then we went on to Braunschweig, one of our greatest times in Germany. We all stayed in homes of the brethren. I stayed in a beautiful country home owned by a certain brother Lothar, and he showed us great hospitality. I really got to know German people in a new way. The love and hospitality was overwhelming. Lothar had three young children, a son and two daughters. He had a ministry for drug addicts in the countryside. They also had a dog named Molly.

Molly was a huge something'r'other, solid black, with a head that seemed even bigger than his huge body. I could see they loved that dog. I have never been a real animal lover myself. I support them (at most) when they are in their own environment. This dog lived inside the house and, for some reason, fell in love with... of all people... me. He followed me wherever I went, and slobbered on me at every opportunity. When I would enter the house he would jump up on me and have a fit. The family would say, "Look Molly loves you!" To which I would put on my hypocrite smiling face and say, "Oh yes,

how nice!” But when no one was looking I would talk mean to him and threaten him. He didn’t seem to care, and would just look back at me with these big eyes full of love. I felt that maybe he needed a girl dog.

At night Molly would come into my bedroom where we had our mattresses on the floor. Many times I would wake up smelling something foul. Often I would awake and find Molly sleeping near me, with his head right next to mine, mouth wide-open, breathing right into my face. All I could do was pray.

For breakfast Lothar and his wife would fix these dynamite German meals of cheeses, different cuts of meat, crescent rolls, and delicious jams. I felt like a king. Molly would go under the table and put his head on my lap while I was eating, and just look up at me. At times he even seemed to smile. Finally he got my heart, and I would feed him my sausage. His big tail would hit the top of the table and everyone would laugh... except me. I felt in myself that I had done something good. That I was dying to myself through Molly. But in prayer the Lord convicted me and touched my heart. He impressed upon me that he wasn’t like Molly, and would not be satisfied with me throwing a piece of meat to Him at my own discretion. That I should not to feel so good over some little act of piety that cost me nothing at all. I looked at Molly in a different way after that.

Dear Brother Carl

We used a coffee shop for our evangelism. After our street meetings we would bring people in for coffee and ministry. We had meetings every night and a special “spaghetti night” too. Young and old would attend. The leadership of what is now one of the most moving churches in Germany got saved in those meetings.

Carl was an older man who owned a local Mercedes dealership. He was soft spoken and came from a well-known family. Some time later he came to visit us in Italy. It was one of those situations where you really get to know and love a person. Carl had a heart for the Lord. God had forgiven him of much. He never talked about his old life but he was separated from his wife, and since his conversion he longed to be back with her. As the years passed we always stayed in touch with each other. Every year for four years I took a group there to work with the church, and Carl was always full of zeal for the Lord. He eventually became an elder, but his wife wouldn’t have anything to do with him or his faith.

Then one day I received a message that Carl had cancer. Upon visiting him you could see the damage it had done. He had no hair because of the chemo, and he looked twenty years older. But I saw a real joy in his face as he shared with me.

“My wife has come back, and she loves me!” I was astounded, and rejoiced in the Lord. He then told me that I would not see him again until we were in heaven. It was hard to say good-bye. My heart ached, but I felt that if I never accomplish anything else for the Lord, Carl alone made my life to be “not in vain.”