

FAITH BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

BY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	i
Foreword	iii
Chapter 1 - Go Preach the Gospel	1
Chapter 2 - Growing Up in East Germany	7
Chapter 3 - Born Again and Spirit-Filled	11
Chapter 4 - Life in East Germany	31
Chapter 5 - God is a Provider	55
Chapter 6 -Living Word Church	73
Chapter 7 - The Wall Falls Down	101
Chapter 8 - Healing Testimonies	121
Chapter 9 - God of Recompense	135

Chapter 1

GO PREACH THE GOSPEL

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

HEBREWS 11:6 NKJV

“There are many big mountains around Germany, but you can overcome them all by faith.” What a powerful statement! Dr. Lester Sumrall spoke these words to me during his last trip to Germany, and it was like a prophecy to me. We were sitting in the small airport in our town as Dr. Sumrall was waiting to board the plane. In those last few moments, Dr. Sumrall opened his briefcase and took out a small world map. As he showed it to me he said, “I’ve preached in almost 120 nations and I did it all by faith.” Then he said, “I wish the world were a little bit bigger, but it’s so small.” He went on to say, “This is my last time here in Germany. Go and preach the Gospel. That’s what God has called you to do.” When he said this to me, tears began streaming down my face; and then he headed through the secure area to the plane. He turned around to look at me, waved his hand, and that was the last time I saw Dr. Sumrall alive.

Brother Sumrall was like a spiritual father to me. I frequently traveled to his camp meetings and conferences in the United States, and when he was in Germany I also traveled to attend his meetings. On one occasion he said something funny to me. “When you come to the United States, don’t teach. We have the finest teachers in the world, we don’t need you. They teach better than you.”

There was a pause and I thought, *Oh, Brother Sumrall, why are you saying that? Thank you—that’s really encouraging.*

But he didn’t stop with that. “When you come to the United States,” he continued, “share a little Bible verse, and then tell your stories. That’s what we need, and people will be saved.”

And so I never tried to teach when I was asked to speak in America. I would read a little Bible verse and then tell my stories. Usually in Pentecostal churches or in Word of Faith churches in America, the regular church services can get loud and people are sometimes wild—there’s real life in these services. But when I spoke to those congregations it was quiet most of the time, and I became unsure of myself. I wondered, *Why are they so quiet?* And then after a while I would see people crying, and when I gave the altar call people would come to the front and be saved. Brother Sumrall was right. My stories encouraged people and there were many salvations.

“BUDDY, YOU’RE FLYING TOO LOW”

When I began traveling to the United States, I would fly in and then rent a car. Occasionally I would travel from Los Angeles International Airport to San Diego at night, and I would drive

very fast. At that time I didn't realize there were regulations on American freeways. We don't usually have a speed limit on the autobahn—the name for our freeway in Germany. There's only a speed limit on “turns or construction zones”—where there are some regulations and you have to slow down. I would leave Los Angeles Airport and often I would drive about 100–120 miles per hour. In California, people drive fast and sometimes a little bit crazy, but for me that was normal, and I never thought it could be wrong.

One day I was driving from a little town in southern California up to Los Angeles. My wife and daughter and another couple were in the car, and I was driving 90–95 miles per hour. It was a beautiful, sunny day. I was heading for Disneyland and I was in the left lane. In Germany only the fast cars are in the left lane—the speeding cars. If you're not speeding or going fast, you have to drive in the middle lane or in the right lane. In Germany the right lane is for trucks, the middle lane is for slower cars, and the left lane is for speeding cars.

I was in the left lane and it was fairly crowded. And then I saw a highway patrolman right behind me with his lights on, and I thought, *Oh, maybe he's in a hurry because he's after a criminal.* I'd seen a lot of American movies and the police were always after criminals, and I thought, *I'd better give him some space.* So I put my blinker on and merged to the middle lane to give him his space.

The patrolman followed me into the middle lane, and I looked in the mirror and saw his face. He looked really mean—he didn't look good at all. I thought, *Something's wrong here,* so I rolled my window down, and I gave him a sign with my hand which said, “Go over, man, go over!”

He began to pull over and he gave me a sign. “Pull over here!”

Traffic was heavy and I made my way to the right shoulder and stopped the car. I realized that something was wrong. The policeman stopped right behind me. When you are pulled over by the police in East Germany you have to get out of your car. We don't have weapons in Germany, and it's very disrespectful if you sit in your car and wait for the cop to come to you. So I got out of my car, and actually I was a little angry because it was a dangerous situation. I ran toward his car, shouting at him. “Why are you stopping me?” There I was, yelling at an American policeman and saying, “Are you crazy? What are you doing?”

The cop got out of his car, took out his revolver and shouted at me. “Get in your car!”

The moment I saw his revolver I thought, *Man, something is really wrong here*. I jumped into my car and I said to my wife, “Angela, please pray in tongues. Something is wrong here. I don't know what it is.”

He approached the car and I opened the window and there was no, “Good morning.” He only said, “Driver's license!”

In that moment I realized I didn't have my driver's license. All I had was my photo ID and my passport. Then I remembered that I had my pilot's license to fly small aircraft. The first page of the pilot's license was in German, and I didn't realize that the second page was in English. I gave him my pilot's license—it was the only license I had with me, and I thought it would probably work for him. He took my documents to his car and checked his

computer. When he came back he was a little friendlier. There was a little smile on his face, and he said, “Are you from Germany?”

I said, “Yes, sir.”

“Do you know why I stopped you?”

“No,” I said. “What is the reason? Did I do something wrong here?”

For me he was the coolest cop I had ever met in America. He handed me my pilot’s license and said, “Buddy, you fly too low here,” and he was laughing.

“What do you mean?” I said. “Is there a speed limit here?”

“Yes. Seventy miles per hour.”

“How fast was I going?” I asked.

“It was 95.”

“Sir, that is slow,” I said. “I can walk that.”

“Yeah,” he replied. “But in California it’s a crime.”

I found out later that he actually had the right to put me in jail for going more than 20 miles per hour over the speed limit. In that moment I said, “Sir, I didn’t know that. I’m sorry.”

And he said, “I have some relatives in France and I know they drive crazy. I’ll do you a favor. I’ll put you down to 85.” And 85 meant he was not willing to arrest me.

In Eastern Europe many of the cops were corrupt, so I said, “Sir, is there anything I can do for you, so you would put me down to 70?”

His face changed. “Hey, never ask a policeman in America a question like that!”

I didn’t realize I had violated all the rules—I was driving too fast, I was jumping out of the car, I was yelling at the cop, and then I tried to make him break the law. After all of this he said, “You know what? Get in your car, go your way, slow down, and never, ever, ask a policeman in America to violate the law and become a corrupt cop.”

When I speak in America, I often use this little story as an introduction to my messages. People like the story because it’s so unusual, and quite funny to them. In Germany we say, “Free speed for free people,” and when I came to California I thought it was the same for America. The thing was, I didn’t know the law. The law is there and the law will work for you or against you, even if you don’t know the law. In every country there are different laws, and we need to understand those laws. But we also need to understand the laws of faith, and the spiritual laws in the Bible. If you don’t know the Bible, the laws of prosperity, good health, or any other spiritual law can work for you, but it can also work against you. So if you have a chance and you are part of a church, go to a Bible study, go to a Bible school, and learn the laws of faith. Learn something about the Bible, because in Hosea 4:6 it says, “My people perish (or die) because of a lack of understanding (knowledge).”