

Real Life Stories
Christian Missionary details his time in Sudanese Prison
Sharing a cell with ISIS members

VIENNA, VA. — Czech missionary Petr Jasek shared Saturday how God spared him from waterboard torture at the hands of Islamic State extremists and eventually used him to lead fellow inmates to Christ during his 14-month imprisonment in Sudan.

For the first time since he was released from a Sudanese prison last year (2017), the Africa regional director for Voice of the Martyrs detailed the horrifying story of his detainment at one of the mission organization's all-day conferences in the United States.

Jasek was among a handful of Christians who shared their testimonies before hundreds gathered at the McLean Bible Church in Vienna, Virginia for the VOM Advance Conference.



Jasek told the audience that he is "living proof that our Lord answers our prayers."

Jasek was accused of espionage and treason by the government when he traveled to Sudan in December 2015 to document persecution faced by Christians in the nation.

Although Jasek originally planned to be in Sudan for just four days, he wound up being imprisoned for 445 days before his release in 2017. During that time, Jasek was placed in five different prisons.

Jasek recalled the first couple months in prison when he was placed in a cell with members of the Islamic State. "Immediately, they found out about me that I was a Christian. They started to gradually tease me in very bad ways. Essentially, I became like their slave," he explained. "I was really [made] to wash their clothes, wash all the dishes, clean the toilet with my bare hands. They were just making fun of me. I did not resist."

The extremists did more than just make fun of Jasek.

"They became more aggressive. They were inventing ways for how they could [torture] me in a very bad way," he stated. "Eventually, they decided to do waterboarding to me. It's a way of torture where a person lays on his back and they cover his mouth and pour water, which gives you the feeling that you are getting drowned. They told me that Czechoslovakia allows the CIA to waterboard Al Qaeda members, which was not true."

In order to perform the torture, Jasek said that they had to move him and the extremists into a different cell with running water.

"The problem with these Sudanese prisons is that the Sudanese guards, even though it could be the most prestigious prison, they are afraid of these [extremists]," Jasek said. "Because it is [thought] that if these Islamists get released they will get revenge on those guards."

The day before the waterboarding was to occur, Jasek explained that the jihadis interrogated him to find out where VOM was operating in Sudan. Every time they didn't like his answer, he said, they would beat him with a wooden stick.

"Supernatural peace"

"I was on my knees and the Lord showed me a [thought] that He came before us in this way. He was once ridiculed, spit upon and beaten with a wooden stick," Jasek recalled. "The Lord gave me the strength to go through all that with a supernatural peace in my mind."

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Jasek claims that it was fittingly during the time he was being interrogated by the jihadis in prison that his wife was in a Bible study back home and the leader stopped the study to pray for the "situation that he is right now in." "They stopped reading and started to pray for the Lord's presence over the situation," Jasek said. "When I came home, I realized that was exactly the time when I was on my knees before the Islamists and they were beating me. But I was experiencing a supernatural peace."

In the cell with the extremists, Jasek didn't have access to his Bible. As his health condition was deteriorating, he said that he was barely able to remember the passages of Scripture that he memorized as a kid.

"I was literally asking the Lord that He will keep my mind sound and that I wouldn't lose my mind through the situation," Jasek said. "The Holy Spirit kept reminding me some of the verses that I had memorized. This was just enough for me, to give me enough strength everyday to pray."

Loving his enemies

Considering that Christians are called to pray for and love their enemies, Jasek stated that even through the beatings and humiliation, he was able to witness the needs of his abusers late at night when they could not sleep. "They were crying. They were also missing their family members. They were also crying to God for help," he detailed. "That allowed me to easily continue to pray for them. I was praying for those fellow prisoners, the interrogators, for the guards, for the prosecutors and for the judge, that the Lord would reveal Himself as the Lord, Savior and God."

"When we realize that these people are not knowing the Lord, that situation made it really easier for me to pray for them," he continued.

Fortunately, Jasek was spared from waterboarding thanks to a guard who was not afraid of going against the wishes of the Islamists. Jasek says that he feels the Lord acted through the guard to move him out of the cell. "Later on I told the guard that he saved my life and we became close friends," Jasek said. "I gave my email address and I started to share the Gospel with him. He was very passionate. I told him that if he ever makes it to Europe, he can stay at my house and we will take care of him."

Moved to another prison

Jasek said that he was moved to another prison where conditions were "even worse."

"We were squeezed in a small room — 4.5 x 5.5 meters. There were sometimes 40 of us. That was the situation and I was able to lead 40 Eritrean refugees to Christ," he said. "It was like new revelation for me. I started to be courageous and openly shared the Gospel with other fellow prisoners. Later on, that resulted in them putting me in solitary confinement again."

Shortly after being put in solitary confinement, Jasek said that he was brought a Bible by Czech consular officers. "I didn't have to do anything else but read the Bible all day. I could not read the Bible all day because I could only read when there was enough light, which was about 8 [a.m.] ... until 4:30 p.m. I had to stand reading on the bars so that I could have enough light. I was so hungry for Scripture. I read from Genesis to Revelation within three weeks."

Jasek said that he was given a "new understanding of Scripture."

He was eventually removed from solitary confinement and moved to a larger prison that can hold about 10,000 people.

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"I went from solitary to a cell where there were like 100 people in one cell," he explained. "We were squeezed. There were 75 beds. Only 75 could have a bed and 25 had to stay on the floor."

"They asked me to preach"

One saving grace of the situation, Jasek said, was the fact that the guards at the new prison allowed him and two Sudanese pastors who he was imprisoned with to hold chapel services.

"The first day I came to the chapel to spend time in Scripture with the Lord. They asked me to preach. I would preach once a week, sometimes twice a week," Jasek said. "Of course, they were monitoring us and they were reporting what we were teaching about. There were two other pastors from Sudan and we knew that nothing worse could happen to us."

Preaching in prison allowed Jasek and the other pastors to witness to "people that were hopeless." "They were real criminals — murderers, rapists, thieves, drug dealers. It was such a wonderful time," Jasek said. "They responded to our teaching. We were just teaching the Gospel. It was so wonderful to see the changed life of those who dedicated their lives to Christ."

Thanks to negotiations between the Sudanese government and Czech officials, Jasek was released in February 2017.

"I came for four days to Sudan. But I was there 445 days," Jasek informed the crowd. "When you think about all the hardships and seeing what the Lord was able to do through us, then what else can we say but the Lord's ways are much better than our ways."

Jasek told the audience that when someone commits their life to Christ, they need to be "prepared for everything." "We know from the words of apostle Paul that everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," Jasek said. "I felt like I received my life back. I was first threatened to be sentenced to be executed. [Then] later on, life imprisonment. Then, my life was returned back to me. I told the Lord, 'My life does not belong to me anymore. It belongs to the Lord.'"

Sudan ranks as the fourth-worst nation in the world when it comes to Christian persecution, according to Open Doors USA's 2018 World Watch List.

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