

as we passed by, "Don't smoke, it's bad for your health!" But he doesn't know English, and turned away.

Then there were the emaciated dogs lined up outside the train windows during especially long stops. This is a nation in need. It is felt everywhere. God, raise up more workers to go to these harvest fields and work for you there.


If any of the above material touches your heart, and the Lord seems to be directing you to do something about this suffering, contact me and we will talk and pray. Some ideas are forming...

God bless you, and I am especially thankful for those of you who prayed or in any way supported this trip.

Bob Faulkner
August 26, 2002

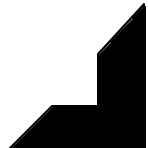


**MORE
WORD
PICTURES
FROM
MY
ROMANIA**

Well, it's happened again. A door to the precious people of Romania opened wide, and I have gone through it. With great pleasure I report to you a trip taken there in August of 2002 .

For those into quick summaries, I have provided one. A more detailed day-by-day report follows. And for those really into this land I offer a prayer list and my own insights which I dub "word pictures" , as in 1987. Pace Domnul-lui, the peace of the Lord be with you as you read this report!



A quick summary

On August 9 of 2002 Chaplain Rob Brown of Chaplains for Christ and schoolteacher Bob Faulkner (yours truly) accompanied at his invitation Romanian Constantin Lupancu, presently a Chicago real estate broker. The purposes of the visit were

1. the easing of Romanian suffering and poverty by financial donations to groups and individuals scattered throughout eastern Romania and
2. the establishment and/or encouragement of permanent jail ministries in selected locations.

To this end, the trio of men spoke in churches 15-20 times, visited numerous homes and villages, preached in 3 jails, and held 2 training seminars for jail ministry workers.

Chaplain Brown was further privileged to share his faith on National live television!

The team traveled nearly 2000 miles. Contacts were made both for humanitarian and jail ministry that will enable these works to be continued.

In short, the suffering believers of Romania have prayed. God hears their prayers, and is sending teams like ours to answer their prayers. What a privilege to be a small part of what God is doing.

Day to day

August 9-10 Friday-Saturday: Trip to Bucharest. Met and housed by believers there.

August 11 Sunday. Preach am & pm services. Afternoon, visit homes in Ialomita district northeast of Bucharest.

August 12 Monday. Over 20 workers attend jail ministry seminar in Bucharest.

August 13 Tuesday. Preach in Bucharest jail. Preach in evening service, Bucharest.

August 14 Wednesday. Trip north. At Vaslui area, visit villagers, preach in village church. Continue north to Moldova. Arrive at Satu Mare near Ukrainian border. Stay in Constantin Lupancu's home.

presence did not help much. When we showed up to look over the new real estate, the price went up 33%. They figured we would write a check on the spot. We didn't. We left Joe looking very lonely.

No, the righteous are never forsaken. But God calls individuals like you and me to stand with guys like Joe, so that the promise will be his as well as ours.

WHAT'S NEW? Instead of the ever-present soldier of 1987, behold the ever-present cell phone! They're everywhere. And, more food in the stores. But less money to buy it with. There are no pictures of dictators hanging on every wall and cluttering even mountain greenery. No gas lines, or lines of any kind, did I see. As for the church, many of the buildings are not packed so full. But then, there are a lot more buildings to fill now, and one sees construction sites everywhere! During Communism, Christians were forced into fellowship with other believers, and some buildings were turned into museums, or razed. Also, people are leaving the country in droves. One Suceava pastor told us of a drop from 1000 to 800 members over the past few years. Furthermore, those packed churches of the 80's were partly filled with Secret Police.

But with all that said, it is true that some of the "warmth" of the Romanian church is missing. Rigid formality and rules have stolen life. For some it's religion as usual, now that the pressure is gone.

A NATION BEGGING. On that final train ride we were accosted by several beggars. One little girl showed up at the door of our compartment and began singing about the Lord. When Constantin asked her what she was singing about, she replied that she was just repeating what she had been taught. She knew that many Romanians are soft when it comes to "religion." This girl was using the Lord's message to help make a living. Then there came crawling down the aisle outside our door, on his backside, a teenage boy, feet turned inward, looking quite ill indeed. Moneys were thrown at him. At the next stop he stood up, walked down the steps, and was handed a cigarette by a female accomplice. I shouted to him

laid hands on them? My faith was increased, but conditioned to wait if need be, as on everything else in that land.

POCKETS OF WEALTH. Occasionally men of God and the people with them have believed Him for incredible prosperity in the midst of all the 19th-century living. These eyes saw whole blocks owned by prosperous believers, many acres of choice land given over to orphaned children. One such orphanage, near Bistrita, sits at the place where former dictator Ceaucescu made his last visit before the roof caved in on his system and his life. He had planned to turn this piece of land into a fox-hunter's lodge. God had other plans. Some of Romania's finest children will grow there and prosper in faith. The rest of this strange twist of "fate": Ceaucescu himself was brought up in an orphanage.

"C'MON-A MY HOUSE" . Much of our visitation time was spent at "works in progress." These building projects, church buildings, prison after-care centers, orphanages were not just being "shown off" to foreigners. Their unfinished nature (one after 7 years of work!) was a not-too-subtle hint to the Americans that somebody needed to drop a donation on them. This was annoying me for awhile. But that's the American in me, combined with a dose of carnal thinking. The Christian thought should be, These brothers have a right to anything I enjoy. Why shouldn't we be asked to bless them as we have been blessed?

GYPSIES. We visited at least one Gypsy village. These people are still abhorred by large segments of the Romanian population. Many believers, though, have reached out to them. Pastor Jacob in Tirgu-Mores took us to see ex-inmate "Gypsy Joe" who lives in a set of walls and a roof, that the government will not recognize as a legitimate address. Therefore Joe cannot have an identification number. With no id, no job, no nothing. Doesn't matter to the government that Joe has just come to the Lord, while in prison.

He has another house in mind, for a very small price. But of course even small prices are prohibitive when you're an out-of-work "ex-con" Gypsy. Unfortunately our

August 15, Thursday. To jail in Botosani, preach (20+). Preach at evening service in Botosani.

August 16, Friday. Preach in another Botosani church. Visit orphanage.

August 17, Saturday. Botosani jail ministry seminar at orphanage chapel. Visits to needy in Botosani. Preach at 3rd Botosani church, pm.

August 18, Sunday. Preach in Satu Mare church, am. Visit to orphanage 2 in Dornesti. pm, preach in Radauti church, then in Frautatii church.

August 19, Monday. Visits. Trip to Bistrita. Orphanage # 3.

August 20, Tuesday. To Tirgu Mores, preach in jail there (60+). Visit ex-inmate and Gypsy village.

August 21, Wednesday. Devotional at orphanage. To 4th jail, but denied access. Visit jail ministry after-care facilities. Team splits. Chaplain Rob to Bucharest, national TV interview, live.

August 22, Thursday. Visits. Preach (Bob & Constantin) at Suceava church, pm.

August 23, Friday. By train to Bucharest.

August 24, Saturday. Plane home.

The Prayer List

These are the people and situations that grabbed my heart and ripped it up. These are not the only people we visited. In God's eyes they may not be the most needy. These are the ones that touched me, and about whom I felt a call to be faithful in prayer and whatever else I can do. Perhaps some of you will join me in praying and supporting these saints of God.

In Ialomita:

1. Elderly Elena Strimbanu and little Martha. With others, these two live in a house that costs a total of \$35.00 a month to rent. But they cannot afford it, and are about to be evicted.
2. Abel Sandu is a little boy whose exposed ribs brought the tug of compassion to me. Parents Dan and Anna are active in church, and Dan works for a living, but cannot

survive on his present income.

3. Maria Sandu, aunt to Dan (above) has a daughter, Anna, who at a young age has already had a kidney operation. Four children altogether, with a mom who may be mentally ill, or at least severely depressed: Dad left in 1995 and has not returned.
4. Remus, our driver, and a leader in the Iaolmita church, lives in Bucharest. His upstairs apartment invited a thief to come in off the roof. He wants to move to a lower apartment, but that costs more than he can afford. His small daughter fears her own room. Remus also wants to work in the jail, and has before. But the cost of gas and the weekly treat they like to provide is prohibitive. Also the Orthodox priests have changed the rules and generally harassed the work.

Osesti

1. The church in the village of Osesti, near Vaslui: they meet in a home but need a large facility. Money and permission from the Orthodox stand in the way.
2. Anna Maria. At age 6, this little girl fell, and subsequent surgery was unsuccessful. She is now blind and mentally retarded. Her dad accepted Jesus while we were there.

Botosani

1. Grescu Marcelli has a wife and 8 children. They all live in one room about 12 x 15. He needs only \$5000.00 to purchase another apartment. It will have 2 rooms.
2. Marian Visiteu needs vitamins B-1, B-2, and B-12, to make him feel a little better as he slowly dies. He has multiple sclerosis and has lain in bed for 9 years. A prophecy has indicated that this man will rise up and walk some day. Meanwhile, he wants a little energy.
3. Victor worked for 20 years in one factory. He was laid off. Now he is depressed and needs a friend to stand with him.

road had overflowed. We would have to walk the rest of the way. Through a cornfield . At night. Following a neighbor lady. With no flashlight. With all our luggage. In the mud. In Tirgu Mores our last jail access was denied, because the night before a guard had been electrocuted. And on the final journey, by train, we suffered a 2hour delay because the engine of the train just quit! I almost broke down on that trip myself. We all have our problems, but in Romania, there seems to be one thing after another. Hot water off. Electricity down. Sold out. Not to mention the men we visited whose whole nervous system had broken down because of the way of life here.

THE CULTS. Communists referred to all the little religious groups as “cults.” Not quite the same flavor to that word as we have, but similar. The word persists, and to some, Pentecostalism, or Baptist-ism , are just other cults.

95% of the land is under the sway of the Orthodox religion, kin to Roman Catholicism. (Catholicism itself is but a small minority here.) Within the Protestant fold are a number of super-strict groups, who preach a salvation message, and know how to pray long and loud, but who bind their people to rigors sometimes matching their old Orthodox ways.

Several churches I saw insisted that, not only should men and women be separated during the service, but that they should leave the church through separate doors! If there is only one door, women must file out first, then men. Women’s heads are covered, and perhaps many of the women even know why, but the concept of the Spirit-filled walk seems foreign to those to whom we preached this message.

Only rarely did we feel we were among people who were truly free in Christ Jesus.

HOW LONG? Waiting is a Romanian past-time . Even waiting on God, for many. The instantaneous miracle is seen in a different light there. Is it not possible, Scripturally, that those who were healed in an instant, had prayed and believed long years before the prophet or the Son of God or an apostle

down strongholds and ask the great Door Opener to do what He does best. It is after all HIS message, and He will find a way to get it preached!

A TIMELESS MESSAGE. Anybody wanna buy a watch? Not the world's wisest businessman, I succumbed to a street watch salesman. Hey, only \$10.00 for a Rolex! My watchband was broken. So I tried on my new treasure. Within seconds, the watchband on it was broken too. Later I discovered that the battery on my original watch had also stopped pulsating. I started to get the message that I should not worry so much about time. Romania surely does not! If I had learned my lesson a little better, I could have saved myself some personal problems. Though Romanians may need more discipline, this American needed more patience! God was doing all He could to teach me the word "WAIT!", the theme word for the 2-week stint. Wait for team members. Wait for your turn to preach. Wait for the driver. Wait for the broken-down train. Wait for the restaurant food to be served.

Well, anyway, I solved the watch problem. Late in our stay I went into a legitimate store, and bought another "Rolex." This one was all of \$20.00, so I knew I had a genuine article (Do you believe that?). And after 4 days or so, it's actually still working, band and all.

OF BULLS AND CHINA SHOPS. Romania is like a piece of fine China, seen from one angle. Very precise and patterned, and very fragile. Americans, I fear, are a bit more like the proverbial bull, charging into the china shop, as though it actually belongs there, acting like it owns the shop, and knows all about fine china. Much damage is done. I winced at times thinking of something that we might have said that caused only pain but no growth. For those considering a visit to another nation, consider taking a course in humility offered by the Great Master of Such Things Himself.

BREAKDOWNS. Something always seems to break down during a visit to Romania. We came to Constantin's house in Satu Mare one night to find that the river that parallels the

Satu Mare

1. Another depressed man, from a nervous breakdown. Used to be at the head of his class, a bright star. The pressures of living in Romania and trying to stay afloat brought him low. We tried to share the love of God with him.

Bistrita

1. Brother Elie (Elijah) is a true man of God who prospers by faith. Constant fasting and prayer has helped him to rise above Romania's circumstances. He blesses MANY and deserves prayers of the people of God.

Tirgu Mores

1. "Joseph the Gypsy" lives in a ramshackle house that even the government of Romania cannot accept as official. Needs \$1000.00 for a new house. With house, he can get an id., and maybe a job. But the way will be tough. Besides being a Gypsy, Joseph is an ex-inmate. He has just asked Christ to forgive him his sins and is trying to do the right thing now. (see more in "word pictures")

Word Pictures

I carried over from 1987, my last visit to Moldova, the feeling that Americans are usually a bit too tourist-minded on mission trips. I desired only to bless Romanians and share their life. So no camera. But as one given to writing, I could not help but jot down my feelings along the way. Hence, "word" pictures.

AFTER THE FALL. Communism has been officially departed from Romania for 13 years. Are things better? Yes, generally. But not like the difference between night and day. More like moving from 6 am to 7 am. In some cases, though, the clock moved backward. Communist trade was linked to other Communist nations. When the government

changed, the links broke. The system was disrupted. Goods could not be sold. Factories closed. Many were brought from poverty to near extinction and beyond. Farm equipment was stolen by citizens and sold outside the country. Many returned to horses after having advanced out of the “dark ages”. Property was redistributed. There were fights. Chaos. For some, the clock ran out altogether. After the “fall” was winter for so many. Spring seems only a broken promise to vast millions of Romania.

THE GLORY OF GOD. Such elation was mine the day we first visited the homes where poverty dwells. Here is where my heart touched the heart of a nation. Here the compassion of Jesus filled me, broke me, and moved me to action. Here I saw the risen Christ responding to desperate pleas for help. They had prayed, some of them for years, for assistance. Here we were. For though God can drop food out of Heaven if he chooses, He most often uses an earthling to do His will. What an exalting moment when Heaven touched earth in home after home.

THE ROMANIAN PASTOR. For those of my readers who may have “preacher’s itch”, Romania is the place to visit. Rob and I preached nearly 20 times each. As interpreter, Constantin preached twice that many, plus gave a stirring testimony. The reason for this sudden demand on our oratory is the Romanian pastoral system. Leaders of the flock there feed the faithful by inviting persons from all over the country, the area, the world, to bless their church with a visit. If a pastor wants to preach, for the most part he must visit another church! There is no end of visitors in the Romanian pulpit, although one pastor lamented that our team of 3 preachers were the “only” guests that morning. I remember commenting a couple of times how refreshing it is to speak to believers who are trained to sit quietly—yes, even the children! - to listen to large doses of God’s Word. And why such a system? Pastors reason that one man speaking week after week would become boring!

ON POVERTY. It struck me on one visit that I was seeing not only the physical poverty of Romania but my own spiritual poverty. Oh to see ourselves as God sees us. Revelation 2:9, to Smyrna: I know your poverty, but you are rich. Revelation 3:7, to Laodicea: You say you are rich, but you are poor.

THE PHARISEE and THE PRAGMATIST. We saw him in a jail at Bucharest. Long robes, well-fed, totally uncooperative, aloof, disdainful. An Orthodox priest. He no doubt wished we were still in America and not interfering with his flock. As we gave incredibly good news to the prisoners, we understood a little of the trouble Jesus had in doing the same.

On the other hand, we had a more serious problem in dealing with a priest of the same Church in another jail. This man entered in, even adding at the end his own bits of enlightenment about “salvation.” But then he cancelled out our message. His words were something like this:

“Yes, you have said nice things, and thank you. But life in Romania is hard. These men will go out and perhaps fail, because of our economic realities. They will end up back here. And why is our economy so bad? Because America and other countries do not support Romania enough.”

We had offered hope in Christ. The friendly priest offered hope in a possible economic change. In the eyes of the prisoners, though, his talk of Jesus and basic “agreement” with our message could only be confusing. If the man in the robes and the men in the suits all believed in Jesus, what could be wrong with Orthodoxy? This pragmatic collusion approach to the “Pentecostal problem” has caused not a few pastors to compromise. I fear that, as pastors “co-operated” with the Communists so that they could have “open doors” to preach the Gospel, today’s pastors are co-operating with the evil of false religion for the same reason.

How bad is Orthodoxy/Romanism? Of the 60 men seated before me, none knew even the rudiments of the plan of salvation. It is not the time to compromise, but to pray