

7 Prophetic Moments That Defined Andrew Brunson's 2-Year Imprisonment

The first time Andrew Brunson received a prophetic word, he was 3 years old. His mother, a missionary to Mexico, met an old man named T. Stanley Soltau. When Soltau was a boy, James Hudson Taylor—the famous missionary to China—laid his hands on Soltau and his brother and set them aside for missions work. Both men grew up to become missionaries.

Andrew's mother told Soltau, "I want you to pray for my two children and do for them what Hudson Taylor did for you."

So Soltau took Andrew and his sister, laid his hands on them and prayed that God would set them apart to be missionaries for Him.

"I think I received an impartation from Stanley Soltau that he had received from Hudson Taylor," Andrew says. "It was very strong in me that I was supposed to be a missionary."

Andrew did become a missionary, one whose story has spread worldwide. In 2016, Andrew and his wife, Norine, were arrested by the Turkish government on allegations of espionage and aiding terrorists. Though Norine was released soon afterward, Andrew was held for another two years before being released last year after significant political efforts by U.S. President Donald Trump's administration. His story has become a symbol to many of the persecution many international Christians must endure for their faith.

But fewer know that Andrew and Norine are charismatic Christians who believe in supernatural healing, intercession and prophetic words. In fact, the Brunsons relied on prophetic words throughout Andrew's imprisonment.

“Most of the interest in our situation has come from non-charismatic churches—maybe that will diminish as they see how much we’re also part of the charismatic movement,” Andrew jokes. “That may diminish, but I don’t want it to. I want to keep having an open door. But I think the charismatic side has been less aware that, actually, we are fully wanting to jump in the river.”

Andrew and Norine Brunson told *Charisma* about seven prophetic moments that shaped this international incident behind the scenes.

Harvest Preparations

In high school, Andrew explained to his teacher, Peter Mehegan, that he couldn’t find any consistency in his walk with the Lord. Mehegan—who was charismatic—said he needed to be filled with the Spirit. With Andrew’s permission, Mehegan anointed him with oil and prayed for the Holy Spirit to fill him. Andrew says he’s never been the same since.

He met Norine while attending Wheaton College. They married and then in 1993 partnered with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church to serve as missionaries in Turkey. Two thousand years ago, Paul and the apostles planted churches across Turkey. All seven churches mentioned in Revelation are located in Turkey, and Antioch and Constantinople were central hubs for the early church. Yet today, in a country of 83 million people, only seven-tenths of 1% are Christian, according to the Joshua Project. And while some historically Christian ethnic groups exist in Turkey, nearly 100% of ethnic Turks are Muslims.

“When we went to Turkey, Turkey was the largest unevangelized country in the world,” Andrew says. “Most cities did not have a church. People said there were 1,000 to 1,500 believers from a Muslim background in the country.”

Andrew says many Muslim countries harbor suspicion toward

Christians, and Turkey is no exception.

“Turkey obviously has a long history of conquest,” he says. “They were the head of the Ottoman Empire, and the Ottoman Empire was the head of Islam. They conquered many lands and imposed Islam. Now, of course, they say there was a lot of freedom for Christians in that. But the fact is that wherever Turkey went and conquered, Christianity was suffocated over time. ... [Christians] are looked down on, seen with suspicion and are very much second-class citizens. Many of them have fled the country.”

Hostility toward Christians has intensified in the last few years under current President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who founded the pro-Islamist Justice and Development Party. Andrew says hate speech against Christians has risen significantly, much of it related to his case.

“In contrast to what they call ‘hate speech’ in the U.S., which often is more on the level of micro-aggressions, [Turkish] hate speech has actually led to violence in the past—killings and things like that,” Andrew says. “I think the environment has been created in Turkey now so that when there is violence against the church, or when there is persecution—and it will happen—the majority of the Turkish population has now been conditioned to say, ‘Well, they deserve it. It’s OK.’”

For the first few years, the Brunsons focused on learning the language and culture. They attended a Turkish university. Later, Andrew briefly taught at a small Bible school before it was closed down. In 2001, they began church planting. Though many media outlets have characterized Andrew as “a pastor of a small church of about 15 or 20 people for 20 years,” he says that’s not totally accurate. From 2001 to 2016, Norine and Andrew were involved in six church plants with various teammates. They also started a house of prayer and conducted some training programs for local believers. Everything was

small and fragile, but there was a lot happening.

In 2007, the Brunsons saw Bill Johnson at a conference in Charlotte, North Carolina. Andrew recalls Johnson saying: "When you're at a conference like this, there are waves of the Holy Spirit that people can ride. Maybe when you pray for someone, they'll be healed, because faith is at a higher level, or maybe you can more easily hear from God and pass that on to someone. More happens because you can ride the wave of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual authority is what it takes to start the wave."

"That really stuck in me, because I thought, *I'm working in a place where there are not any waves,*" Andrew says. "There aren't any people who are starting those waves. ... So I began to pray, better than I knew. I said, *Father, draw me so close to Your heart that You will be able to trust me with the authority required to start waves.* ... We started going after His presence, after intimacy, and that became our main value."

In 2009, they attended Randy Clark's first Europe-based School of Healing. While there, Andrew asked God to give him a word of knowledge for healing. "Prepare for harvest" came into his mind instead. After initial resistance, that word got planted in his heart, and he began to believe for it.

Andrew and Norine began working hard in Turkey to prepare for the coming harvest. In 2014, the Brunsons began working with Syrian refugees fleeing the war. Andrew led a team that worked on the Turkey-Syria border and another in Izmir, where a refugee church began.

By now, Norine says, Andrew's 2009 prophetic word "about a spiritual harvest coming to Turkey has gone deeper and deeper into our hearts. So deep that I just don't question it. It's a matter of when. It's a matter of what it will look like. But it's not a matter of if. There is going to be [harvest] in Turkey. But Satan wanted to abort this. He wanted to stop it."

Going Home?

A few days before his arrest, Andrew says he received a confusing word from the Lord: "It's time to come home."

"I thought I was home already," Andrew says. "I had lived in Turkey for 23 years, and we were planning on being there for the rest of our lives. ... I expected to see the harvest with my own eyes. I had words related to that. I thought, *Lord, are you telling me you're going to take me home to heaven now? Are you cutting short my ministry? Have I done something wrong?* I was very discomfited."

So when Andrew and Norine were arrested by Turkish officials on Oct. 7, 2016, Andrew remembered the prophetic word and connected it to the officials' threats of deportation. He determined God had been warning him in advance of this predicament and that, through it, He was assuring the Brunsons He was actually in this.

"Early on, we had the sense that this was not a normal deportation," Norine says. "In fact, I think there was some pretty high spiritual warfare going on."

After 13 days, Norine was suddenly released with no explanation. She resisted the guards who tried to escort her out; the night before, Andrew had confided in her that he was afraid of being alone. She did not want to leave him. But the guard told her that her release was a good sign—and that Andrew would likely be released next.

Once freed, Norine called each of her three children to let them know what had happened, and then phoned the American Embassy. She says she spent the entire night on the phone.

Meanwhile, the longer Andrew stayed in prison, the longer he began to question his original interpretation of the prophetic word.

"I was pretty upset at God," he admits. "I thought, Didn't you say, 'It's time to come home?' A normal person would take that to mean that there's some sense of immediacy. ... This isn't something I can obey. I'm locked up. It's not a matter of cooperation with the word. It's completely up to You."

So why wasn't God doing anything?

That question would haunt Andrew for the next two years.

The Cloud of Witnesses

After Andrew's imprisonment, Norine solicited help from outside sources. She reached out to advocacy groups but received conflicting advice: Some recommended going public with Andrew's arrest, while others suggested working quietly behind the scenes. Norine—who had never dealt with international diplomacy and advocacy before—was understandably overwhelmed.

On top of that, her own visa was in question. Prior to the arrests, Andrew and Norine had applied for a long-term residence permit. But she was led to believe her arrest occurred because the government was deporting her. Her release did little to clarify the situation, and she could not get clear answers from any officials regarding whether her residence permit had been canceled. For all Norine knew, at any moment, she could be forced to leave the country—and leave Andrew all alone. Even after she secured a temporary permit to stay, some Christian leaders encouraged her to leave Turkey for her own safety.

"I said, 'OK, Lord, if I should leave, then you need to tell me so clearly in a way that I cannot dispute,'" Norine says. "'I need an angel in front of me—something clear—otherwise I'll stay.' So I determined to stay and do what I could. It meant that I was more behind-the-scenes, and not doing interviews and things like that."

Instead, the Brunsons' daughter, Jacqueline Furnari, became "the face of the family," according to Norine, doing media interviews. In November 2017, she testified before the Helsinki Commission that her father had already missed her wedding and would miss her graduation that December if swift action was not taken. Norine would also miss both milestones, due to concerns that if she left she would not be allowed to reenter.

"In February, I got married," Furnari said. "We didn't want to get married without my parents present, but because my husband is in the military, we could not postpone it. We had received my father's blessing, but we felt so terrible about getting married while he was imprisoned. Neither of my parents was present when I got married. I will never get that moment back.

"For those of you who are fathers to daughters, I'm sure you would want to walk your daughter down the aisle. My father didn't get that. I didn't get that. My husband and I decided to have a civil ceremony and to postpone our wedding ceremony until my father is home. I'm still waiting for my wedding. I'm still waiting to wear the wedding dress that I got almost a year and a half ago. I'm still waiting for my dad to walk me down the aisle. I'm still waiting for that father-daughter dance."

Another man at the church began pastoring and co-leading the church with Norine during this time, which freed her up to focus on Andrew's plight and visiting him in prison. Andrew's moods swung dramatically, and he battled deep depression during his imprisonment. Norine urged other believers to pray for Andrew.

"Shortly after Andrew was arrested [and] was still in the detention center, there was something that came to me also: that God was raising up a cloud of witnesses," Norine says.

Soon, Andrew's story became known to believers around the

world—thanks to the work of organizations like the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ). Through visits with Norine, Andrew became gradually more aware of how many people were interceding for him.

“What I have been told is that this was an unprecedented prayer movement focused on one person,” Andrew says. “Timothy George from Beeson Divinity School is a church historian. He said that the last time there’s been something like this was in World War II for Martin Niemöller. ... A number of people have come up to me and said, ‘You know, I prayed for you. I’d wake up in the middle of the night and pray for you.’”

Andrew was particularly encouraged by news that the Chinese underground church had heard of his plight and was interceding for him. He believes China will become a major mission force in the coming decades, and because of that, he had long wanted to reach the Chinese to call them to Turkey.

“After my imprisonment, one of the house church networks in China printed up a million brochures that told about my situation,” Andrew says. “A million brochures went out. Who knows how many people saw them? More than a million, I would assume. If I’d gone to China repeatedly again and again for years, I never could have talked to that many people about Turkey.”

Andrew began to consider that perhaps enabling this incredible prayer movement was the entire point of his imprisonment.

“We came to see this as a supernatural prayer movement, something God was initiating and sustaining and causing to spread,” Andrew says. “I began to see just the glimmers of a faint outline of what I thought He was doing, at least in part with my imprisonment—that my going to prison was actually part of my assignment to prepare for harvest. Because this many people have never prayed for Turkey. I thought, *God is using me as a magnet to draw prayer in for something much greater*

than setting me free. He's doing this to raise up an amazing amount of prayer to pour into this land. And this prayer will be a major key in accomplishing the harvest He has planned."

The Dream of 68

In March 2017, Andrew had a dream in prison. In the dream, he saw a piece of paper with his name and the number 68 written next to it, and he understood the 68 to indicate the number of days before his release.

"I'd already been burned about a couple of things," Andrew says. "So I held it lightly, but I counted out the days, and 68 days later would be May 22. And so I said, Is this possible that on May 22 God will effect my release? It seems too good to be true that He'd give me something that exact."

On May 16, President Trump invited Erdogan to visit the White House. During that summit, Trump inquired about Andrew's imprisonment and asked for his release three times.

Norine received a phone call on May 22: The two governments agreed to his release—exactly as Andrew's dream had predicted. The Brunsons would be sent back to the U.S. She needed to pack their bags and be ready to go at a moment's notice.

But on Tuesday, May 23, Norine woke up with a song stuck in her head: "I Surrender All." (She says God frequently speaks to her through music and lyrics stuck in her head when she first wakes up.) She didn't understand why God gave her this song, but she said, "OK, Lord. I don't know what you're asking me to surrender, but I will surrender it."

On May 24, the Turkish government pulled out of the agreement. Andrew would remain in prison.

"That really threw me," Andrew says. "I was like, Well, God, obviously I didn't mishear. You can't mishear a dream. Obviously this dream wasn't false. It was true. So now I knew

that God had orchestrated events and moved two governments in exactly the way he had foretold. But I was still in prison. So what happened?"

Over the next 17 months, Andrew and Norine would experience moments similar to this, in which release was promised to be imminent and then ripped away. A number of times Norine woke up with "I Surrender All" playing on repeat in her head before one of these reversals. Andrew's faith in the prophetic was severely tested during this season. With hindsight, he believes he may now understand what God was doing.

"Basically, what He was saying is, 'I can take you out of prison right now—but if you're willing to stay [and surrender], then I can accomplish something that's greater,'" Andrew says. "Now, I wish He'd said that to me directly. Because then that would have made it very clear. Instead, it was very confusing."

The Stillborn

Soon, it became apparent to Andrew and Norine that the struggle to get Andrew freed wasn't primarily about Andrew at all. In 2016, during Norine's last night in prison, she received a prophetic image of a stillborn baby in the womb. She believed the baby symbolized the harvest coming to Turkey—and that the devil wanted to kill it before it could ever be born. Months later, Andrew had a related dream from prison. He told Norine during one of her visits.

"In that dream, I was pregnant and I suddenly gave birth to a live baby, and Andrew helped deliver it," Norine says. "But it was a live baby—that was the important part. ... Satan wants to keep these people in darkness and in bondage, but God has something really amazing planned for them."

Andrew believes his imprisonment, at least initially, was a spiritual attack from the enemy. But what Satan intended for evil, God used for good.

"We saw God as a grandmaster chess player," Andrew says. "I don't think He initiated [my arrest]. I think it was an attack. The goal was to knock Norine and me out—which should not be very difficult to do—and to silence our voice of declaring again and again that harvest is coming."

He adds, "The way that I have imagined this is at about 18 months into my imprisonment, Satan suddenly becomes aware of what is happening. And he says, 'Oh, no, God outmaneuvered me again.'"

When believers around the world began praying—and the Turkish leaders hardened their hearts and refused to free Andrew—the Brunsons interpret that as physical manifestations of an intensifying spiritual conflict. Though the couple themselves are the first to admit they are not all that significant, their predicament embodied a larger spiritual battle for the region.

"If you look at major battles in wars, I don't think the two sides ever decide, 'Hey, let's have a big turning-point battle over there,'" Andrew explains. "It's more that a battle starts, and then both sides commit more resources, and it keeps growing, and they commit more resources, until it has become so big a battle with so many resources committed that they realize, 'OK, this is going to be a decisive turning point.' ... I think this is what happened in my case. ... It started out small, where they were just wanting to knock us out. And then it escalated and escalated until you now have millions of God's sons and daughters around the world praying into one of the darkest spiritual strongholds in the world. I don't think Satan wanted this at all. If he had foreseen what would happen, I don't think he would have done it."

Andrew believes God may have allowed the battle to go on even longer in order to fulfill a greater spiritual purpose. He says the country's leaders, like Pharaoh with the ancient Israelites, stubbornly opposed his release even when it no

longer made sense for them to do so.

“Half of the time [Pharaoh] hardened his own heart, and half of the time God helped him harden his heart,” Andrew says. “I think there were times when there was a clear exit for me, and it then closed. I think God was involved in that. I’m not saying God kept me in prison. I don’t think He does evil to us, or that He’s the cause of our problems for the most part. I think He allowed the other side to do what they wanted to within certain parameters, and did not intervene when He could have for me. ... But it was a huge spiritual battle going on. I think this is one of the reasons why I had such a difficult time and broke so badly in prison—because it was a very intense battle, and the stakes were very high.”

The Lockbox

Millions worldwide may have been praying for Andrew, but after a year in prison, Andrew felt further from God’s presence than ever. The man who had devoted the better part of a decade to chasing after God’s presence now felt alone. The Lord was silent, or when He did speak, His prophecies came true—only to fall just short of rescuing him from prison.

“I very much questioned God’s faithfulness and His goodness and His personal love for me,” Andrew says. “It was easy to find many verses about God’s general love for His people. But how about me, Andrew? Specifically me? The truth is, God does sacrifice many of His children, because He thinks of it differently than we do. There are many of His children who suffer and many who are martyred that no one ever knows about. [They] go through horrible things. And God just looks at the death of His children differently than we look at it, because He’s very much looking at it through the eyes of eternity—of reward and what is accomplished.”

Andrew remembered the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18: “Our light affliction, which lasts but for a moment, works for

us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

But Andrew could not relate to Paul.

“My afflictions seemed very heavy to me,” he says. “Paul had seen the glorified Jesus. He had visited heaven. Of course he saw things differently. I was sure if I had a similar experience, my perspective would change entirely, and I would have a deep fear of God that would make me willing to suffer for Him. I would see things with the eyes of eternity.”

Andrew begged God for an encounter.

But that encounter never came.

“When I was put in prison, [I experienced] the total silence of God,” he says. “I was really shocked by it. I did not have a sense of God’s presence throughout my time in prison. And after this had been my main value—what I ran after for years—I felt like, *You’ve abandoned me. How could You do this to Your son?* ... I said, ‘Are You just the God of conferences? Where are You in my darkest time, when I really need Your presence?’”

He could not turn to his Muslim cellmates with his doubts. There were no other Christians to console him, beyond visits by his wife. He would sometimes receive letters from Christians who encouraged him to “trust God.” Even today, he bristles at that phrase.

“People would write to me and say, ‘Just trust God,’” Andrew says. “I know when they say that, they’re really saying, ‘Trust the person. He is trustworthy.’ But usually we link it to an outcome. We’re trusting Him for something. What am I supposed to trust God for? For many of the people who are writing, what they really mean is, ‘Trust Him that He’s going to save you.’ But there are no guarantees that God’s going to

get me out of prison. There are no guarantees when it comes to suffering or persecution. This is where it really hit me hard, like a sudden realization.

“Especially for charismatics, you have all these Old Testament promises of provision, health and protection, if you’re following God: ‘If you do these things, If you keep My covenant, then I will supply all your needs, and I will protect you from all your enemies. You will be healthy and have none of the diseases the other nations have.’ Then you get to the New Testament. And Jesus, in some ways, seems to renew those things, where He says, ‘Don’t worry about housing or anything. Don’t worry about what you’re going to eat. Your Father in heaven is taking care of those things.’ And of course Jesus healed everybody who comes to Him.

“Then what He tells His disciples is, ‘If you keep My covenant, then people are going to hate you and persecute you.’ So it’s a real flip of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, ‘If you obey me, you’re going to be blessed materially’—you could say—and the New Testament says, ‘If you obey me, the nations will hate you.’ Now, obviously, not everyone is hated all the time. But the point is, Jesus really flips it around.”

Andrew wrestled with that apparent contradiction in prison—and he has since come to a fascinating conclusion.

“When it comes to persecution, what I would suggest is that all of those words about provision, protection and healing are suspended,” he says. “I think it is naive—and actually the wrong way of thinking—to go into a persecution context and think, *I have the promises of God that He’s going to provide for me*. Well, Jesus also said that you could lose everything. Paul says he went hungry and was naked and had pain. He also had provision. So the point is that there are not guarantees when it comes to persecution. I looked for a verse, [like] ‘What can I hang on to that God’s going to save me from

prison?’ But there is no verse that says He will save me from prison.”

So Andrew says the question of “trusting in God” is a difficult one—because he’s not certain he did. He understands that may sound very shocking and wrong, particularly to American believers.

“I can’t trust Him that He’s going to get me out of prison,” Andrew says. “I can’t trust Him that He will return me to my family. I can’t trust Him that I won’t die in prison. The outcomes I can trust are all pushed off into the future, for eternity. He says nothing can separate me from His love. He says He’ll work all things together for good for those who love Him. But what is that good? It may not be a good I see in my lifetime. I may have to suffer, and others will receive the benefit of it, and I will receive a great reward in heaven, which will be an amazing thing to carry for billions and trillions of years. ... I moved away from thinking in terms of trust to thinking in terms of loyalty and endurance and faithfulness. Am I going to be faithful? Am I going to endure and persevere? Am I going to betray God when I feel betrayed—or am I going to be loyal to Him?”

As he read the Bible in prison, he became aware of how many verses emphasized enduring to the end. This scared Andrew; he was not sure he could. Eventually, Andrew repented of the accusations He had made against God’s character and chose, instead, to “stand in the dark.” He would be faithful even if he felt God had not been faithful to him. He relinquished the idea that he needed the sense of God’s presence and decided that what was most important was a “basic devotion to God.” He would hold onto God’s hand like a small child clinging to his Father. He would endure without understanding, without prophecy, without fellowship.

“I came to the point where I imagined a lockbox, and I intentionally took my doubts and questions, and I put them in

the box,” Andrew says. “I closed the door to it and turned the lock. I imagined a digital lock as well, with handprints, and I’d say, ‘My palmprint is going on here. I can open it. The only other person who is able to open it is God.’ I said, ‘God, I make the decision that I will not open this box. ... If you want to bring them up and open this box, You can do it. Otherwise, I will not. I do not need to have the answers to have a relationship with You—and I’m fighting for my relationship with You.’ So whenever those doubts or questions would return, I would say, ‘No, you’re locked away. I will not think about it.’”

The Captives Released

Early in Andrew’s imprisonment, Norine asked Catch the Fire Toronto’s John Arnott if he could ask prophetic individuals he trusted whether they had a word to share. She asked him not to tell the prophets who the word was for, in order to keep it “pure” and avoid any bias.

Arnott reached out to his contacts, and a man named David Wagner replied. He told John, “On Sunday afternoon, I had a vision of a golden jailer’s key during my meeting, and I heard the Lord say, ‘I’m going to cause the sound of praise, a concert of prayer and the winds of worship to open up prison doors. The Josephs are about to be released, the Pauls are about to be released, the Silases are about to be released from their prisons. Fear cannot withstand the power of perfect love. Get ready for an early release, and I AM redeeming the time.’”

Norine was encouraged by Wagner’s prophecy, but she was also confused by it. Andrew was just one man, but the prophecy indicated that many people would be released from prison. She says the prophecy began to make more sense to her after she saw the Trump administration prioritize freeing persecuted Christians around the world.

Andrew says he is still grateful for the work done by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Ambassador-at-Large Sam Brownback to free him. And Norine says Vice President Mike Pence somehow became aware of their situation very early on—even before his inauguration—and remained a champion for Brunson's release. On Oct. 15, 2018, Pence wrote on Twitter, "Pastor Andrew Brunson is an innocent man held in Turkey & justice demands that he be released."

Meanwhile, the political situation in Turkey continued to worsen. The Brunsons officially made their story public in the media in December 2016—a move that netted them disdain from local Turkish-language media.

"I was called a military spy," Andrew says. "They said I hated Turks, and I wanted to cut their heads off. They said I was leading a group of American Special Forces officers who were there to undermine Turkey and try to split the country up, cause division and basically do away with the Turkish state and set up a Christian state by force. ... Most of the media in Turkey—over 90% of it—is controlled by the current government. This was a government-driven propaganda campaign, using me as a focal point, but I wasn't the only target. By painting me as a traitor and enemy of the Turks, they were painting all Christians in that light, because I'm a leader in the church."

Yet slowly but surely, progress was made toward freeing Andrew. Citing health concerns, officials moved him from prison to house arrest in July 2018. And after a diplomatic battle between the U.S. and Turkey—in which the U.S. imposed sanctions on Turkey, which was already dealing with an economic crisis—Erdogan relented. On Friday, Oct. 12, a Turkish judge sentenced Andrew to three years, one month and 15 days in prison for espionage and aiding terrorism, but ruled he could be released for time served and leave the country immediately.

No one was more surprised by this ruling than Andrew.

"It was very surreal, and I felt very detached," Andrew says. "I'm standing in the courtroom, and it has become clear that I'm going to be convicted and given a prison sentence, and I expect that I'm going to be sent back to prison. And then suddenly, they do convict me, and they do say, 'OK, you have a prison sentence.' ... And then suddenly they're saying, 'OK, you're free to go now.' I was very shocked. *What does this mean?* I thought I was going to prison, and instead, they said they're releasing me for time served and they've removed the travel ban."

Within 24 hours, Andrew and Norine had been flown back to the United States and were speaking in front of reporters at a press conference in the Oval Office, at Trump's invitation. During that meeting at the White House, Andrew laid hands on Trump and prayed for him: "Lord God, I ask that You pour out Your Holy Spirit on President Trump. Give him supernatural wisdom to accomplish all the plans you have for this country."

Andrew says the experience felt almost unreal.

"[One day,] I'm standing in a court being convicted as a terrorist," he says. "A day later, I'm standing in the White House, in the Oval Office. It's just an amazing Joseph-type thing, from conviction to White House."

A New Urgency

For months, Andrew admits he felt like an observer in his own body: "Stuff is happening to Andrew Brunson, and I'm observing what happens to him. But it's not really me. It's like it's happening with someone else. ... I'm happy for what's happening, but I don't feel like I'm fully entering into it."

When he was evaluated for PTSD by a State Department psychiatrist shortly after returning to the U.S., he was assured that this kind of detachment is normal for trauma victims. He's also comforted that as time has passed—it's been just over a year since his release—he has felt more like

himself, and the sense of detachment has gone. In February 2019, Andrew was able to finally walk his daughter down the aisle for her wedding. The ceremony, held in the mountains of North Carolina, happened just one day shy of her second anniversary.

But as Andrew's feelings have returned, a new urgency has gripped his heart for the church in America.

"My focus has always been overseas, and especially on Muslims," Andrew says. "But since I've come back to the States, I just have an urgency for the American church, and especially for the next generation. I believe it's going to become much more difficult to stand for truth, to stand for what God stands for, and to stand openly for Jesus. ... So I want to challenge young people to start running after God. Cultivate fear of God—the right view of God. Go after intimacy with Him, because a lover is willing to suffer for His beloved. If you love someone, you're willing to sacrifice yourself for them. So if you cultivate that love for Jesus, then you'll be willing to stand for Him even if it costs you."

To everyone who prayed and interceded for their release, Andrew and Norine extend their thanks—and ask them not to stop praying yet. A decisive battle may have been won in Turkey, but that is not the end of the spiritual war. It continues for Turkey and the region.

"I rode a wave of prayer out of Turkey, but a tsunami of prayer crashed into Turkey," Andrew says. "We will see the results over the next years. It's not finished yet. The full result isn't my being released; that was accomplished by the prayer of God's people. But there's going to be much more that happens because of this prayer movement. We're already seeing it in Turkey. In the last year, I've had reports of many more people than ever before coming into these small Turkish churches, saying 'I don't want to be a Muslim anymore.'"

The Brunsons still believe a harvest is coming. And they will be ready when it does.

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