

“Free In Deed”

The **Bi-Monthly** newsletter of Central California Jail/Prison Ministry
Volume 10– July 2005 / Aug. 2005

“I Can Only Imagine”

In this **Volume 10** issue, we would like to speak to those who are reading this newsletter that are not incarcerated. Do we take our freedom and blessings for Granted?



Drunk Tank 1930's



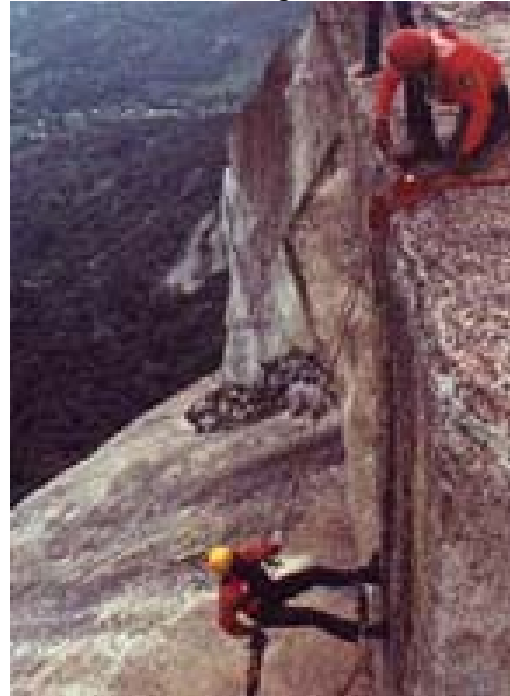
Jail Dorm 1930's

Writing this right now as it is Memorial Day 2005, I think of the price that was paid for freedom. There are also prices to be paid for “Free Will” and sometimes this gives the appearance that we are not free. In realizing that Freedom is always paid with a price. We realize that being behind cell doors is paying a price towards freedom. Being behind cell doors to witness and share the love of Christ appears to be paying a

price. Please realize that the price has already been paid, and we are just displaying that payment done by Christ.



Sheriff's Office doing Rescue



They will risk their lives for yours

You can express the love for these individuals, as Christ showed for us by simply being willing to write one of those incarcerated. Thanks to those protecting us is also appreciated.

Intentions & Wishes

We have gone to Bi-Monthly because there is too much to share. The intentions of this newsletter are to allow an understanding of jail & prison ministries. It is our intentions to get input from those incarcerated as well as those “free” to visit. Life experiences of the faith and fellowship from those locked up in the facilities are always desired to let others know of the value of “visitation”. I am certain that each of us have many stories of the miracles God has done in our lives.

Our wishes are that we would have a list of supportive churches that individuals might look forward to attending once released. A list of services, such as

**housing,
employment, and
counseling services,**

as well as some individuals available for **friendly fellowship** are also much needed items.

God’s Word says if a man stumbles, how can he continue lest there be another to help him up. **Ecc. 4:10** “For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him [that is] alone when he falleth; for [he hath] not another to help him up.” **Proverbs 24:17** “Rejoice not when thy enemy falleth, and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbleth.” **John 11:10** “But if a man walketh in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.”

Please help us with input with this newsletter as we strive to serve God. We appreciate any articles, testimonies, or input.

The Path Inspired

I would like to share a story of the seeds planted in my life and the insight as I look back.

The greatest influence in my life I would have to say was my earthly father. This man would do what ever he could to provide for his family. The greatest reference of his nature was my mothers dearly love always for him.

When I was probably 8 to 12 years old, I had a Sunday school teacher named Malcolm that worked on planting Godly seed in my life. As I look back, I am sure there was the appearance of the seed going dormant, or even dying. As I entered middle school years, I bounced through a variety of churches because of going with friends and relatives. Still, any seed that may have been planted was basically “dead.”

As I was finishing my high school years, I started a job in a restaurant where I met a black man, Otis, that was the dishwasher. He let me know that he was an ordained pastor. I thought I want nothing to do with this man. Otis would take the garbage out to the room to empty and would stay a little longer as he pulled his New Testament out of his pocket and read for his break. Then (the nerve of him) he would come back in and share with me about God’s love for me and God’s purpose for my life. I would tell Otis that I did not want to hear about it. I explained that my relatives would use the Bible and religion to tear apart and slay one another. I further explained that my feelings were that he read the Bible in the garbage room and that was where it belonged. I now am thankful that God did not remove me, because I would not have been going to be in His presence.

But God had another plan and had not given up on me. I was accepted to California State University Humboldt and moved to Eureka, CA. I have to admit that this was really God's country, but I still did not have a personal relationship with Him. As I looked for work, I found an opening in the service department of Sears. I was hired to do television and stereo repairs. The manager of the shop came to me and let me know that he was a pastor of a local church. Again I thought "I'll stay away from him" but that was not God's plan. I began to think "either this man has something real or he is totally nuts." I decided that I would ask some questions, and so we would spend lunch together in his Volkswagen and discuss Bible reality.

In January 1971, at the age of 23, I finally told Him, **God I accept you as Lord and Savior and want you in control of my life but (1) do not expect me to go to some God forsaken country like Africa as a missionary, (2) don't expect me to work with youth, and (3) never expect me to be involved with inmates, jail or prison ministry.**

As I went on in life, thinking I had cut the best deal I could with God, he started to reveal to me that he wanted me to release some of those things "I" was holding on to and fully submit my life to Him. This happened over an extended period of time and it seems God knew just the right timing and speed for me to grow (you might realize he is the creator/builder). As I released those fears I had and let God have control of those objects, there continually were burdens being lifted. I tell people now that while people were getting high on weed in Humboldt County, I was getting high on the Spirit.

I became involved in teaching youth and running a youth group. While dealing with the youth, I noticed one principle that can be applied with our relationship with God. I took a group of youth out gold panning. All day long I watched the young men panning the gold. At the end of the day, I noticed the young ladies had the bottles of gold going home with them. When I asked how that happens, the ladies said that the men did it because of love and labored for the ladies. We actually get to take home the "Gold" at the end of "our day" while God was the one laboring for us all those days.

I have been involved in jail/prison ministry for about 2 ½ years now and can truly say it is my greatest blessing that was almost missed because of "trying" to say NO to God.

Later in life, God revealed His progression pattern for me to follow;

1. Sin
2. Salvation
3. Separation
4. Sanctification
5. Soul Winning
6. Stewardship
7. Service

Many people try to separate from the temptations of the world before receiving salvation. Others try to receive all God's blessings (sanctification) before they have separated from the sin of the world.

Read Ephesians 4 thru 6 and see if you can see this pattern revealed. Notice that 1 John displays the same progression, as does Colossians.

P.S. Africa may be in the making!!

Addresses to contact our Ministry Volunteers

Bob
P.O. Box 6667
Visalia, CA. 93290

Rick
3737 S. Akers
Visalia, CA. 93277

This space available
P.O. Box
Your Town,

This space available
P.O. Box
Your Town,

This space available
P.O. Box
Your Town,

Bible Study Lessons

SET FREE PRISON MINISTRY
Of Northern California
401 MacArthur Boulevard
San Leandro, CA. 94577-9801

Replenishing

God's Word promises to restore the years of the locust, or more simply the years previously lost.

Joel 2:25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

Recommended Reading

For the new Christian, or the individual desiring to know God, we would like to recommend the following reading.

The Gospel of John – This is a great introduction of Christ's walk on Earth.

The Book of Romans – This gives an introduction of many of the Bible stories shared and helps build familiarity of Christ's plan for our lives.

The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren – 40 chapters will change your life in 40 days

Book of Proverbs – Read one chapter a day with the chapter read being the day of the month. This will allow the book to be read almost 12 times thru the year.

Ephesians 4 – 6 – This gives the pattern for life that we should live. All 7 S's are displayed in these 3 chapters. We are given the purpose of the gifts, changing our character, husband/wife/family relationships, and the type of life we are to live and display.

Men's Relational Toolbox – Another fine work by Gary Smalley with both of his sons adding to this book. This book avoids "male bashing" but rather teaches men to use and modify the inner tools they have to improve their relationships.

When Satan reminds you of your past, remind him of his future.

God accepts you where you are, but loves you too much to leave you there.

Letters that Express it All

These are actual quotes from some of the different incarcerated individuals. The names have been removed

"I thank you for the Bill Glass Crusade program. It has showed me that I should not give up and I can only go forward from here, thanks to God! (and you). . . .

I have slowed down on reading my Bible, I'm getting discouraged, not with God, but with my fellow man, the games I must go through. I feel like just giving up!

Then I think about you, Gene, and all the others who put in so much to show me to the Lord and it's what keeps me going! I'm not gonna quit or let Satan have his way, I'm gonna fight and win this fight, you gave me the tools, the strength and the will as well as the knowledge to defeat him again. Thank you!

You never gave up on me, so I cannot give up on myself!" **SW**

" . . . Yes I have accepted Christ as my savior. When we first met I was down in the dump of thinking '**what have I done wrong to be here**' and I thought '**What have I done to prevent from coming here? Nothing!**' I didn't hear anybody say '**Hey!! You are going the wrong way!**' because I didn't want to hear! Didn't see where I was going, didn't read the signs, but then day by day I could hear, could see, and then I thought it's too late. But wait a minute. I am not dead yet and I still got a lot to learn yet and all of my family and friends are helping and all I had to do was to remember that God was always there. Just read and you will find, ask and you will be told, want and it will be given to you. Thank you Jesus never leaving me and thank you for writing back. **LV**

" . . . I've been in and out of prison since I was 18. Before I go any further I'd like to let you know that I am a Christian. I have studied God's Holy Word in and out of prison. And I know that when I'm in the Word, thing go good for me. I get a job and things just seem to go my way, but after a while I start feeling lonely in church and I feel out of place, like I don't belong there. It seems like I have no friends, so eventually I go out looking for my old friends, then stop going to church, then I start using drugs, then I end up in prison again. It is a cycle I would like for God to help me break out of, so maybe you can help me with a prayer.

I want change in my life. I know that God has helped 1000's of people to change. I have heard of heroin addicts that are now sober and drunks that are in their right mind because of God.

Well chaplain, I want that change in my life. I want God to help me think soberly and clearly. I want God to show me his mercy and loving kindness and help me to experience love in his life. I'm tired of being locked up. I hate being caged up in a little cell like an animal. I want to be free, spiritually and physically, so can you please help me with a prayer?" **JU**

" . . . I am a first timer here in prison and I really don't like it. I am a Christian and I pray a lot and ask God to help me be more humble, gentle, and patient. I am tired of living a life of crime and drugs. My mother has been a Christian for about 6 years now and she has told me a lot about God, but I never listened to her. We have had our differences and at the moment I don't even have her address to write her. I only pray that she will write me. I would really like that." **TDM**

Please pray for individuals like this, that the Lord will lead them to a true commitment.

Selected Ministry Articles

Second Chances

God's Prisoner

From J. Vernon McGee's Edited Messages on Philemon 1 ©1983

Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. . . (Philemon 1)

I have noticed that several of the commentaries try to change this and explain it away by teaching that Paul really meant that he was a prisoner because he was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. But that is not what Paul said, and he had the ability of saying exactly what he had in mind. He was using the Greek language, which is a very flexible, versatile language. He said he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

If we had been there, we might have had a conversation with Paul like this:

"Poor Paul, it's too bad these Romans put you in jail."

"They didn't put me in jail."

"Oh, we know what you mean. Those hateful religious rulers brought a charge against you."

"They didn't put me in jail, either."

"Who did, then?"

"Jesus Christ. I'm *His* prisoner."

"You mean to tell me that you would serve someone who put you in prison?"

"Yes, when it's His will for me to be in prison, I'm in prison. When it's His will for me to be out of prison, I'll be out of prison. When it's His will for me to be sick, I'm going to be sick. I belong to Him. And since I belong to Him, I have learned to be content in whatsoever state I am in."

***Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
(Philemon 3)***

by: Greg Laurie

Did you know that our shortcomings and failures come as no surprise to God? David wrote in Psalm 139, "O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; you understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether" (verses 1-4 NKJV).

Maybe you have had a serious failure in your spiritual life recently. Maybe it has been a moral failure. Maybe you have failed your spouse, children, co-workers, or others who were looking to you. Maybe you have fallen and wonder if you ever can be forgiven.

Yet God can take our failures and turn them into successes. God can take losers and turn them into winners. We see this in the life of one follower of Jesus, whose name was Simon Peter.

It is worth noting how Simon got his new name, Peter. The disciples were with the Lord at a place called Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus turned to them and said, "Who do men say that I am?" Various ideas were thrown out. Then Simon, under the inspiration of God himself, said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16 NKJV).

This was a remarkable moment. Peter had been given supernatural insight. Jesus told him, "I am giving you a new name. From this moment on, your name is Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (see Matthew 16:17–18).

I wonder what the other disciples thought when Jesus gave Simon this new name. "Rock? Is He on the level? Is this for real? You are calling him Rock?" After all, when you think of a rock, you think of something that is solid. A rock is dependable. It is immovable. But Simon was hotheaded. He was impulsive. He was impetuous. To call Simon a rock almost seemed laughable.

This goes to show that God not only sees you for what you are, but also sees you for what you can become. He sees your potential. We might see a blank canvas, but God sees a finished painting. We see problems, but God sees solutions. We see failures, but God sees successes. We see a Simon, but God sees a rock. In the same way, He sees you for what you can become.

Before Peter fully lived up to this new name, he had a serious lapse. He experienced a fall that was both notable and dramatic. You'll find the Gospel accounts of it in Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and John 18. Yes, Peter fell. Yes, he had a lapse. But it was a temporary one. Later, in his own epistle, Peter wrote, "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you" (1 Peter 5:10 NKJV).

Peter was saying, "I know what I am talking about here. I have gone through hardship. I want you to know that God will get you through it." In the same way, you have gone through certain experiences in life. It might have been a tragedy. It might have been a mistake you made. Maybe you've thought, "Why did the Lord let me go through these things? Why did God allow this to happen?" But God can take whatever you have experienced in life and use it so you can reach out to other people who might be going through the same kind of thing right now.

I could look back on my own childhood and say, "Lord, why did I have to be born into an alcoholic home? Why did I have to be in a home where my mom was married and divorced seven times?" When I look back at the lessons that I learned, I realize that God can use these things to help me reach out to and have compassion for people who are going through something similar.

Instead of being devastated by past failures or being upset with God as to why you went through certain things, how about allowing God to take those things you have experienced and turn them into great lessons that you can share with others? God gives second chances. That is what He did for Peter. And that is what He can do for you.

• [A New Beginning \(Monday, January 31, 2005\)](#)

The High Road To Beginning Again

by Chaplain Ray

More than ninety-five percent of all the prisoners in our jails and prisons today will walk out the front gate someday. What kind of people will they be? What kind of neighbors will they make? Will they continue their careers of crime, or will they change to a lifestyle of labor and obedience to law? How can a prisoner who has served years in penitentiaries and prisons find the road back and build a new life? What can Christians do, and what can churches do, and what should our churches do to help?

Most men doing prison time will get out sooner or later. How can they stay out? What does it take to start over? That is what every prisoner needs to know.

If you wanted to know how to repair an automobile, you would ask a mechanic. If you wanted to know how to repair a clock, you'd talk with a jeweler or watchmaker. If you wanted to know how to build a house, you would learn from a carpenter. However, you are wanting to do something much more complicated and serious than any of these things. You are about to rebuild a life that has been destroyed in the past. You are about to change your future.

Coming from someone who has studied the problem of rehabilitation for some years. I can tell you that you must have a good foundation upon which to build a new life. There must be a basis, a real starting point. The day that a man walks out of jail or prison is not the time to run

a game or to kid yourself into a fantasy, into a make-believe, unrealistic plan. Starting over is for real. It is serious business. Staying out of prison is serious business.

I have a friend who was involved in crime in the streets of Houston for years. He was a drug addict. He dealt in drugs. He committed many crimes. His name was Joe. He went to prison. The day he finished his prison sentence and walked out the front gate his father and brother were waiting for him in the prison parking lot. What kind of reception did he get?

In the car, they had hidden some drugs, for he was a drug addict. In the car, they had some booze. He liked liquor. And in town they had a prostitute waiting for him. That foolish father and that ignorant brother thought that when a man comes out of prison, he needs drugs, booze, and women.

It wasn't long before Joe was back in deep trouble again. That's not the end of Joe's story. His story has a wonderful end. He stopped running around with his father and his brother, and the prostitutes and the drug pushers and the liquor dealers. He hid out in a Christian Center in Houston, a place that we called *The Pulpit In The Shadows*. He and his crime partner hid out there mostly to break down their drug habits, and to hide for a few days from the cops. My friend, Freddie Gage, was the director of that Center. I was honored to serve on the Board of Directors.

While there, hiding from the police, Joe met Jesus Christ. He was totally transformed. He went to Lee Bible

College. Today he's a great evangelist and a minister of the Gospel.

There **IS** a road to that wonderful land of beginning again. That road doesn't start in the "red-light" district. You cannot find a signpost of that road in the taverns or among drug dealers. You will find the signpost of that road among those who are walking that highway. Jesus describes for us in the Book of Matthew the seriousness of building a life and building it right. Matthew 7: 24-27:

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew; and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

You can walk with me through any jail or prison in this land, and look around you, and see the wreckage of houses that have collapsed! Lives that caved in! Why? Because they were built on the shifting sands of ungodly lifestyles, on unprincipled living, and they could not stand the realities of life. The foundation upon which you build your new life is of extreme importance. That is why the rehabilitation rate among prisoners, in all of the secular programs that leave God and the Bible out, and that build on anything less than this foundation, is so dismally small. Our government has abandoned its multimillion dollar CETA

program. They had vainly hoped to rehabilitate prisoners by spending millions of your tax dollars.

The history of this nation and of other nations is littered with the wreckage of such humanistic programs. The foundation upon which you build your life will determine how well it will stand. If the foundation is not solid, your life will collapse.

My prisoner friend, if you are going to start over, why not start right?

My friend, George Meyer, who was a getaway driver for Al Capone, a gangster in his youth, spent thirty years in various prisons for robbing banks and armored cars, and other crimes. Then he met Christ in Leavenworth Prison a few years ago. Today he is a shining example of a rehabilitated ex-convict! His whole life is built on the word of God. Seventeen years ago, when he left Attica Prison the guard on duty said to him, "Well, goodbye, George. We'll be seeing you soon."

George said, "No, you won't see me. I'm going home." The guard laughed and said, "George, you're not going home; you are leaving home! Prison **IS** your home!"

In two of three cases, the opinion of that guard would be valid! Prison *is* home for two out of three prisoners in this land today. Two out of three will be coming back because that is their home. It fits their lifestyle of covetousness, of theft, of permissive living, of unprincipled conduct, of ravaging the rights of others.

That guard didn't know that God had put His hand upon George Meyer and

protected his life through many dangers up to that same time - even when he and Willie Sutton tried to escape from the Eastern Pen in New York State. They went down into the sewers, so the guards just sealed the sewers and flooded them with water. But they survived! And today, George Meyer is a born-again Christian with a good Christian home. He is in demand all over this land as a public speaker.

I had a letter just a few days ago from the chaplain of the federal prison at Lompoc, California. He said, "Your friend, George Meyer, was just through this place. He spoke to our men here." He added, "We really appreciated his coming. He had something to say to prisoners."

He had found the rock on which to build, and that is the only way that prisoners can be sure of staying out of prison. If you continue the life that took you to prison in the first place, that same life will take you back to prison again. But if you build a new life on a new foundation, with a new Master, with new values, with a new lifestyle, there is a rock on which you can build!

Paul said in First Corinthians 3:11, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The question is not "What is the foundation?", the real question is "**WHO** is the foundation?" That foundation is more than a program! That foundation is more than a principle! That foundation is a person! His name is the LORD JESUS CHRIST!

Many prisoners think they will make it if they can just start out in a new location. A lot of prisoners write to me and say,

"Chaplain Ray, I'd like to come to Texas when I get out of prison, because I know if I go back to my hometown, I'll fall in with the old gang and I'll soon be back in trouble again."

That's a good observation, and quite accurate. In many cases a man does well, when coming out of prison, to go to a new town and not get back among his old friends. If you are going back to your old hometown, don't go back to the old gang. Go back to those who are friends of God. Go to Christians. Go to church. Go to Christian institutions. Work with Christians. Associate with Christians.

If you go back to the 'old gang', you'll end up in the same old prison cell. Only Jesus Christ can provide you with the new life that every convict needs.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." II Corinthians 5:17.

Your change is inward, and that results in outward changes. The secret is in your heart, a new Lord, a new Master, new priorities, new attitudes. Christ is the source of all that change.

He changed Zacchaeus, the crooked tax collector from Jericho. He changed Peter, the boisterous fisherman from Galilee. He changed the penitent thief from a guilty criminal to a righteous child of God. He changed Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Apostle. He can change anyone who will turn to Him in repentance and faith and commit their life holy to God.

If you will do that, don't wait till you get out of prison. Start where you are right

now, as you are. As you commit your life to Christ, pray, "God have mercy on me, a sinner. Take me as I am. Wash me in the blood that Jesus shed for me, and help me build my new life according to your Word and according to your will." If you can pray that prayer from your heart and mean it sincerely, in the next two minutes your life will be wondrously changed.

Half a million prisoners in jails and prisons of this land need to find, and walk, this high road to the land of beginning again. The sure guide, and the true road map, is the Bible.

The story of the Prodigal son, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke, is a good starting point for every person whose life has collapsed in ruin.

Many people talk to God without ever talking to themselves. But before this prodigal son went back to his home and talked to his father, he had a talk with himself!

I've seen men talking to themselves in many prisons and in jails.

Some of them are really talking sense. Some are talking nonsense. But this prodigal son talked to himself, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father and say unto him, 'Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee.'" You see, he didn't just make a mistake. He didn't just take a wrong turn in the road. He sinned. "I have sinned. I am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants." That

prodigal son found the magical road to the wonderful land of beginning again!

How can convicts and prisoners, and others whose lives have collapsed upon them and around them . . . how can they pull themselves together when their world falls apart? How can they put their feet on the high road that leads to the land of beginning again? How can a prisoner find the high road that leads to the land of beginning again?

In Galatians 6:9, Paul wrote, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart, or give up." One of the staff members at our International Prison Ministry offices in Texas found a poster that spoke a great message. He put it in the dining room. It's still there today. It reads:

"A man may fail many times but he is not a failure until he starts blaming somebody else."

That wasn't quoted in the Bible, but all of the Bible affirms it. Eve blamed the serpent who tempted her. Adam blamed Eve, who offered him the apple. And the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve have been blaming others for their failures, from then till now. A man may fail many times, but he is not a failure until he starts blaming somebody else!

The most revered president in the history of this nation was once considered a failure. As a young attorney, he went bankrupt, applied for a civil service job and was refused. He got married, and his wife died. He entered the political arena as a candidate for the House of Representatives, and he was soundly defeated. Then he put in his bid for a

seat in the United States Senate, and again he lost.

Then at the age of fifty one, he ran for the office of the president of the United States, and Abraham Lincoln was elected! He became a legend in his time and for all time to come! His secret was, he would not quit! He put his trust in God. He said, "I will prepare myself." and he did. When the country needed an unusual man to lead it through a civil war, it called on Abraham Lincoln.

Those who fail are those who quit, and that applies to prisoners and convicts just like it does to politicians, preachers, or anyone else. It does not take any special talent or ability to be a quitter.

Paul the Apostle, who was oftentimes put in prison and finally was executed as a Christian martyr, wrote, in II Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith." He was not a quitter. And in Galatians, he wrote: "Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

You can become anything you want to be and everything that God wants you to be, if you will not allow the causes of failure to defeat you.

It is true of prisoners. It is true of all of us. To shift the blame to somebody else, to poverty, to the ghetto, to wrong associates, to an unloving father, to a working mother, to shift the responsibility for our sins and crimes and failures to somebody else is to choose to walk farther and farther down the road of failure! The first step toward finding the high road to that magic land of beginning again is to face reality. "I

have sinned. I have played the fool. I made the wrong choice. I've sowed wild oats. I am reaping the bitter harvest."

That is the point at which prisoners, turning from crime to Christ and from self to the Savior, make the first turn and the first step toward finding that high road that leads to the land of beginning again. The Bible calls that land ***THE KINGDOM OF GOD.***

We helped a prisoner get out of prison twice, once on the west coast and once on the east coast. Then we brought him to Dallas to work at our offices. He had only been here a few days when he said to me, "Chaplain Ray, I never knew that people in the free world worked so hard." I sa, "Well, of course we have to work so hard. We have to support ourselves and our families and all of you men in the prisons as well."

The dignity of labor is the key to rehabilitation. And let me tell you frankly. When prisoners say that nobody will hire a prisoner, that isn't true. It is much easier to get a job for a prisoner than to get that prisoner to stay on that job. And this is from practical experience!

I have little interest in halfway houses that attempt to rehabilitate prisoners without a daily diet of meaningful, productive labor. One of the first things that a prisoner must learn, if he's going to rebuild his life in the free world, is the importance of work. Some people say that all things come to him who waits. Not a word of truth in it! I know men in prison that have been waiting for ten years, twenty years, and thirty years, and the good things they're waiting for don't come to them.

It would be better to say, "All good things that are needful come to those who labor and who work."

Work will never lose its magic power. I commend work, not only to everyone in the free world, but to everyone in the prison world. Set your heart and your mind to labor. Get all the work you can in the prison, and do it with all your heart. Develop a lifestyle of labor that will make you a winner when you walk out the front gates of the prison.

But the one thing that determines the destiny of a man is his personal relationship with God. Get that right, and live by His Word, and all your other relationships will fall into proper place, including your labor relationship with other human beings.

When a man is paroled or released from prison he needs three things that are essential to a crime free life.

1) He needs a place to live. Preferably with his own family.

2) He needs a church family of believers, a church to which he commits his loyalty, and a church that is committed to him.

3) He needs a job. The idleness that is common in prison must not carry over into the free world. He needs to immediately go to work and earn his own way.

"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Eph. 4:28.

Prisoners who want to find the high road that leads to the land of beginning again must totally forsake the old road. That road led to prison. Forsake the old companions who also walk in the old ways of sin, crime and lawlessness. Forsake the old hangout and all of the old hang-ups. *Christ* makes all things *new*.

7 S Summary

I like to summarize with the spiritual barometer of where we are. It is a seven step progression (Eph. 4-6)

Sin **Realize**
For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God

Salvation **Repent**
There is but one way to be saved, Jesus Christ. . . . Put on the whole armor of God.

Separation **Remove**
NEVER give place to the Devil. . . . Behold old things are passed away and ALL things become new.

Sanctification **Restore**
And grieve not the Holy Spirit . . . But be ye filled with the Holy Spirit

Soul Winning **Relay**
I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Stewardship **Reward**
Who then is that faithful and wise steward?

Service **Results**
With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.

Doing what God has Called Us to Do

The individual writing the following 2 letter excerpts had just gotten 30+ years when we met for the first time on a Monday night. His story saddened my heart as I listened to a man beaten down, hurting, and feeling no one (God included) loved him any more. However, God had not given me the job of “soil inspector” but God called me to “sow the seed.” No matter what the soil may appear like

The hard part of ministry is when you are called to sow. Those that are farmers know that harvest time is the best. In ministry also, we like to see the harvest. But harvesting is something that builds us up, feeds our drive, and shows the return on investment. Remember that God promises 30X, 70X and 100X return on investing in Him.

... I just wanted to thank you for taking out the time to stop at my cell that night and share the Word of God with me, I needed that. I really need a fresh new filling of the Holy Spirit in my soul, so please pray my strength in the Lord. I have been reading and praying that God's will be done in my life, to be honest with you Bob. I thought that God did not love me anymore because I had backslid and committed a terrible sin against God and my family, but you said something that made me realize that Jesus Christ and the Father are the only ones who's love for me will never fail, and I truly thank God for you, I love you brother.

“... Let me just say that I am blessed. I was real happy to hear from you, and about the work

that you have been doing . . . I am full of Joy. God is good (all the time) . . . I want to thank you again Chaplain Bob for stopping by my cell that night and sharing the Word of God with me, it put me back on the right track, I was beat down! I didn't think that God cared about me anymore. I had stopped reading the Word, and I stopped praying, but then I thought about what you said about God loving me and what Jesus did also. You kicked my butt, and set me right, and that s a good thing, you are the first white man that has ever kicked my butt (ya ya), but anyways thank you for taking the time out to show me love. I love you for that brotha!”

When Satan has us in his grasp, he keeps darkness around us. We cannot see clearly the love of Christ. We cannot see any hope in our future. We cannot see any use in trying to overcome. Satan has us in his complete control because we cannot see any alternative way.

Until we can learn to trust God through His Son Jesus Christ, we have limited vision. From God's viewpoint, He knows what is best for us. God was the designer of us and knows every strength and weakness. Just as someone that designed a piece of machinery, there are rules and standards to keep that machinery lubed, running and reliable, so God has an owners manual for us – **the Bible**. This book, being the inspired Word of God, needs no revisions, amendments, or modifications. Being given by a Perfect God, it is a Perfect instruction manual.