

Hope Within

In prison there is much despair. It surrounds an inmate at times. This hopelessness can infect a lifer's being from the moment they enter the system. In most cases it only worsens with the passage of time. When appeals are denied; family and friends drift away; the prisoner's future looks increasingly bleak. Many turn towards alcohol, drugs and violence to escape the boredom and futility of their existence. Yet, among this population are individuals that stand out as beacons of light.

There are men among the many depraved here who look forward to a future full of promise. They rise above the circumstances in which prison places them. These wondrous servants of the Most High carry on a legacy of love. Where do you suppose their hope lies? What gives them the strength to face a cruel environment with tranquillity. It is certainly not of this world.

These men hold to a promise that comes from the Creator Himself. It says in Romans 10:9-11 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that the God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, 'whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.'" Some prisoners have discovered the freedom that comes only from being a member of the body of Christ. To men who know the anger, disappointment and condemnation of the world, the gospel can bring a treasure that transcends all their pain.

In Acts 15: 8-9 the Bible proclaims: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." Here at last inmates find themselves acceptable and loved, cherished by their Lord; they are part of God's family. They look forward to the same rewards and eternal life that all true believers have throughout history. Death and destruction no longer reign in their lives. They are in agreement with the Apostle Paul who stated in II Corinthians 5:8 "we are confident I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Yet, they also know that God has a purpose and plan to fulfill through their lives. To this end they can wake each day with anticipation and joy.

In Romans 12:1 it says: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service." There is no greater privilege than to be a living sacrifice for our Master. To be allowed to serve Him is a reward unto itself. Every day the Christian inmate can wake with the hope of bringing joy to His Savior's heart.

So you see, even in a place surrounded by walls, a child of God looks forward to a great future. There are daily opportunities to be useful and productive in the Kingdom of God. We live out the commands to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Each one of us has the same potential to live out and speak the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Knowing that we will rise again, we can live out I Corinthians 15:58. "Therefore, my beloved

brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." For us the best is yet to come. There is hope for all who place their trust in Jesus Christ.

Now reader, I must ask, Do you have this hope? If it is missing in your life I beg of you to turn from your sins and toward Jesus. Confess all that holds you in bondage and use Romans 10:9+10 as your template to pray. If you believe in Jesus Christ and receive His gift of salvation, you too can look forward to life. I Corinthians 15:3-4 records Paul's message: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the scriptures." It is the foundation of the Gospel and of the Christian's hope. I pray it is so for you.

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