

Prison: The Incarcerated Christian

Due to a person's rebellion towards God and the laws of the land (Romans 13) a person may find themselves in prison. Hopefully at some point the incarcerated man will cry out to God and allow God to begin working in their life and to address negative behaviors to become more Christlike. Some of these behaviors may have been learned over a long period of time and it may take a long time to address and change these behaviors. God will help you.



Romans 13:1, *'Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.'* ² Consequently, whoever **rebels against the authority** is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be **free from fear** of the one in authority? **Then do what is right and you will be commended.** ⁴ For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore, it is **necessary to submit to the authorities**, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. ⁶ This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. ⁷ Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.'

When an incarcerated man becomes a believer all their sins are forgiven. But they still owe a debt to society that they need to fulfill with their prison time. They should recognize that God used/uses prison to save them and/or make changes in their lives/behaviors. Each day thank God for His mercy and grace. Use every opportunity in prison to grow in the Lord, no matter how frustrating at times, and to learn new life skills/programs that are available in the prison system. **Romans 8:28** tells us that "God causes all things to work out for the good." Even in prison God will work things out for your good. Don't live in the past, or the future, but focus on what God wants to do in your life today.

Since God loves and works in prison to help the incarcerated Christian grow and mature as a believer, he also has a plan for that person when they are released. **Jeremiah 29:11** *'For I know the plans I have for you,'* declares the Lord, *'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'* Prepare for your release and trust God for His plans for you after you are released.

The Christian incarcerated man should not be angry and bitter towards anyone that played a role in their incarceration such as friends, family, judicial, prison admin or correctional officers, etc. It is

time to let God work in your heart to forgive others, to trust in His love and plans for you, address any behavioral issues God wants to work on. To grow spiritually through daily prayer, Bible reading, prison fellowship groups and to share with others what God has done for you. It is also a time to begin reconciliation efforts for family and children if communication is allowed. Remember, if you were not in prison, you may never have come to know the Lord or addressed issues in your life and you may have continued to hurt yourself, others or even have an early death. You need to focus on getting your life right with God so you can get your relationship right with those you love.

Note: Some people on the 'outside' who have never been in a prison also live in an invisible prison surrounded by invisible bars due to depression, anxieties, fears, abuse, addictions, etc. These people can also be freed by Jesus when they call upon Him.

DISCUSSION:

1. Share how being in prison helped you to become a Christian and make changes in your life ____
2. Share your expectations to pay off your debt to society _____
3. Share how you are using your time in prison to address behavior changes _____
4. Share how you forgave others that may have placed you in prison _____
5. Share any reconciliation efforts/progress with your family and children (if communication is allowed) _____

