

## **GOD BEHIND BARS**

### **PRISON GATE PICTURE**

#### **GOOD MORNING**

**IF MY BEING UP HERE IS SURPRISING ..... WELL ..... IMAGINE  
THA SHOCK I'M IN.**

**SO, WOULD YOU JOIN ME IN PRAYER OVER THE MATTER.**

**MY LORD,  
THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME THE WORDS. I ASK  
YOUR HELP IN DELIVERING THEM. MAY THEY CAUSE  
THOUGHT AND PROVE TO BE HELPFUL.  
AMEN**

**A FEW WEEKS AGO, DEB AND I MET UP WITH SOME  
ARKANSAS AND TEXAS FRIENDS IN ANGOLA, LOUISIANA  
TO TAKE IN A PRISON RODEO AND CRAFT SHOW.**

**THE EXPERIENCE TURNED OUT TO BE FAR DIFFERENT THAN  
WE COULD HAVE IMAGINED.**

**THESE CONVICTS WERE POLITE, RESPECTFUL, ... MANY WITH  
SMILES, AND SEVERAL WERE OUTSPOKEN CHRISTIANS, WHO  
APPEARED TO BE SINCERE.**

ONCE HOME, WE ENJOYED SHARING WITH A FEW FRIENDS  
ABOUT THIS UNEXPECTED CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

PASSING THIS STORY ON KEPT CROSSING MY MIND.  
... MAYBE A WEDNESDAY NIGHT AT CHURCH.

NAW .... IT WOULDN'T IMPRESS OTHERS IN THE WAY IT DID  
ME. BESIDES, I'M SURE NO SPEAKER.

WEEKS LATER,  
I DECIDED TO GET IT OFF MY CHEST BY TELLING BROTHER  
JEFF.

IT SEEMED TO FIT RECENT MESSAGE THEMES, AND HE'D  
RELATE WITH HIS PRISON CHAPLIN EXPERIENCE.

WHO KNOWS? HE MIGHT EVEN BE ABLE TO USE PARTS IN AN  
UPCOMING MESSAGE!

HE RESPECTFULLY LISTENED .... SEEMED TO ENJOY IT.

THEN

ASKED IF I'D BE WILLING TO SHARE IT WITH THE CHURCH  
FAMILY! .... SUNDAY

AND THEN

WHILE I WAS STILL SPEECHLESS ... CAME THE KILL SHOT:

"WOULD YOU PRAY ABOUT IT??"

.... SO, WE GET INSIDE THE PRISON FENCE AT 8:30 IN THE A.M.  
TO SEE THE CRAFT SHOW ...

DEB'S STICKIN' CLOSE – WE'RE RUBBING SHOULDERS  
WITH MURDERERS, YOU KNOW.

THESE FELLAS JUST WEREN'T FITTIN THE PART. THEY SEEMED  
TO HAPPY AND CONTENT.

OH, THEY'RE JUST PUTTIN ON A GOOD FRONT TO HELP SELL  
THEIR WARES.

BUT I WAS SEEING MORE SMILES AND HEARING LESS FOUL  
LANGUAGE FROM THE CONVICTS ... THAN THE PUBLIC THAT'S  
COME FOR THE RODEO!

### PICTURES OF CRAFTS

THE INMATES WORK WAS IMPRESSIVE. WOODWORK  
PROJECTS: INCLUDING FURNITURE  
METAL WORK: FIREPITS AND GRILLS  
AND LOTS OF WELL DONE ARTWORK.

WE WERE THERE FOR HOURS AND DIDN'T SEE IT ALL.

WE WERE ACTUALLY ENJOYING THE HAPPINESS AND  
CONTENTMENT OF THESE FELLAS.

WE STOPPED FOR DINNER ... 8 DIFFERENT STATIONS – ALL  
INMATE PREPARED  
BBQ, CAJUN CRAWFISH, PIZZA, STEAK

BAND BEHIND BARS TREATING US TO MUSIC

ALL WITH A SMILE AND COMMONLY 'GOD' TALK!

BUT

I CAME FOR A RODEO TOUTED AS THE  
'WILDEST SHOW IN THE SOUTH'

PICTURE OF PRISONERS PRAYER CIRCLE IN THE ARENA

HERE'S THE WAY IT STARTED: WITH PRAYER!

CONVICT POKER PICTURE

IT DIDN'T DISAPPOINT. THEY CALL IT CONVICT POKER. LAST  
ONE STILL IN HIS SEAT IS WINNER

REMAINDER OF THE RODEO PICTURES

WE HAD A LARGE TIME

THOSE FELLAS SURE PLAYED HARD AND ALL CAUTION WAS TO  
THE WIND.

**I WANT TO TELL YOU A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THESE MEN  
BEFORE  
YOU HAVE ANY LONGER TO GRIEVE OVER HOW NAÏVE I AM  
ABOUT WHAT ... CHANGED CHRISTIAN MEN THESE ARE ...**

### **ANGOLA PRISON**

**HAS OPERATING CAPACITY OF 4,100  
IT HOUSES INMATES FROM AGES 18 – 91  
THE AVERAGE SENTENCE IS 87 YEARS  
72% ARE SERVING A LIFE SENTENCE  
HOUSE THE MOST PRISONERS WITH A LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE  
SENTENCE IN THE U.S. AND IS KNOWN AS THE  
'BLOODIEST PRISON IN THE SOUTH'**

**SOCIETY HAS ISSUED CONSEQUENCES FOR THEIR TERRIBLE  
DEEDS; AND IS NOT GOING TO FORGIVE THEM!!**

**THEIR LIFE OUTSIDE THAT PRISON IS OVER!!**

**THEY'VE GOT NOTHING TO PROVE / THEY'RE GOING  
NOWHERE!!**

**GOD LITERALLY HAS A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE WITH NO  
DISTRACTIONS.**

**A HIGH, HIGH % SEEK CHRISTIANITY, ETERNAL LIFE, AND THE  
ONLY FORGIVENESS THEY'LL EVER RECEIVE, AND  
THE ONLY ONE THAT REALLY MATTERS!!**

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**DRIVING HOME, I'M THINKING:**

**HOW MANY MORE CHRISTIANS WOULD THERE BE IF WE  
COULD LOCK THEM AWAY FROM ALL OF LIFE'S  
DISTRACTIONS?**

**GIVE THEM NOTHING ELSE TO THINK ABOUT BUT WHAT  
HAPPENS AFTER THESE FEW SHORT 90 YEARS ON MOTHER  
EARTH.**

**IT QUICKLY STRUCK ME THAT THE ALMIGHTY COULD HAVE  
MANAGED THAT SCENARIO WITH JUST A THOUGHT!**

**HE WANTS US TO CHOOSE HIM - OVER THE DISTRACTIONS OF  
HUNTIN' AND FISHIN'  
CATTLE/HORSES AND HARLEYS  
TRAVELIN' BALL TEAMS  
AND EVEN THAT JOB YOU EXCEL AT AND DEARLY LOVE!**

**ARE WE PUTTING THOSE THINGS BEHIND OR IN FRONT OF**

**HIS DESIRES FOR US???**

**COULDN'T THOSE DISTRACTIONS BE MADE INTO TOOLS WHEN  
HIS WISHES FOR US BECOME OUR FIRST PRIORITY?**

IN THE SECOND CHAPTER OF TITUS, PART OF VERSE 7 READS:

**"IN EVERYTHING, SET THEM AN EXAMPLE BY DOING WHAT IS GOOD"**

ANOTHER PART OF SAME VERSE SPEAKS OF 'TEACHING'

YOU, AS A CHRISTIAN, ARE 'TEACHING' THOSE AROUND YOU WITH YOUR PRIORITIES, YOUR ACTIONS, AND YOUR EVERY WORD.

GALATIANS 6:7-8 TELLS US WE'RE 'SOWING SEEDS'

ARE THEY THE IMPORTANT ONES THAT WILL MATTER?

WHEN GOD LISTENS TO THOSE DESCRIBING YOU, WHAT'S HE HEARING?

HE HAD A WALL FULL OF WORLD CLASS BUCKS, AND  
THAT GUY COULD CATCH A MESS OF FISH IN A  
MUD PUDDLE

OR

THAT GUY ALWAYS HAD A SMILE, A HELPING HAND, AND  
A CHRISTIAN MESSAGE FOR YA ..... AND WAS THE BEST  
OUTDOORSMAN I EVER SAW! ????

**MATTHEW 5:16 SAYS "LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS"**

**ABIDING JOY EXPERIENCED BY CHRISTIANS IS A POWERFUL PART OF THEIR TESTIMONY TO THE WORLD.**

**IT PROMPTS OTHERS TO WONDER ABOUT IT'S SOURCE.**

**HOW ABOUT THAT TRAVELIN' TEAM FAMILY OUT THERE?**

**ARE FOLKS FIRST NOTICING A JOYFUL FAMILY THAT ALWAYS PUTS THEIR CHRISTIAN PRIORITIES FIRST? AND SECONDLY, HOW GOOD A BALL PLAYER YOU ARE?**

**COLOSSIANS 3:23:**

**"WHATEVER YOU DO, DO IT ENTHUSIASTICALLY, AS SOMETHING DONE FOR THE LORD AND NOT FOR MAN.**

**AND TO THE BUSINESS WOMAN, MIGHT ONLOOKERS SAY:**

**SHE'S SOMETHIN'! BUILT THAT BUSINESS FROM SCRATCH! COULD SELL ICE TO AN ESKIMO!!**

**REALLY KIND AND GENEROUS TOO; .. DON'T SEE THAT MUCH!**

**BUT, BE PREPARED: YOU WON'T BE AROUND HER FOR LONG BEFORE JESUS COMES OUT. HE'S WHAT REALLY SEEMS TO DRIVE HER!!**

NOW THAT I'VE CALLED EVERYBODY ELSE OUT, IT'S TIME I CAME CLEAN ABOUT MYSELF AND MY SHORT COMINGS.

PUT JOHN 16:33 ON SCREEN

JESUS SAYS, IN JOHN 16:33, "I HAVE TOLD YOU THESE THINGS SO THAT IN ME YOU MAY HAVE PEACE. IN THE WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION. BUT TAKE COURAGE, I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD".

I MAKE THIS 'CHRISTIAN THING HARDER THAN IT HAS TO BE. I'VE HAD A SORRY WEEK, WITH NO PEACE.

I'VE SPENT HOURS UPON HOURS PREPARING FOR THIS MORNING.

NOT ALL BECAUSE I'M NO SPEAKER. BUT BECAUSE I WAS THINKING OF ALL I SHOULD BE GETTING ACCOMPLISHED AND ALL THE OPPORTUNITIES I WAS MISSING, I COULDN'T FOCUS.

I WAS ANGRY. DEB CAN TELL YOU, I'VE NOT BEEN FITTIN' TO BE AROUND – EVEN MAD AT JEFF FOR TALKING ME INTO THIS.

ON TOP OF THAT, I FELT GUILTY BECAUSE THIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN AN HONOR.

**I GOT ME A LESSON.**

**"IN THE WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION" ...**

**ALL THE THINGS THAT I WAS WANTING TO GET  
ACCOMPLISHED AND ALL THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT I WAS  
MISSING WERE WORLDLY THINGS.**

**I MADE MYSELF MISERABLE.**

**JESUS WAS OFFERING ME PEACE, IF I JUST WOULD'VE TURNED  
MY THOUGHTS ON HIM INSTEAD.**

**I'M HEADED TO KANSAS IN THE MORNING TO PICK UP A LOAD  
OF CATTLE. THE VERY TYPE OF THING I WAS ANGRY ABOUT  
MISSING LAST WEEK.**

**YOU FOLKS ARE ALL HEADED IN SEPARATE DIRECTIONS AS  
WELL.**

**WOULD YOU JOIN ME IN HAVING NEW COMMITMENT ABOUT  
WHAT MATTERS?**

**I MEAN WHAT REALLY MATTERS?**

**AS IF HE WERE WATCHING?**

**BECAUSE HE IS.**

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**IN JOHN 15:11, JESUS SPEAKS OF US HAVING A JOY THAT REFLECTS OUR CONNECTION TO HIM.**

**THAT JOY IS WHAT WAS SO EVIDENT IN THOSE PRISONERS. THEY HAD HOPE IN JESUS, WHEN THERE WAS NO OTHER POSSIBLE HOPE.**

**CAN WE MAKE THAT SAME CHOICE, EVEN WITH ALL THE DISTRACTIONS IN OUR LIVES? LET'S CHOOSE JESUS AND WHAT MATTERS TO HIM!!**

**I'D LIKE TO RECOGNIZE PASTOR JEFF'S SERMONS FOR MANY OF THE SCRIPTURES AND MY WIFE'S HELP WITH LOCATING OTHERS AND SUPPORTING ME IN THIS EFFORT.**

**THANKS FOR YALL'S PATIENCE AND HEARING ME OUT. HOPE YOU WERE ABLE TO PICK SOMETHING OUT THAT HAD MEANING FOR YOU.**

**BROTHER JEFF – RESCUE ME!!**