



I Found Him in Hell

By Rick Mathes

Mr. Carnal was a professing Christian who lived an exemplary life. He was a deacon in his church and taught Sunday School Bible study. The entire congregation looked up to him and the pattern he set for others to follow. On the outside, the side all could see, he was the husband and father all the women wished their man would become. Unknown to everyone was the real truth, that on the inside he confessed Jesus is Lord but never became obedient to His lordship. He was living a lie that finally caught up with him in a sudden and unexpected death! He died and went straight to hell.

As he looked out over the glowing lake of liquid flames, the abhorrence and inexpressible torture he witnessed was more than his damned soul could bear. As far as he could see was a holocaust of screaming human beings thrashing about in the white blistering conflagration, begging to die and escape this deathless tribulation.

Silently, Satan himself slithered up and rasped, "I have you!" He responded, "I know. I never confessed Jesus AS my Lord," and began to sob. Through tears he pleaded, "I beg you; give me twenty-four hours more before you throw me into that lake of fire." Satan smiled a toothless smirk and growled, "Granted!"

He hesitated and then began trudging along the steamy shoreline while flames licked at his exposed carcass. Reaching down from time to time to hoist up to eye level one wretched body after another,

he looked them full in the face and cursed with all his pent up venom of loathing. Again and again he would choose and grip an anguished cadaver to curse as he eventually found his way around the smoking abyss, counterclockwise to where he began his twenty-four tedious hours before. He was totally spent and lacking the strength left to stand in front of the immoral one who had patiently waited for his prey to return.

As he collapsed on that smoldering shore, Lucifer quietly approached and hissed, "Your time is up! But before I cast your body and soul into the black inferno, I must ask you just one last question. Why were you doing that?"

The condemned looked up and gasped, "I was looking for that preacher who told me I was saved!" Satan's twisted features gleamed with pride as he snarled, "That was I who told you that you were saved!"

Rick Mathes, author of Allah or Jesus, and his wife, Trish, are the founders of Mission Gate Prison Ministry, an outreach to those who are incarcerated and their families. To learn more about this ministry, please visit their website at: <http://www.missiongateministry.org>

Are You God's Answer?

By Tim May

The people of our state, our nation, and the world are experiencing financial distress; many in society are living a life of perversion. With the downturn in the economy, many people are losing jobs, homes, cars, and placing their hope in man and man's solutions.

Some have said we are living in the last days. I have heard it said that in the worst of times, as



Reverend Timothy and Katie May

believers, we live in the best of times. It is my belief the church has a great opportunity to change the mindset of the world for the Kingdom of God. We, the people of God, need to be fulfilling the call as Disciples of

Christ.

Many believers are calling on the Lord for many great things, "*Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.*" (Jeremiah 33:3) Often we call on God and wait for Him to answer. However, are we willing to be a servant and become the instrument that He utilizes to be the answer for Him?

We cry out in our churches for God to bring unity to the body, to break down the walls of denominational isms and schisms. We pray for His love to abound, but do we allow the Lord to use us as part of His answer to build the Kingdom and show His love?

We, His people, proclaim unity, however do we demonstrate unity of the body of Christ? We often talk a great game; but are we too busy allowing the world to influence our lives by permitting denominational differences and ethnicity to influence and divide us. While we desire to worship together, many times our differences in style stop us from doing so. When we do work together, is our motive recognition for ourselves, our individual churches, or for the Kingdom of God? How can we win the world if we don't show love and acceptance for one another as believers?

Scripture tells us in Ephesians 4:1-7, "*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*"

We profess our love in corporate gatherings but do we show agape love in our deeds and attitude. Agape love is the highest form of love. It expresses the relationship between all of creation. It expresses man's love of God, God's love for man and any creation of God, and a relationship of stranger toward stranger. It demonstrates a respect and consideration of all things. This is a form of love which does not develop as naturally as others, but requires cultivation. It is a form of love that does not seek inner consideration, but demands external consideration always. There is nothing selfish in it, no demands, only giving. Agape love is described as unconditional love.

Scripture tells us in John 13:34, "*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*"

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Looking Forward

By Richard C.

When I was just a little guy, about five or six, I used to love going to church. It was this fun new place, I was learning all these new things and my mother had even bought me a brand new suit to wear and I loved to dress up in it. Then, when I was eleven, I was at a night youth-group meeting and the pastor had a massive heart attack on the altar and died right there in front of all of us kids. My adolescent mind could not comprehend why God would allow this to happen. If it was a test of faith, I failed because I fell away from the church after that. Little did I know that the very next year I could have really used that foundation of faith because a very traumatic event took place that left our family parentless.

I tried for twenty-five years to fill the hole in my heart with every drug known to man, nothing worked. It took hitting rock bottom and coming to prison on a life sentence that I finally figured enough was enough and I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. It was in a holding cell of the county jail that I got down on my knees and asked God into my heart, and He accepted with arms opened wide. It hasn't been easy, there have been relapses, slips, and sin, but if there is one thing that

I have learned, it is that our Lord is quick to forgive, John 3:30, *"He must become greater; I must become less."* tells me if God is ever going to increase in my life I must decrease and it only takes one look around me here is prison to realize what my stinking thinking did for me. Not only did I hurt myself but the whole ripple effect hurt a lot of innocent people.

Today I have fourteen years clean and sober and I know this has

been possible by the grace and mercy of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. If I had any idea life could be this good without all the drama I was causing myself, I would like to think I would have gotten clean long ago. But for me, chasing the bag (drugs) was what life was all about. I honestly thought I had to be high to be happy. That is truly sad. And I may be doing "all day" (life) as they say, but today I am happy in my own skin. I can look in the mirror and not be disgusted with the guy looking back at me, because I was in prison long before I came to rest behind these walls and I have been set free long before they

decide to open that gate.

Today I have a new suit which I wear, it is the finest I will ever own, it is the armor of God. In Ephesians 6:10-18, *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against*

the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor

of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be

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I Was On Fire

A Testimony About Thomas M.

Thomas M. is a man after God's own heart. His testimony is one of many seasons which have changed throughout the years. Thomas was raised on a farm in Georgia with thirteen brothers and sisters. His father spent thirty-seven years in the

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Marine Corps and he too joined the forces when he was a young man. He went on two tours during the Vietnam War, his first in 1967, and his second in 1973. During his second tour, Thomas witnessed events that affected his life traumatically after his return to the states. Having left his wife and son, he soon found himself across the country, and eventually at the Vacaville prison.

Thomas' life story before his sentence, however, is only part of a testimony that shows how God had transformed his heart. "I thought everyone in church was a hypocrite," Thomas explained. Despite his feelings towards Christians, Thomas agreed to attend the 40 Days of Purpose class offered at the prison, but only after being lured with a certificate. "In the course

of sitting around in a small group, something happened. I didn't know Genesis from Revelation, but the more I heard, the more I wanted to hear." And so Thomas began his walk with the Lord. "I thought what am I doing?" Thomas explained, "I read about the Pharisees and saw I was the hypocrite, not them. Whether right or wrong, at least they were going."

As Thomas began studying the Bible, he received revelations that changed his view on life. "Impression without expression equals depression. If you're impressed with something and don't release it, it's like a time bomb." Thomas made it a habit to read the Bible every day. "I started getting different versions of Bibles; I'd have them stretched across the bed!" One night, after doing everything he could to show God he was ready to be used, Thomas was asked to give his testimony. "I said 'I'm not ready!' I used every excuse in the book. I was fuming, so I got the Bible and turned to Exodus, Chapter 3 and I read, God was asking Moses to let his people go and Moses was making excuses. I got convicted."

Soon after, Thomas was again asked to give his testimony. "I jumped up and said I'd be ready in a minute! Nothing

prepared, no Bible, nothing!" Thomas gave his testimony that night and spoke on contrition and conviction. "When I first received Jesus, I was on fire; the Lord wanted to give me a cooling off period to show me I still had a way to go" Thomas explained. "Now, I've even written a couple of papers of my own."

Thomas's testimony is such an example of how the Holy Spirit can turn hearts 360 degrees and use any man for the benefit of the Kingdom. Still avidly studying the Bible and walking with Christ, Thomas continues to do everything in his power to express his faith as a changed man.

This testimony was written by Lorraine Gonzalez of New Life Church, Fairfield, California.

Christians Behind Bars

By Jose H.

A few weeks ago we were visited by a group of students from Pacific Southwest Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church. Three other prisoners and I were blessed to share our testimonies with them; all of us are Christians. As each one of us shared our testimony and thoughts the group listened attentively. The students appeared to be somewhat surprised to hear us speak with such passion about the great things God has done in our lives, surprised to see us with such peace and joy in our sound mind as we shared our experience with Jesus.

The Bible speaks of a demon-possessed man who lived in the cemetery, but when he met Jesus something happened, he wasn't the same anymore.

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He was delivered, saved, transformed, and restored. Those who came and saw him found

him sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, *"and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid."* (Luke 8:35)

Some people might believe that everyone in prison is wickedly vicious, violent, angry, and depraved, that they need God more than anybody else, and if they are saved, they have been saved for two days. This is not always the case and these prison walls don't separate the good from the bad. There are good and bad people inside these walls just as there are good and bad people outside the prison walls. Furthermore, before God there is no difference, for all have sinned and need God's salvation as in Romans 3:9, *"What shall*

we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin." and further on in Romans 3:22-23, *"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

There are Christians behind bars that have met Jesus, been delivered, and spent years at the feet of Jesus, in their right mind. People do go to prison for committing crimes, big or small. However, they are still human beings. They are fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, grandfathers, and grandmothers. They have family who suffer, at times even more than the prisoners themselves. In addition, the victims of crime need Jesus, sometimes even more so than the prisoner because of the bitterness, anger, and hurt in their heart. That's the central point of the Gospel of Christ, people restoring broken lives, God is not pleased in the

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destruction of the wicked as in Ezekiel 33:11, “Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?’”

Many Christians have what I call the Jonah syndrome. Jonah didn’t want to preach to Nineveh because it was a pagan city. He felt those people didn’t deserve God’s grace or a second chance as in the following scriptures, Jonah 4:2-3, “*He prayed to the Lord, ‘O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? This is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.’*” And in Jonah 4:10-11, “*But the Lord said, ‘You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and dies overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?’*” However, that is the heart of the Gospel, for Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost and there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine upright people who need no repentance. (Additional scripture reference: Luke 15:4-7; Luke 19:10; and Matthew 18:11-14)

If God is speaking to your heart to get involved in prison ministry or some other ministry, don’t run like Jonah, God will eventually find you. You’ll find there is no greater joy and satisfaction than being part of mending broken lives with the purpose of repentance, salvation, deliverance, and restoration. Touching lives has a domino effect; if you touch a life you might touch a whole family. When you touch a family you might touch a whole community. You touch a community and you might touch a whole city, a state, a nation, and why not, the world, “*I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been*

doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” (John 14:12)

Being a Christian doesn’t automatically make us immune to fear.

Even when Jesus was here with His disciples, how many times did He have to remind them, “Fear not!”?

It is for that reason Scripture tells us to place our trust in Him, and Him alone. We need to either drive out the evil that places a spirit of fear into our thoughts, or consciously turn our self-directed ways into Jesus’ ways.

*“Who walks in darkness and has no light?
Let him trust in the name of the LORD
and rely upon his God.
(Isaiah 50:10b)*

PEACE TO YOU

Never fear, dear one.
I have come as the light in darkness,
illuminating who I am and
showing you the path to take.
As you look only to Me,
all fear leaves and you
are brought into My glorious light.
I send My peace and cover you
with My presence.
Rest there with Me.
Release, trusting yourself
completely into My loving care.

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alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. I find it vital to don this suit every day especially in here, because Satan is out there just waiting to pounce. I also read my Bible each morning to get my heart right before I set out for the day. It has served me well, eyes on the prize as in Philippians 3:14, *“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”* I am still doing a life sentence but it is not the one which the courts gave me, it is eternal life.

The Seed of Jesus

By Reginald L.

A Brother in Christ at California State Prison-Solano

I was alone one night, in shame and despair
I looked to man for help, but none was there.

I have no future but prison,
no past, just pain I can't look in the mirror, to
see my tears again.

By justice I was condemned,
in the sight of man's eye my only hope is
God's mercy, for His grace I cry.

A seed was planted somewhere long ago
in the midst of my sorrow, it began to grow.

That seed was Jesus, I am set free
no longer in the hell of my sinful ways

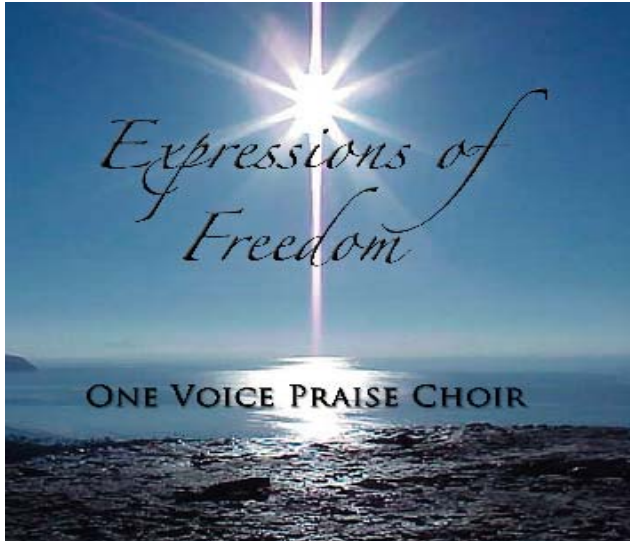
He made me a new person,
who can love and pray.

Though holidays come and seasons pass
in prison with Jesus, my hope forever lasts.
So if you find yourself depressed or full of
despair get on your knees, pray to Jesus,
because he cares.

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One of the things that the Lord has challenged me to do is to love as He loves and to see people as He sees them. Being involved in prison ministry I see believers behind the walls and all believers as complete in Christ and love them no matter his or her crime or sin. Remember, God loved us in our sin and He loves us as believers behind the walls, in front of the walls, as well as those who still reject Him. Sin in our world seems to be judged by degrees, however; God sees sin as all the same.

Remember we are not of this world but only passing through as children of God. Let us not respond as the world responds. Let us be the answer as we follow God’s principles to bring truth, hope, and love to the world. Let us respond to the world condition by living a life of loving, forgiving, and becoming the answer, Ephesians 2:10 reminds us of the following, *“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*



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Advancing the Word

Second Quarter Ministry Report

During the second quarter the following classes were completed at California State Prison-Solano: Passport to Purpose, utilizing The Crossing and The Promised Land, facilitated by Carol Davis of **Mission of Grace Foundation** <http://www.missionofgrace.org>; a worship and song writing conference, facilitated by Robert Harris of **Sounds of the Nation Africa** <http://www.soundsofthenationsafrica.org>.

The ongoing classes are: HIRE, a Prison Fellowship class preparing men for release, facilitated by several volunteers from **2nd Wind** <http://www.secondwindnetwork.org>; Kingdom Inheritance, facilitated by John Haaf; and the Purpose Driven Life program facilitated by Pastor Tim May along with his team.

Joyful Expressions ministered in song and Word to the men at Sierra Conservation Center-Jamestown and San Quentin Prison-San Quentin. This is in addition to the regular weekly ministry services in the chapel at California State Prison-Solano. On a monthly basis the Ebenezer team ministers to the young men at the Sacramento County Boys Ranch in Sacramento.

One Voice Praise Choir has enjoyed a summer break this quarter.

Spanish Outreach unfortunately did not have an opportunity to minister this quarter.

In addition to the musical component, Ebenezer Outreach Ministry provides weekly preaching, individual counseling, and assists with coordinating the CSP-Solano Demonstration Project as part of the Joseph Project featuring special rehabilitation teaching programs and guest speakers.

Production Team:

Kim Moreno, Choir Director; Rudy Aguardo and David O'Guinn, Sound

One Voice Praise Choir and Joyful Expressions Members:

Carolina Aguardo, Gaylen Anderson, Nancy Anderson, Paula Caddy, Marlee Certini, Sandy Evans, Lynne Gallaher, Judith Handa, Ron Handa, Jeanne Havlicek, Lisa Lamb, Tim May, Regina McCollam, Janell Michael, Judy Moran, Norbert Moreno, Timothy Negrete, Janet Nichols, Peggy Preece, Verna Ringler, Jeanne Schultz, Carolyn Sheehan, De Val Smith, Carol Switzer, and Daryl Stewart

Weekly Ministry and CSP-Solano Demonstration Project:

Pastor Richard Atchley, Brett Braidman, Pastor Russell Crooks, Carole Davis, Chris Davis, Pastor Alfred DeGree, Ernest Echelberger, Edward Fogle, Tom Forrester, Ervine Ray Fowler, Linda Fowler, Dan Gamel, Loraine Gonzalez, Jay Grover, John Haaf, Ron Handa, Pastor Michelle Harris, Pastor Robert Harris, Quinton Kelly, Herman Littleton, Pastor Kenneth Love, David Michael, Ramon Molina, Christopher Mullen, Tonya Parham, Pastor Darren Paulson, Pastor Daniel Robertson, Robert Rogers, Robert Silva, Pastor Eddie Thomas, Erik Trantum, Pastor Stuart Welch, and Arthuretta Williams-Smith

Churches Involved:

For a complete list of churches involved with this ministry, please visit our website at: <http://www.ebrock.org/Links.aspx>