

INVEST IN THE ETERNAL

These newsletters can never fully convey what our Lord is doing in the hearts of men as we have proclaimed the "unsearchable riches of Christ." As we come to the close of another year, I pray that you will understand that only eternity will fully reveal what has taken place in the lives of the destitute and defeated because you chose to **INVEST IN THE ETERNAL**. The following portion of a letter I received is but a taste of what only eternity will reveal. It is from a very young man who came to Christ while I was visiting cell-to-cell on Texas death row. The gangs who roamed the streets of L.A. raised Gabriel and his life left an unbelievable trail of destruction. He received Christ (John 1:12) on Halloween night three years ago, and I always send him a birthday card on Halloween.

Dear Bro. John,

Today is a new day in the Lord. The Lord is good all of the time, John. As you know, I gave my life to Christ three years ago on Halloween Night at the Ellis Unit. I'll never forget that night. How could I? The Lord came into my life and changed me tremendously. I received your wonderful card today letting me know that you didn't forget your little brother on his third anniversary of walking with the Lord. I know you will never forget because it was you and your Jesus-like ways that brought me to the Lord. I love you for it. I wouldn't take one day back of all I have experienced in the last three years of walking with Jesus. I'm no longer a walking dead man on death row because in reality I'm not on death row. It doesn't matter if they let me go or if they stick that needle in my arm because I will be delivered from prison to a bright and better day.

Love Eternally,
Gabriel

I LOVE THEM TOO MUCH TO STOP COMING BACK

I often remind the inmates that one of the reasons I have come back to the cells where I once was incarcerated is that I never want to forget where the Lord brought me from, and where I might be if He had not delivered me from the horrible bondage of heroin addiction and sin. They laugh when I tell them how much I love going back to jail. They weep when I tell them **I LOVE THEM TOO MUCH TO STOP COMING BACK** to "sit where I once sat." I tell them that I will keep coming with the message of hope as long as the Lord gives me breath to proclaim it. As I was leaving the jail the other day, a young black man ran up to me in the lobby. He had a Bible in his hand and a wonderful smile on his face. He said that his life had been transformed while in the services that we held. He said that he had made a promise to the Lord that when he got out he would "do as Chaplain Downs has done," and come back to where God touched his life so that others could have what he now has. Although he cannot come in as a chaplain, he does individual visits with the men who were in his cellblock. He said that the guys in jail did not think he would come back after he got out and they were touched by the fact he had indeed come back. May the Lord help us all to never forget where He brought us from and where we could be without His amazing grace.

INJECT THEM WITH JESUS

This past week I had breakfast with a young man that was just released from prison. Philip's life had been transformed by the grace of God while he was in the county jail waiting to go to trial. This young man soaked up the Word of God like a sponge. He had asked me to be with him on the day he was to get sentenced for transporting a huge shipment of cocaine. After the judge sentenced him to 25 years, he asked Philip if he had anything to say. At that time Philip began to thank the judge, the district attorney, his attorney, his chaplain (yours truly), and most of all, the Lord who had changed his life. This young man, who with tears confessed that he was glad that God had used this whole ordeal to wake him up, touched everyone

involved in his case, including the judge. When we met for breakfast, it was an emotional meeting. We talked about the awesome way God had moved in those days when he attended our services. He shared with me that one of the things that I had said in my preaching that really stuck with him was when I told the men, "I so badly want you guys to have the peace and victory that Jesus has given me that if I could, I would put it in a hypodermic needle, hold you down, and **INJECT YOU WITH JESUS.**" Well, as you know, "salvation is of the Lord" and we can never do what only God can do: draw the sinner who is in need of salvation. I am glad that Philip has crowned Jesus Christ Lord of his life, and that he continues to walk daily with him. He will be coming to church with me to give his testimony. I just have a feeling that he will be a part of the ministry God has called us in to.

MINISTERING TO INMATES' CHILDREN

This Christmas season, one of the ways we will be ministering to the inmates is by ministering to their families, mainly the children. Often overlooked is the emotional damage that occurs in children whose father or mother goes to prison. It is very hard for inmates to maintain a healthy relationship with their children while spending many years away from them. Thanks to Prison Fellowship's "Angel Tree" program, as well as the labors of our own home church, we will be **MINISTERING TO 25 CHILDREN** in our area who have a father or mother in prison. We will be bringing Christmas gifts, in the name of the inmate, to these children. Along with the gifts, we will be bringing the Gospel to them. Pray that the Lord will use this program to mend broken relationships and to draw these families to Him.

A WORD OF THANKS

This has been another year where we have seen God supernaturally finance the ministry he called us to do. I could do twenty newsletters alone on how God has sent funds from the most unlikely sources to carry out his will. I want to say thank you to every church and individual that has stood with us both by your prayers and financially. I know the inmates would like to **THANK YOU** personally, but I promise I will not give your address out in jail!

God Bless You at This Christmas Season!!!

~ CHAPLAIN JOHN DOWNS