

### **WHEN WILL YOU BE BACK**

The last two months have been the greatest season of harvest that I have seen since I went back to prison to share the message that set me free 22 years ago. The Lord of the Harvest has truly been at work in the hearts of men. There is nothing that thrills me more than to see a large group of inmates headed toward the chapel with their Bibles in hand. As they turn the corner and see me standing at the door their faces light up and they almost break into a run to get to "the church behind bars." I usually greet everyone with a hug or a handshake and thank them for coming. Many will bring their friends to hear the chaplain who "sat where they sat." I start every service by praying for the moms of the inmates. That always tenderizes the hearts of even the toughest of men and ushers in an atmosphere of soberness. I then pray that the men will have ears to hear and open hearts to the calling of God upon their lives while they are incarcerated. I always sing Amazing Grace just before the message. That sets the table to hear the eternal Word of God. I expect the Lord to do something unusual every service and inevitably He does. There are times of complete silence and there are times of great praise. There are times of great laughter and there are times of groaning and moaning in the spirit. No one ever wants to leave the chapel, and the most often asked question I get as the men leave is, "**WHEN WILL YOU BE BACK?**" Because of folks like you that have been compelled to give to this ministry I can tell them I will be back next week. Only eternity will tell the whole story of what God has done through your giving.

### **BRING GOD TO ME**

I recently went to conduct a service in one of the facilities that house about 4,500 inmates. Just about the time I arrived a fight broke out in one of the cellblocks, and I was informed that church would have to be cancelled. There was one cellblock of men on that floor that I had never been able to pull out for church. When I asked the guard about pulling them out instead of the other men he agreed to do it without hesitation. The Lord was orchestrating the entire event and we had a real move of God. One young Hispanic man who trusted Christ was weeping openly and asked me if he could say something. He stood up and said, "I have never known God or even cared about God until last night when I felt like I needed to pray. I was crying, and I asked God to please send someone to **BRING GOD TO ME** if he was really there. We have not had church since I have been here and when the guard called out church I knew that God had really heard me. I gave me life to Jesus today and I know that God sent this chaplain for me." Yes, there is a God who hears the prayers of the destitute!

### **HELP MOM**

Although the ministry to Texas Death Row has been limited because of the security risk, I am still visiting many of the men who I have grown close to through the years. Many of the men who had been faithful church members when we were able to have church have found it hard to maintain a joyful spirit since they were moved to lockdown and church was cancelled. They miss the singing, the testimonies, and most of all, the Word of God being preached. Last week I visited an inmate by the name of David. As we began to talk about the days of having church our conversation turned to the memory of some of the men that had come to church and had maintained outstanding testimonies for their Lord. David knew that I had attended the executions of three of his very close friends, and as I began to relate how they had stood strong to the end, he broke down and began to weep. Through the tears he told me he was very tired and hoped that the setting of his date to be executed would come soon. He told me he had one thing he really wanted me to pray about and that was the matter concerning his mom. His mother had kidney failure several years ago and David was able to donate one of his kidneys while he was on death row. Now her only kidney has quit working again, and his prayer is that the state of Texas will agree to let him donate his only remaining kidney to his mom and keep him alive on dialysis on the days just prior to his execution. The chances that the state of Texas will do this are very slim. David is no exception. The one thing that every death row inmate gets concerned about as his execution date draws near is to **HELP MOM**. Please pray for David and for me as I try to bring the light and love and the Lord Jesus Christ to the men on death row and that God will help me to comfort the moms as they say goodbye to their sons.

### **OUR GREATEST NEED**

When we launched out by faith into this ministry we knew that what we were doing was very close to the heart of God. He has been very faithful to us and has chased us down with His blessings. I could easily write an entire book on how God has used unlikely sources and unusual means to bless us. I want to close by again thanking you for standing with us. **OUR GREATEST NEED IS AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN FOR YOUR PRAYERS.** I began this newsletter by sharing how mightily God has been moving in these last two months. May I remind you that our enemy is not going to take this sitting down and that we are in a war. Please make prayer support for this ministry a vital part of your prayer time.

~ CHAPLAIN JOHN DOWNS