

Liberty Among the Captives

The Testimony of Billy Morrison

In 1983 I was arrested and charged with various terrorist offences, from possession of arms and explosives to murder, and in 1984 I was given a term of life imprisonment. I had been involved in a terrorist organisation called the Ulster Volunteer Force (one of the most militant of these groups) since I was 19 years of age — I was 21 years of age when I was arrested.

When I came to prison I felt no real regret for what I had done in my life — I regretted being caught — and I drifted along with prison life until I met a fellow prisoner who had become a Christian. This was the first time that I had ever met a Christian in my life and within two weeks I was to be one myself.

On the last day of April 1985, this man asked me to read a sermon by a long dead preacher named Charles Spurgeon based on Luke 7:41-43, and to my surprise I agreed to read it that night. Up till this point I had had no interest whatsoever in religion and no desire for it. Like most men in my situation I thought that it was for those who could not do their time and I wanted nothing to do with it. But before the day had ended I had had my eyes opened to the truth of the matter!

If you read this passage of Scripture you will find out that it describes a creditor and two of his debtors. Spurgeon pictured the creditor as God on the judgment day (it is clear that this is what Jesus means) and the two debtors are sinners who owed Him a debt because of their sin. One (the debtor who owed 50 pence) was a relatively small debtor (or morally good in human terms) and the other was a relatively large debtor (an outright evil man), but both had something in common: they both owed God a debt because of their sin and were unable to pay this debt (see Romans 3:19-20,23). But instead of the creditor demanding payment (which would mean hell for the two sinners) He frankly forgave them both! They owed God a debt and could not pay this debt, yet He forgave them this debt even though they had done nothing to deserve forgiveness. When I read this I immediately saw myself as the larger debtor who owed God a great deal because of my evilness and yet He was saying to me: repent and submit yourself before Me as Lord and Saviour and you will be forgiven and redeemed from your sin. To me this was the greatest offer that I had ever been given in my life and it seemed to me that anyone who would reject such an offer would be the biggest of fools. So within an hour of reading this sermon I was on my knees asking the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive me of my sin and save me.

It was only later that I found out how the Lord was able to forgive me for my sin even though His law demanded that I be punished for it. I knew that I was a sinner but how could God save me when His law demanded that I be condemned, and not go contrary to His law. I found my answer in the Bible — where we find all our answers! Matthew 1:21 tells us that Jesus came to save His people from their sin and the apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:3-5 that God has chosen these people from before the foundation of the world to be saved through Jesus Christ. How was Jesus Christ to save these people that God had chosen to save? By coming to this world, living a completely sinless life and dying on the cross of Calvary in the place of His people to pay the punishment due for their sin — thus redeeming them from this punishment (see John 3:16;

2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:10-13). God's people are saved through the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ on their behalf: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ...But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

I know that many of you are saying to yourselves: "He is nothing but a jail-house Christian turned to God because he is unable to do his time; wait until he gets out and we will see the true Billy Morrison!" I freely admit that I need Jesus Christ in my life: I need the redemption that only He can give; I need His friendship, for He is the only one that will never let me down; I need the guidance that only He can give (through His Word, the Bible), for He is the only one that is never wrong, and I need His love because He is the only one who knows me inside out and yet was still willing to die to redeem me because I was one of God's people! I am not ashamed to say this!! But if you think that being a Christian in this world —whether in prison or out of prison — is an easy touch then you have a lot to learn about what being a Christian means.

God demands a lot from His people after He has saved them, and there is no room in God's Church for the weak livered, the soft or the coward. Have you the courage to stand up in the face of the men (or women) around you and confess that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Saviour, or are you one who runs with the crowd because he (or she) fears what they would think? The Lord says that, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe". (Proverbs 29:25) And how true this is in many people's lives today — is it true in your life? Do you fear the scorn or the laughter of others more than you fear the Lord and His wrath on the unrepentant? Do you fear them so much that you will let them keep you from the love of God which is found in His Son? Have you ever noticed what the Lord says in Revelation 21:7-8? Note well that the Lord tells us that the fearful will never enter heaven. Who are these fearful? They are those who feared the men around them more than the Lord their God! Do you think Christians are weak? Christians need more backbone than any other person in this world because they have more enemies than anyone else in this world. Jesus tell us that the whole world hates the Christian because it first hated Him (see John 15:18-25), and this indeed is the truth of the matter. Not only do Christians battle against the hatred of the world but they also have to face the attacks of Satan as well: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8) If this were not bad enough Christians also have to battle against their own sinful nature that never leaves them (see Galatians 5:17). Jesus demands that we put to death our own sinful desires and obey Him instead, and this is one of the hardest things that any human being can do in his or her life (see Matthew 16:24-5; John 14:15). Is it any wonder that Jesus tells all those who are considering becoming Christians to sit down and consider what the cost of this will be in their lives, before starting to follow Christ (see Luke 14:25-35)?! Tell me, have you got what it takes?

But having emphasized the cost of serving Jesus Christ in your life — self-denial, hatred of the world, and the attacks of Satan, I have good news for all those who are seriously considering turning to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith! We all to a certain degree fear what men will say to us, but the Lord promises those who serve Him that He will give them the courage that they need in their lives. As we read in Proverbs 29:25, the fear of man brings a snare to us, but it goes on to say that, "whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe"! Or as Proverbs 18:10 tells us: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." The Lord

Himself will give us the courage that it takes to face all that the world has to throw at us! The Bible also tells us that the Lord will not let us suffer any temptation that is beyond us but will give us a means to escape — if we look unto Him for the grace to do so (1 Corinthians 10:13). If we look unto the Lord for the strength and the grace we can overcome all the temptation that comes to us. It is when we fail to do this that we fall into sin. But what about the Devil? Satan will indeed attack us — and the more we seek to serve the Lord in our lives the more he will attack us! — but the Holy Spirit who dwells within every believer is greater than the Devil (1 John 4:4), and this is why the Lord tells us that when we resist him he will flee from us!! (see James 4:7) He flees from us because the Holy Spirit within us makes him flee!

After reading this, I would dearly hope that you would consider your state before God and your own need to repent and come to faith before the Lord God Jehovah. The Scriptures give us this promise: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36)

Where do you stand before the Judge of the whole world?



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