



Compassion

2022 - First Quarter

No Atheists in Fox Holes

There is a saying which came out of the First World War – “There are no atheists in fox holes!” Something similar is often said regarding men and women in prison. It goes something like this, “They only come to Bible study to get out of their cell.”

Based on more than 20 years of ministry in Wisconsin’s prisons, I am convinced that very few men and women regularly join our study of God’s Word just to get out of their prison cell. Just as he does with all of us on the outside, Satan tempts

the men and women in prison to fill their days with anything other than the Word of God. Even when someone is in prison, they can watch television, listen to the radio, read books, go to recreation, exchange emails with family and friends, play dominoes or sleep. These are just a few of the activities with which someone may choose to occupy their time.

To be sure, someone may occasionally come to a Bible study just to see a friend or to “get out of their cell.” But they very rarely stick with it, though, when they

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Defeated Sinner or Triumphant Saint?

"For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not *keep* doing what I want. Instead, I do what I hate. ...the *desire* to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out. So I *fail* to do the good I want to do. Instead, the evil I do not want to do, that is what I keep doing" (Rm. 7:15, 18-19 EHV).

I have always appreciated that in His great wisdom, the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to record for us this personal struggle that raged within his heart. And I regularly find myself sharing these words with the men I serve in prison and pondering them in my personal life as well. But it wasn't until just recently that I connected Paul's words in Romans, to those of Daniel describing his prophetic vision.

"I kept watching the night visions, and there, in the clouds of heaven, I saw one like a son of man coming. He

came to the Ancient of Days, and he was brought before him. To him was given dominion, honor, and a kingdom. ...the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under all the heavens will be given to the people, to the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an eternal kingdom, and all dominions will worship and obey him" (Dn. 7:13-14, 27 EHV).

So, what's the connection? When we celebrated Saints Triumphant Sunday and Christ the King Sunday a couple months ago, I was reminded that like the apostle Paul, I often find myself feeling a lot more like a *defeated sinner*, than a *triumphant saint*.

I struggle to be a good father, a good husband, friend and chaplain, and every day I am confronted with failures and defeat. I look around and see the country I live in becoming increasingly more hostile towards God and His people. At best, "one nation under

God" appears little more than lip service, and at worst, it casts aside everything that God has ordained, from the sanctity of life and human sexuality, to the gender a person is born with.

Despite all these things that would persuade me that I am nothing more than a *defeated sinner*, surrounded by a nation of *defeated sinners*, both Daniel and Paul, hold before me an unshakable truth. Jesus Christ, the King of kings and LORD of lords, is still sitting on His throne! Jesus is still working out all things "for the good of those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Rm. 8:28 EHV), and so I am in fact, a *Saint of God, Triumphant* in all things because of Christ, my King. And SO ARE YOU!



by Chaplain
Joseph Radsek



Repent

In my prison discussion group, one of the guys had something he'd learned and wanted to share with the rest of us. We were looking at the 10th Step of 12-Step Recovery – "Continuing to take personal inventory, and when we are wrong, promptly admitting it." We were discussing what it's like to admit that something we've done or an attitude we may have is wrong. That's when *Rodney* spoke up.

"I've been studying what the Bible means when it uses the word 'repentance,' and how it's different from what people usually think of. I always thought 'Repent!' meant that I'm supposed to completely change my life *right now*. And that always scared me off: I didn't know how to make a complete 180, and I usually just gave up and said, 'What's the use?'"

"But I learned that 'repentance' means a *change* in your *thinking*. So, yeah, my life needs to change, but it can start small – I can look at stuff I'm doing and ask the question, 'Is this right? Is this what God wants?' And

that's already a change right there."

I think every man in the room was encouraged by what *Rodney* said. Like *Rodney*, a lot of them had the common misconception that it's all or nothing – completely turn away from all sin right this moment, or you're hopeless. We looked at what David wrote in Psalm 139:23-24 – "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting" – and we saw how David was ready to let God give him the will and the power to change his thinking, even if David didn't feel like making any changes at that moment. (David had just told God, in Psalm 139:19-22, about his murderous hatred for some people, and how he felt perfectly justified in having that attitude – but he told God about it, and he was open to whatever God wanted to do with that attitude of his.)

"Maybe you're not willing, but are you willing to become willing?"



– that's an AA slogan, and it's a pretty good reflection of how living in God's grace works. Instead of setting up a standard for me to measure up to, God meets me where I'm at and starts working with me right from that point. You and I, and the guys in prison – we all can have hope for a new life, from the God who loves and forgives and accepts us right where we're at.



by Chaplain
Philip Merten

realize that they will not be allowed to just visit with a friend or discuss sports, politics or some other topic that has little or nothing to do with our sin and God's grace in Christ.

Rather, I am confident that those who come to our Bible study week after week do so because of the Holy Spirit's work in their heart and soul.

According to God's promise, "Just as the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return there unless they first water the earth, make it give birth, and cause it to sprout, so it gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater, in the same way my word that goes out from my mouth will not return to me empty. Rather, it will accomplish whatever I please and it will succeed in the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:1-11 EHV).



by Chaplain
Charles Iles





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