

PERSONAL PRISONS

Prison. What is prison anyway? Is prison an unclean, over-populated building where a person is confined by four lonely walls and guarded by eagle-eyed officers watching his every move? Is it a place for the ultra guilty, the worst of the worst that society has to offer who are locked up like cattle in a overcrowded pen? What is prison, really? Well, after actually living here in prison for over three months and seeing what it is with my very own eyes, I believe I can finally see the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth of what prison really is all about.



In this season of life, I've discovered what the definition of truth really is and how it truly affects all of us. If you've heard me say it one time, you've heard me say it a thousand times: "Whatever happens in the physical realm has a parallel in the spiritual. And whatever happens in the spiritual realm will manifest in the physical." I hope to encourage you, my friends, by drawing the parallels out that I see in here on this journey and hopefully show you how it might relate to yours. Perhaps my prison sentence can help free you from your own "**prisons.**"

Prison is as close to "hell" as we have on this earth. It is dark, lonely, emotionally painful, and the feeling of abandonment is always right there pestering you like a mosquito that just won't leave you alone. It sucks the blood right out from you and drains you of the last bit of life that you were hanging on to. But, as you will see, prison is not the only place where one can be

incarcerated. Many of you might be dealing with some of those same feelings in the comfort of your own home.

Just as prison is a place for those who have broken the laws of the land, so it is in our spiritual lives. The real definition of “prison” does not have to have physical walls, guards in blue uniforms, or boundaries that you can’t cross. **REAL** prison is the incarceration of the soul. It is a state of your being. I have met people in here that are more free than many who’re out on the street. I have met more people in the real world that are much closer to a state of prison than people that are behind bars. Prison is the status of your heart. It is the condition of your soul.

Being in this prison camp for a while now, I’ve had the chance to meet a lot of people and hear many of their stories. And I have to admit: I have come away hanging my head in disbelief at how naive I really was about who some of these “prisoners” really are. I’ve come to learn that there are two different ways people can get sent to prison. One is by breaking the law and immediately giving the authority of that jurisdiction the right to incarcerate you after going through the legal process. The other way is you did not really break the law, but at least two people say you did, and you will, no doubt, still end up in prison. This is called a conspiracy. If you let your neighbor borrow your truck and he decides to load it down with a thousand pounds of pot and gets caught, as long as he has a friend who is willing to go along with the story that you were the one who sold them the pot...you’re going to prison for 15 years. (True story.) There are at least a dozen cases in here just like this and they are heart-wrenching for sure. It is possible for innocent people to be incarcerated and stripped from their families in the blink of an eye. In my next letter, I will deal with this issue and how it relates to us spiritually.

For now, let’s take the first one and break it down. In the natural realm, if you break a law, you can go to prison. Most people here are guilty. It works the same way in the spiritual realm. We are all walking the lines of jurisdiction. If you break one of God’s commandments, you are guilty, whether you know or even understand the particular law you broke. And the Bible says in Romans that the wages of that sin is death in that specific area of your life. For the unrepentant sinner, that eventual end leads to spiritual death and being away from the presence of the Most High for eternity. For the believer, we must **IMMEDIATELY** deal with the mistakes we make because the spiritual prosecutor and accuser (Satan) is right there pulling us into his jurisdiction. Most people don’t deal with their sins right away or in the right way and end up putting themselves in prison without even knowing it.

The only definition of sin in the Bible is breaking God’s law (see 1 John 3:4). How many of us have been charged with doing this, and because we didn’t deal with it correctly we ended up in God’s court and were sentenced to prison? How many of us have refused to swallow our ugly pride because we know we are right and say to ourselves, “the other person hurt me worse and hurt me first; I’m not reaching out until they do because they’re the one who’s wrong!”? When we do that, we allow the enemy to find us guilty on multiple counts in the scriptures, landing us in his spiritual prison. How many have lived for years, even decades, inside their own prisons because of prideful, rebellious hearts, not willing to crawl up on the cross until the thief next to us does?

Do you have any unconfessed sin in your life? Do you have any areas of His Word that you have broken? If so, you need to confess that before not just God, but the person that you sinned against, as well. Until you make it right, you will stay in a prison in that area of your life. And without you knowing it, it will affect every part of and every person in your life. As I have said before, sometimes the greatest curse is not receiving the blessing you didn't even know you missed. When you don't clean up the food that you dropped on the floor, the bugs will come. It doesn't matter whose fault it was, who meant to do it, etc... Sometimes we just have to clean up after our kids even though we weren't the ones who made the mess. Why? Because we're the adults and we want a clean house and it's just worth it to do it ourselves if they won't.

I challenge you today to be the spiritual adult and make it right. Clean up the mess. Does it really matter who did what? Do the best that you can to make whatever it is right. Don't let the "bugs" continue to eat up your blessings and keep you in prison. Because the truth is that that is exactly what the Father did. He saw a major mess. It wasn't His fault, but he left His heavenly throne room to humble Himself and to die for us. In the process...He cleaned up our mess...your mess. The enemy loves to point the finger and accuse our brethren. The Son of God was willing to be wrong and be crucified to make things right just to have a clean house. Why did He do it? Because we are just children. We aren't always capable of making it right. Sometimes my friends, you just have to be Yeshua/Jesus and lay yourself down. Sometimes, the other person is just not capable of doing the right thing. Once you have confessed to anything you may have contributed to, you crawl up on that cross, and **THEN** let things settle in their court. Until then, you will do your time in prison. Leave no stone unturned, my friends. Get it right. Make it right. Break out of your own prison.

Do you feel like you might be in prison in any area of your life? Personally, going to prison saved my life, my family, and my ministry. This imprisonment is only **INCREASING** my faith, **INCREASING** my strength and removing from my life all that was hindering me from becoming all I can be in Messiah. Like all of us that go through great trials, sometimes it takes us a minute to get our legs underneath us and our wits about us, but once we do, we settle into the storm with a new resolve and dependence on Him. Yahweh is a long-term player. He is not looking for us to be comfortable, secure and happy. He is interested in making us into warriors that become what He has destined for each us to become. As far as my life, this was His best chess move yet.

Shalom,
Jim Staley