

Psalm 142..... That I May Praise His Name.

A prison is far more than grey walls and steel bars. The word “prison” symbolizes words that define the strong situation encompassing America’s incarcerated and their families.

The societal isolation experienced by those sentenced to prison does not vanish with their release from incarceration. Ex-offenders and their families are confronted with new trials and ordeals that quite often become an extension of their former situations.

Their needs are many but their resources are few or non-existent. Surviving this tribulation demands fair and gainful employment, affordable housing, transportation, clothing, medical provision, and counseling to help them assimilate back into a society that frequently does not welcome them.

The seven verses of Psalm 142 show a crystal clear vision of David’s life as a person snared by a world of loneliness, hopelessness, desperation, and uncertainty. David’s solace was that Our Lord God was with him through this tribulation. God would hear his prayer and deliver him from the hand of his enemies.

The need for mentoring the imprisoned, their families, or the ex-offender is the act of love that Jesus has commanded us to do. In the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of John, we are taught that if we truly love the Lord Jesus Christ we are to feed His sheep.

Shepherding His ever increasing flock can begin with participation in volunteer prison ministries such as Kairos and Horizon. The call for gatherers to this bountiful harvest has never been greater than now.

When I first entered a prison in ministry my thoughts were that I would be taking Christ into a place of darkness. Imagine my surprise to discover that He was already there and waiting for me!

We are commanded to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Jesus teaches us in Matthew 25:34-40 that we have the blessing of visiting Him in prison.

The liberation of those burdened by the yoke of prison should be on our hearts and minds. Our strengths in God can set them free. Our souls will rejoice eternally as together we praise the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN !

Gary Hopkins, pastor

Friendship and Oldtown UM Churches <”((((((((>< ..... <><