

Abiding with Jesus

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Now when they saw the boldness of [Douglas], and perceived that he was unlearned and an ignorant man, they marveled; and they took knowledge of [him], that [he] had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13 King James Version (KJV)

Abiding with Jesus ... *in jail!*

“And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said ... loose him, and let him go.” John 11:44 NKJV

As I ponder the circumstances that have once again brought me her to the Clayton County Jail, I can't help but feel a sense of gratitude to God for allowing this to happen to me. Actually, it was in my best interest, as well as God's, that He spared me from what could have easily resulted in my death, or at the very least, resulted I me having a detrimental stroke. Once I was given my initial medical check-up by the doctor the day after I was booked. The Doctor was so alarmed by my blood pressure reading that he immediately admitted me to the infirmary so that I could be under observation while I was being treated for this very severe blood pressure reading which was around 221/146 and definitely in the stroke zone or worse. He told me that without treatment, a stroke was imminent, and that I could easily leave bad kidneys or an enlarged heart, which I would also be diagnosed for. The urgency in his voice alarmed me and caused me to immediately regret my irresponsibility for not taking better care of myself by getting my prescriptions for high blood pressure pills filled. This was simply inexcusable on my part, and was indicative of my depraved state of mind as a result of me choosing alcohol as my comforter instead of the comforter himself, Jesus Christ.

But you will ask, “O man of God how could this happen to you?” And I will say, “Easily!” I simply took my eyes off of Jesus and put them on the storm that was ragging all around me, just as Peter has done when he attempted to walk on water after being beckoned by Jesus to come to Him. If it happened to who did take a few steps walking on the water before taking his eyes off of Jesus, and sinking into the water, it could very easily happen to me since I doubt that I have faith enough to take a single step walking on water without sinking. I think this would be true of practically everyone who calls on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior these days. Scripture say, “Therefore let him who thinketh he stands take heed lest he fall.” 1 Cor 10:12. After taking my eyes off Jesus by no longer walking in his Spirit, I immediately started sinking but instead of asking for the Lord to save me, I reached for a bottle of liquor to use as a floatation device to comfort me and give me relief from the turbulent waters of the storm that beat upon me. The reason, or reasons for me doing something as foolish as this are not very clear to me now but I would suspect that it had a lot to do with the particular lifestyle I had been living at the time. Let's go back a while before this all began.

Back in January of 2012, I accepted a contract position in one of the satellite cities around Chicago. The pay was great and even included my hotel expenses. After applying prudence and thrift I was able to save a rather large quantity of my salary that unfortunately did not include deductions for tithes. I thought nothing of it and continued to save my money, convincing myself that I would simply make one big deposit to my church that would take care of the tithe. I was mistaken. While in the

Chicago area, I bought a 1999, candy-apple red, mint condition, fully equipped Eldorado, with rear spoiler included. The car was beautiful, and everybody told me, "That car is you!" I believed it myself and even started thinking it was God's will that I own the car, of which I had taken the risk of buying it before I ever gave it a test drive or did the proper search of investigating the dealership to make sure they were legitimate. All I know is that I wanted the care and thought that God wanted it for me so I stepped out on faith and sent the dealership \$8,300 for tag, tax and title via a bank deposit to their account. I reasoned that if there were no problems, God was definitely in favor of me making such a risky purchase. My assignment ended and I came back to Atlanta to enjoy the fruits of my labor. Shortly, I went to pick up my prized possession from the dealership near Atlanta. I started to become acclimated with being the owner of a fine Cadillac Eldorado. Now, regardless of how much I wanted to be seen as the owner of the car, I wouldn't say that I idolized it because I continued going to church on a regular basis, as well as, continue my street ministry. However, I neglected to tithe on the monies I had made in the Chicago area as I had planned, which would probably come back to haunt me, so to speak. Then, in a very short time, I decided that I should be able to enjoy the fruits of my labor with the consumption of alcohol, thus beginning the treacherous and tragic decline of my spiritual walk with Christ into the hellish enslavement of my flesh.

The power that the car seemed to have on the perception of both males and females was not lost on me, as I began to use their altered state of mind to my advantage. My sex life ballooned overnight it seems, and guys came out of nowhere claiming they knew me. This was indeed a kind of power, and I soon became under its spell. Once I started drinking alcohol, my character began to take on the nature of being the owner of that Cadillac instead of the nature of Christ. My confidence in myself as a ladies' man soared through the roof, and the ladies responded, to my delight, even when they didn't know I was driving a Cadillac. Apparently, they were only responding to the air of confidence I carried myself. For all they knew I could have been in a dog of a car. However, this air of confidence was misplaced and would soon place me squarely into the cross-hair of Satan's marksman who would fire a projectile, in the form of a woman, that would send my world spiraling down like a bird shot by an archer's arrow. The devastation was immediate, and irreparable. After initially meeting her at a gas station where she asked me if I had a lighter, I foolishly offered to buy her a lighter in exchange for her phone number. She agreed and we exchanged numbers. Suspecting that she was a prostitute, I regretted giving her my number and proceeded to ignore her calls. After a while I began to admire her persistence and thought that maybe, just maybe, she had more of a genuine desire to see me for me and not just a customer.

On that faithful day, I agreed to meet with her for what would have been our second date. The first date ended relatively well, although she seemed upset about the neighborhood I had taken her to. I was simply running an errand over to the community but expected to take her dining in a very nice restaurant afterwards. She insisted I take her home so I did and decided I would leave alone. Unfortunately for me, she continued calling persistently as before so I eventually spoke with her.

This time she suggested going to a bar that she was familiar with. We went there and had what I would call a pretty good time, although she did start to become very belligerent to the other patrons there and it was suggested by the owner that she had consumed enough and it was best if I took her home. I agreed because we had both been drinking to excess. As we departed from the bar, she said she didn't want to go home but go with me to have sex, but that she wanted to stop and buy some powdered cocaine first. I had carried her to buy some on our previous date but it was day light. This time it was night and I didn't feel comfortable driving back into the rear of the apartments because it was a perfect spot to get robbed. I refused to take her there and she began to lose her temper. She reared back in

the passenger seat and threatened to kick my windshield out with her boots that had a 3 inch heels, as well as a kick the dashboard. This really concerned me and I started thinking about various solutions. I knew that I could not put my hands on her so I thought of driving her to one of the local city police stations. Big mistake! When we arrived at the police station, I went in and spoke with one of the officers on duty about her and what could he do to help remedy the situation. In my naiveté, or my drunken state, I had assumed that it would only be a simple matter of him coming out to speak with her and demand that she exit my vehicle. I had given her money, so she could have easily taken a taxi home. However, the officer had called a patrol car to assist. When the patrol officer came to the car window the first thing he wanted to see was our IDs. Since my license was suspended, I could only produce a state ID.

Feeling the pressure, I lied when asked if I drove the car there and claimed that it was driven there by someone else but they decided to leave because they had outstanding warrants. The officer then told me that didn't matter now since I was seated in the driver's seat, even though the keys were not in the ignition. He educated me to Georgia law in which if you are seated in the driver's seat, you are in control of the vehicle, even if it is not a moving violation, and can be arrested and charged with a moving violation. Although I did drive the car there, I never knew I could be charged and arrested for a DUI and driving with suspended license even if the vehicle is parked. This was a very costly lesson for me indeed and will be one I will never forget. The woman with me was crying hysterically by this time, as I was taking the field sobriety test. Because I refused to blow into the Breathalyzer in the station, my license was slapped with an automatic one year suspension. The officer called for a wrecker to have the vehicle impounded and soon I was looking at my beautiful Cadillac being unceremoniously taken to the impound lot.

I was soon taken to jail and the woman responsible for all my troubles was released and allowed to freely leave the scene. This was indeed a set-up orchestrated by Satan and carried out by unsuspecting and foolish woman. I believe for a fact that had I not started drinking, I would have never met this woman in the first place and would have been free of those charges.

Upon my release from jail, I quickly reunited with my car and drove it home. Several days later I received a text from the woman asking how I was doing and that she would like to see me. I could hardly believe what I was reading and responded telling her our relationship had ran its course. I never heard from her again. Meanwhile, I continued to consume alcohol at an alarming rate, and to continue my womanizing. During this time I received a blessing from the Lord that should have been a sign to me to stop that foolishness, repent of my sins and return to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. This happened as I was exiting the freeway and about to enter a six lane road. As I exited, I noticed the traffic had slowed to a standstill, and saw emergency flashers up ahead. I also noticed several abandoned vehicles parked just off the side of the exit ramp. I thought it was probably an accident a first but as I drove nearer, my heart sand as I realized I was caught right smack in a road block where police were checking licenses. I began to both panic and pray desperately seeking a way out to this situation. It suddenly dawned on me why the vehicles behind me had been left in the manner they had. It was because when the drivers saw the road block, they jumped out and abandoned their cars, and ran away. I was being drawn closer and closer into the lanes of the road block where there were officers checking all 6 lanes of the road. A sickening feeling began to emerge from my bowels, the hopeless feeling of going to jail.

This would definitely be a bad time for me because I would not have been able to pay to get my car out of impound like before, if ever. As I pulled my car up towards the officers, I continued to pray to God for

help, my brow beginning to sweat. It seemed that an officer was in every lane but something urged me to get in the middle lane, so I did. Suddenly, out of nowhere, the officer in the middle lane stopped checking credentials and beckoned everybody in that lane to drive straight through it. I immediately started praising and thanking God for the miracle. However, the situation had shaken me up so that I couldn't resist the urge to buy something to drink because I was a nervous wreck. I hadn't exactly compared God's blessing to me with scripture but when I shared it with a friend of mine; he very wisely compared it to God parting the Red Sea. Immediately my spirit bear witness to it as well. God had essentially parted the Red Sea for me but just like the children of Israel; my gratitude would be short lived. It was as though God decided to show me mercy instead of judgment for how I was living but my walk in the darkness was too great for me to see it. I was spiraling out of control and drawing farther away from the peaceful shores of Christ, and into the tempest of Satan's storm. As I was being pulled into it, I was managing to cry out to the Lord, through prayer, to please save me. Surely God heard my dispelling cry because sometime later as I was going to a sports bar, I was greeted by some male patrons and asked to grab a chair with them.

I agreed and offered to buy a round of frozen drinks. There were 3 of them but only 1 of them accepted. We chatted about the basketball game for a while as the other two guys continued ordering their own drinks. Later that night they all left, and I was ordering my second frozen drink. When I was done with that, I asked for the check and almost spit out the water I had been sipping on. The check was for \$61.00, where I had only bought 3 frozen drinks valued at \$5.00 each. I knew this because I was a regular customer. I brought this glaring error to the attention of the waitress but she told me I had paid the full tab of everyone at the table. I told her I gave no such approval to her directly, and she should not have approved anyone else. She hotly objected and demanded that I pay the bill or she would call the cops. At this point I felt the need to defend my integrity so I told her I would wait until they came so we could clear things up. When the cops came separately took both our stories and then the cop asked me if I had enough money to pay the bill, apparently deciding in the waitress' favor.

I was astonished and told him I only had \$40.00 on me. He then asked me if I knew someone I could call that would bring me the money so I gave him the number and he call it. Now, according to the people he called, they said that he only mentioned that he needed them to come to the sports bar to see about me, that he never mentioned bringing the \$21.00 I needed to in order to pay the bill. By the time my friends got to the bar, the cops had already put me in the police car with handcuffs. My friend said it was only then that they knew anything about a bar bill or me needing \$21 dollars to satisfy it. They asked to speak with me to find out more but the cops refused them. Then my friends said had they known of the \$21 I needed, they could have brought it. They even asked to go get it since it was only about 30 minutes away, or less. The cops also refused that request and proceeded to arrest me. As I sat in the car being taken to jail, I couldn't help thinking how strange this had all transpired. I had been a regular customer at the bar during those times and knew most of the waitresses and bartenders.

However, on that particular night, which was a Monday, and I never went there on Mondays, I saw absolutely no one I knew that worked there who could put in a good word for me about my paying and tipping habits. I felt that was highly unusual, if not strange. In addition, I knew it to be standard practice for waitresses, at least the smart ones, to insist on asking the customer directly if they will be paying for anyone else's drink. This is standard routine, why the waitress would not come to me to make sure of the purchase speaks to her unprofessionalism, as well as her naiveté regarding being a waitresses. To me, the whole thing seemed contrived and manufactured, by God or by man. The idea that I was being arrested for such a petty offense was not what concerned me. What really concerned me was the fact that I was in violation of my probation and once I was booked into jail, they would very soon discover it.

This would make the situation worse because I had left my car in the parking lot of the bar, and there was a real potential of it being towed long before I go out of jail. Now, my greatest priority was to try to save my car. Most shopping centers allow extended parking but they don't post how long you can legally park there. If my car were impounded, I would never be able to get it out because I had wasted all of my money and had nothing left since the cops gave the waitress my \$40 and still locked me up for the \$21 balance. This was becoming more bizarre as I thought about it. God had shown me mercy when I was caught in a road block drinking with suspended license but from man I was shown no mercy for coming up with \$21 short of a \$61 bill, in which I was not even extended the common courtesy of directly approving the purchase of drinks for others. I surmised that it was indeed God's will for me to suffer this trial. After I was booked into jail, the very thought of how the sports bar had treated me brought to my heart and mind such a distaste and dislike for ever wanting to drink again. Suddenly, the realization of life without alcohol forever became a real inviting possibility. I began to wrap my heart and mind into this state of being and pondered the possibilities. While I was in jail, this became my spiritual battle cry. Life without alcohol was the sustaining grace that comforted me during the 39 days I spent in jail because of my probation violation. The incident at the bar was dismissed the next day but by then they had discovered the probation violation so I was transferred to the county jail it occurred in. Also, by the grace of God, I managed to get a friend of mine to come to pick up some property I released to him so he could drive my car from where it had been parked. To my sheer delight, after 14 days it was still there! That allowed me to enter into God's rest without any other concerns.

Now, about the probation violation; the preceding year before I bought the Cadillac, 2011, I was driving my 2004 Chevy Cavalier up to Erie, PA for a contract assignment. While driving through Lexington, KY, I took the wrong interstate and decided to turn around and head back in the opposite direction and park somewhere so I could get my bearings. As I was driving on an off ramp, I noticed police with flash light on the opposite shoulder of the off ramp as though they were looking for something so I slowed down and veered away from them. Suddenly, the two of them converged upon me shouting and yelling at me so I stopped to see what the matter was. They then started asking me why I had gotten off the interstate on the particular off ramp so I told them I had missed my turn and had turned around to find somewhere to park so I could get my bearing. They told me the ramp was closed to traffic exiting the interstate and asked me, "Didn't you see the sign?" This puzzled me so I told them, "what sign?" Then one of them shined his flash light up the exit ramp to the part closest to end, about 200 feet, and said, "That sign!" which had been placed in a dark area and read, "Do Not Enter."

I couldn't help but let out a chuckle as I asked why was it placed way up there and not closer to the interstate, giving driver's time to avoid the exit ramp and continue on down the interstate? I had heard about Kentucky police, and how backward they could be but I never imagined they could be that backward. Apparently my flip remark was enough for them to pay closer attention to me. So they started looking into my car to see if they could find something incriminating. One officer spotted an open can of beer I had been sipping on in the console drink holder and assumed that I was probably DUI so he had me to take a Breathalyzer test. After it came back negative, the other officer decided that he could do better but his test came back negative as well. That's when a police Sergeant arrived and he too administered the test but it also came back negative. Then the three of them discussed the situation among themselves but where I could plainly hear what was being said. The officers who were on the scene when I arrived asked the sergeant, "What can we charge him with since he passed all 3 tests?" The sergeant told them to charge me with reckless driving, failure to obey a traffic sign, and having an open container of alcohol.

Of course I was disappointed by the Sargent's decision but I figured they would write me out the tickets and send me on my way. That's what I thought. What actually happened is they came over to the car and asked me to get out. I knew this was bad. They then handcuffed me and arrested me, taking my car to impound. I could not believe what was happening, and even tried to understand why it was happening. All I knew was that I had to report for work in Erie, PA on Monday of the following week. That all happened on Thursday night around 9pm. I didn't know when I would be going to court and I didn't have anybody to bond me out of jail. After sitting in intake for about 3 hours, fretting my circumstances, and desperately praying to the Lord for mercy, I was finally called to be processed into the jail. The intake worker happened to be a black guy and he just happened to mention that I could bond myself out of jail if I had the money. I quickly asked how much was it? He said if I had \$195 I could bond out but I would need to appear in court the following day to face the judge. I told him to start the process but knew that I was not going to stick around to go to court. I surmised that if those 3 white officers were willing to skirt the law like that, just imagine what an all-powerful white judge could get away with. At the moment my thoughts were only black and white, and I was not taking any chances hanging around Lexington, KY until 1pm the next day. When I bonded out, I made a bee line heading for the impound lot, which cost me another \$95 in addition to the \$10 I paid the taxi driver. Then I headed for Erie and thanked God for coming through for me yet again. Months later, this seemingly practical decision to avoid the traffic courts of Lexington would cause great consternation for me on hand but would be a blessing for me on the other.

While driving from the store, I was stopped by the police because my tag light was not working. I gave the officer my driver's license and thought nothing of receiving the ticket. Unfortunately, the officer came back and told me my license was suspended. I was in disbelief and started searching my mind for reason why. The only thing the officer could tell me was it was for failure to appear in court. My mind reeled as I diligently searched my memory for instances when I had not appeared in a court room in the state of Georgia but couldn't find any. I did, however, think of skipping court in Lexington but quickly dismissed it since I thought it was highly unlikely they could suspend my Georgia license. I managed to have a friend come and drive my car literally from one side of the street to the other where my car was parked in the lot of the motel I was staying. Then I was taken to county jail. After I bonded out of jail, I went online to see where the suspension was originating from. When the driver services person told me it had originated from Lexington, KY I was flabbergasted and in disbelief. I had no idea that could be done by another state, and because of it, I now had a driving while suspended case I had to deal with. It was while working in the Chicago area the following year, 2012 that I flew down to Atlanta on my court date. I ended up having to pay \$905 in fines, and received 6 months' probation. Since I was working and living out of town, the probation officer gave me the option of calling into her office once a month, plus I was to pay \$44 per month in probation fees.

I thought that it was quite a deal until I started calling in to try to reach her directly, which is what I had to do because you couldn't leave messages. I had been allowed to pay 2 months in advance while in her office so I only had 4 months left. After I got back to the job, the stress and anguish of making all those calls to reach her proved too much for me, and since I couldn't reach her, I neglected to pay the monthly probation fees, which I thought really wouldn't make a big difference. I was wrong. When they hauled back before the same judge for the probation violation, the first thing she asked was why didn't I pay the fees despite the fact I couldn't reach her? Apparently, the judge was implying that paying the fees was a very important part of probation and most probably would have resulted in me being-reinstated. Instead, because I had done neither, she submitted to the probation officer's recommendation to violate the remaining 4 months I had left on probation. I couldn't help but think that I could have easily paid the probation fees if I had known how important they were. If I had been told to send the money

even if I couldn't get through to them and if I had been told that it could make the difference between being violated or re-instated. Yes, if only I had known. However, this was not God's will because He knew that He would later need to use this decision of the court to prune me of the unproductive and destructive limbs of alcohol drinking. I realized that almost the first moment I stepped into that cell after my arrest at the sports bar, and throughout my time spent in jail, I continued to daily thank God for the opportunity to be there. It made a world of difference to me and I stayed clean and sober for 6 months, up to the point where I took my eye off Jesus and placed them on the storm raging about me, which is the place this story began.

Now that we have come full circle, let me expound more on what I mean by the storm. After spending 39 days in jail for the probation violation, I emerged with a sincere determination and resolve to quit drinking forever, and I had never felt better. The Lord soon blessed me with an assignment in Boca Raton, FL as though He wanted me to know how much He loves me, and for what I had devoted myself to while in jail-doing His will. It was beautiful.

After coming back home, I took another contract assignment that was supposed to be long-term and eventually permanent employment. With the money I had made in Boca Raton, I eventually used it to rent a house and furnish it. I wanted my own space and initially resisted the urge to rent out a room. However, the job only lasted for about 3 months and during this time I had redecorated the house as I had wanted to do in the first place by filling it with new furniture. It wasn't like I was throwing my money away but I could have done a much better job of saving it. I had decided to step out on faith and believe that the job would be just as I was told but after 3 months, it ended abruptly due to no fault of my own. My manager applauded my work and offered to give me a great reference. Then on the last day of my employment, I went out to crank up the Cadillac and heard a noise indicative of a metal on metal collision.

I immediately knew it was due to a collision between the starter and the fly wheel, which would be costly, regardless of which was at fault. Up until that happen, I was handling the despair of losing my job quite well but when it happened I drove home to see if the car would crank back up but it didn't. The damage had been done. I had previously gotten the alternator and radiator replaced, which cost me a bundle. Now I would have to most likely get both the starter and fly wheel replaced, which would cost probably twice as much, or more. The idea of spending all this money when I no longer had a job overwhelmed me and caught me off guard. Before I knew it I was in the back of a taxi heading to the liquor store to find a floatation device. Once I found it, I continued to seek solace and comfort through alcohol consumption as though nothing else mattered, and constantly deluding myself with false hopes that I would bring an end to the drinking tomorrow, which never came. After I ran out of high blood pressure medication, I promised myself that I would refill it but day after day that promise went unfulfilled. Over the course of 4 months, I managed to stay sober enough to work 3 weeks but the money mostly fed my appetite for more floatation devices.

I also managed to interview for jobs over the phone and in person but nothing became of them because I was limiting the Holy One of Israel by my persistent drunkenness, which is a reproach to God. Meanwhile, my blood pressure was soaring in the danger zone, and a stroke or massive heart attack was very likely imminent. By the Grace of God is the only way I escape what could have been a very tragic and irreparable outcome. Even through the numbing effects of the alcohol, I could sense my spirit warning me of the impending danger of what lay ahead if I continued down that path of destruction just as Balaam's donkey tried to warn him of the Angel with sword that awaited him if he continued down his path. God put words in the donkey's mouth and then opened the eyes of Balaam so he could see the

angel with the sword to warn Balaam of his certain death if he continued, and God created a heightened sense of concern within my spirit. I knew from experience that if I expected God to deliver me from that bondage of alcohol I would have to somehow find the strength to lay prostrate and pray to the Lord.

Fortunately, I did find the strength and prayed with my whole heart and soul, even shedding tears of remorse for allowing myself to become taken by Satan this will. Afterwards, I felt so much better and was hopeful that everything was behind me. I read the Bible for a while, reflecting on my situation, and diligently looking for confirmation from God's works that I had come out victorious despite the damage done. Standing on faith, I decided that it was so. I then began actively engaging in my job search, speaking with several recruiters about jobs that were very promising, and was actually expecting follow up calls from them regarding interview scheduling later in the week. Yes, I really felt good about what I was beginning to accomplish.

Then, like Job, the thing that I feared most had come upon me. As I arose from my computer desk, I saw with sheer terror within me, 2 sheriff deputies walking towards my house in the front yard. I immediately panicked with a kind of terror that causes the mind to enter a fight or flight mode, desperately seeking to save one's life, or in my case one's freedom. My heart sunk as I crawled over to the corner of the bed; I heard one of them say that he had just seen someone in the window. The cops knocked on the front door and announced themselves as sheriffs' deputies, requesting that they be let in. As I lay on the bed sweating bullets away from being seen through the window, I realized my bedroom door was unlocked. I quickly tried to lock it, as if that would really help, but was spotted by one of the deputies who had come closer to my bedroom window. He yelled at me to come out of the house, so I did. The first thing he said to me was, "Are you Douglas Watts?" I knew then that they were at the right place. It was over. Interesting enough, I started to lie to them but remembered my wallet was in my back pocket with my ID in it, but before I could say anything he had flipped through some documents and found my mug shot and said, "Yeah, that's you."

I started to accept the possibility of me losing the house and all my worldly possessions but was already putting together a plan of action that would focus on maximizing my stay in jail being about the Lord's business. Yes, this would be a time of rebuilding my spiritual life and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others. I didn't have to worry about my Cadillac because I had sold it about 2 months earlier after it continued to have starter and fly wheel problems after I replaced 2 starters. Then it started to have cooling problems that made it run dangerously hot on several occasions. The car had consumed roughly \$3,000 from me before I threw my hands up. Even the poor guy who bought it from me continued having to make repairs on it as though the car were somehow cursed. That's why I will never own another car without getting together a group of believers and praying and laying hands on the car as I have seen so many other saints do. There has to be a legitimate reason for doing this, so I choose to err on the side of caution.

As for the reason the deputies paid me a visit was due to another probation violation I incurred because of the DUI I was charged with while dealing with the crazy woman I took to the police station I mentioned earlier. I had been sentenced to 1 year probation along with a lot of other requirements and fines imposed by the judge. Unfortunately, I was unable to comply with the terms because my car broke down the very day I was to report to probation and I also needed a car to do all the other stuff required of me. I felt trapped so I decided to take my chances getting an assignment in another state and living there indefinitely. I figured they would just wait until I was involved in another traffic stop or in some kind of crime. However, I do thank God the warrant was served and my life spared because I don't think I would have taken care of my high blood pressure right away even if I had stopped drinking, and I think

the Lord knew this, and because of His great and boundless love for me, God chose to give me life, and that more abundantly. What a mighty and loving God we serve! What a friend we have in Jesus! When Job was being tried by trials and tribulations, he said that, "God knoweth the path that I take and when He has tried me I shall come forth as pure gold." I think God sees our beginning and end, and everything in the middle as a single instance of time. I think He knows when and where we will go astray or invite certain dangers into our lives that could negatively impact His purpose for our life and uses our own foolishness to prune us or as in this case to save us from a catastrophic outcome or death itself. I can't help but think what would have become of me had I not had the outstanding warrant for my arrest, which seemed to be key to my survival.

I have come to have a new respect and understanding for the scripture, "All things work together for good for those who love the Lord, to those who are called according to His good purpose." I wonder if it is because of my active ministry that I use to fulfill God's purpose for my life that has sustained my life and kept me in my right mind throughout my existence? Over the years, and continuing to see God's hand in my life performing miracle after miracle, I have constantly asked myself, "Who am I that thou are so merciful of me?" Is it because of my humble ministry or is it because of the vision He has for my ministry that has not yet been revealed to me? It is my hope and prayer that I will get everything I need to cover the course of my stay here and then God will give me the vision He has for my ministry in moving forward for His purpose for my life. I think it safe to say that my life was spared or such a time as this and when He has tried me, I shall come forth as pure gold. Is that the man of God that Satan has feared and tried to prevent from emerging?

Was Satan really expecting me to turn away from Jesus because of the way this happened, and the real possibility of me losing everything I own and leaving this place only to become a homeless person? Satan, being carnal-minded, tends to think in terms of losses and gains. When Jesus gave His life for our sins at Calvary, Satan considered His death as a loss, thus a victory for him. However, God considered Jesus' Death a victory putting Satan to an open shame and triumphing over him in it. As for me, becoming homeless is not a loss but a gain because God will receive the glory when He builds me back up and grants me a place of honor above the heads of all my enemies. This, coupled with the vision God will give me for taking my ministry to another level, would make me a formidable soldier in the army of the Lord against Satan's Kingdom.

That's why it is incumbent for me to stay focused, keep my eyes stayed on Jesus, and maximize my efforts of being about the Lord's business. This is exactly what I'm here to do and cannot allow myself to become distracted or become entangled in the affairs of others around me. I must constantly be vigilant, blocking with my shield of faith, every fiery dart thrown by the enemy and there are many. Some of them I expect but the most dangerous are those I don't expect, and tend to come out of nowhere. Being constant in prayer, reading and meditation on scripture and fasting also provides me with an additional blanket of protection against such weapons. There is simply too much at stake here for me to have a chink in my armor for Satan to exploit and it is not an option. On the outside, I never had the privilege to consistently think only about the Kingdom of God but now that I do, I intend to make the very best of it. This is my reasonable service and my mission for my ministry. I must relegate everything else here to a lower state of importance and interest. Nothing must take me off course or hinder me in any way as I press toward the mark for the prize for the high calling of God. I must be non-responsive every snide, belittling, or contemptuous remark directed at me as though my life depended on it, and in a larger sense it does.

In accordance to the book of James, "I must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath." I must bridle my tongue," and bring it into the obedience of Christ through humility. My pride must remain dead and nailed to the cross, never to come down. These words will serve as my beacon of light as I navigate through the darkness that characterized all county jails in this country. The darkness in such places can be evil, deceitful, and unforgiving so the man of God must fly under the radar of those who are taken captive by Satan at his will. However, I myself must also allow the light of Jesus Christ to shine through me as a kind of lighthouse to those struggling in this sea of darkness and lighting the way for them to find the peaceful shores of the Savior's love. As for my progress, I'm on cruise control and only need to maintain speed and heading until I bring forth my fruit in due season.

After the doctor admitted me to the infirmary, I thought that it would be a step up for me but I quickly found it be a step down as far as living conditions were concerned. I was put in a cell without a window which was actually designed for 2 men but would now have 3, with me sleeping on a thin mat on the floor, squashed between the door and the hospital bed belonging to one of the inmates being treated. There were 2 such beds in the crowded cell, leaving very little room for me to claim as my personal space. To make matters worse, I had to leave behind my thicker mat because in light of my dangerously high blood pressure, I was still expected to carry my full plastic bin, which contained my mat, blanket, and other personal items, all the way around to the infirmary which was about the length of a football field with an incline of about 25 degrees. When I was told to take my bin with me, I quickly informed the officers of my fragile state of health so they backed down and told me to proceed.

In spite of the insistence of the doctor that my situation was dire, I was not administered medication for my high blood pressure until over 2 days later. During this time I felt trapped and often wondered if I would have a stroke, or worse, because of it. The medical staff, as well as the jailers, seemed insensitive and indifferent to my state of health and rudely disregarded all my requests for treatment. I knew that frustration like his was of the devil so I quickly sought to find something to combat it with. One of the inmates happened to have a spare bible he let me use and amazingly I started to receive medication after I began to find peace through reading the work of God. I couldn't help but think of scriptures from the Book of Esther Where it declared, "For such a time as this." I thought, yes that bible was made available to me for such a time as this when my very life could have depended on it. Ironically, when the medical staff started taking my blood pressure in order to see how I was responding to the medication, they were all astonished that it was so high, and that I was walking around like nothing was wrong with me. They would look at me as if I should have been dead or have suffered a stroke by them asking me questions about headaches or dizziness.

Now these were the same folks who had earlier saw no reason to be concerned with me, in spite of that fact that my blood pressure reading had been duly recorded in my medical report by the very doctor whom they supported. However, after they found out how critical it was, they started hunting me down to take medication and have my blood pressure checked. They even waited outside the courtroom after I had been sentenced to do 3 months and came rushing to me take medication. I walked on down the hall; another staff took my blood pressure. After about 5 days in the hell-hole, the doctor was finally convinced the medication was working and my blood pressure was stabilizing down to a safe level so he released me back into regular population.

I can't imagine how pissed off Satan was in missing that opportunity to get rid of me but I was delighted he had. What I did know was that I would need to put on the whole armor of God in order to protest myself against him while in here, as well as upon my release. I suspect that Satan has taken the gloves off and in aiming to go bare knuckle with me from now on. Well, thank God the battle is not mine but

the Lord's. Otherwise, I suppose I should be afraid. Actually, in fact, I know God has already delivered me this victory and has allowed me to openly triumph over Satan in it. Now that I have this victory, I need to utilize it to create for myself an environment that will prove to be resistant to the worldly influences of the works of the flesh as described in Galatians 5:19-21. I can't explain it but I find it very interesting and many times frustrating, that not enough is said in these scriptures, or the rest of the Bible for that matter, about using profanity and how God specifically feels about it. All I know is that once I became born-again through the renewing of my heart and mind, I developed a strong distaste for using profanity or even hearing it that has persisted to this day. I don't know why it tends to bother me more than most Christians but it just does. I have even gleaned the scriptures in search of verses that specifically condemned its use in no uncertain terms but have only found some where the implication was as close as I could get. Profanity tends to be like beauty to most folks, and its value lies in the eye of the beholder. In this case it lies in the ear of the beholder. What makes it even more frustrating is that many Christians use it routinely outside of church functions and don't seem to be as sensitive to its use as I am. Although I have never allowed myself to be anything other than persuaded that such language defiles the Christian spirit and actually the language of the devil, having absolutely no use by God it still astonishes me that it continues to go unchallenged by the clergy, as well as seasoned believers. Why is Satan handed this victory, seemingly on a silver platter?

In my efforts to bring those of us here who do know the Lord together for prayer or bible study, the routine use of profanity by these guys is the weapon of choice used by Satan to defile our image of Christ thereby greatly diminishing the pure light which would be available to those in search of the risen Savior. Many of these guys profess that they are aware of this language as being inappropriate but they seem to be helpless against the use of it or unaware that they are using it. Such lack of faith and knowledge of scripture complicates things for me when I try to convince others that they should avoid its use entirely. To make matters worse, we had a church service for our dorm which was performed by one of the jail chaplains recently. I could not believe the amount of profanity that guy felt he had to use just to make his point. He kept saying he wanted to keep it real, but I kept wondering to whom did he find it more important to keep it real—us or God. It was so disappointing and probably persuaded many of those guys there was really nothing wrong with using profanity if one was “keeping it real.” Being that it's hard enough to sway Christians away from the use of profanity, I definitely avoided such conversation with unsaved men” because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Rm 8:7, 8)

Although it is a great source of consternation to see so many of these men who lack the faith to control their tongues when they openly confess to be followers of Jesus Christ, the more immediate problem for me is trying to maintain my own cell and keeping it free of the works of the flesh particularly profanity. At the time of this writing, I have tried to nurture the faith of 2 men to overcome this particular defilement but without success. Satan has simply kept them in such darkness that they are not receptive in their hearts to the life-giving light Jesus Christ. I have also brought a young man to accept Christ as Lord and Savior but feel that he too will become a victim to Satan's snare like the others for the same reason. The thing that is so consistent among each of these guys is that they all profess to be unaware of this affliction most of the time. I can say to them, “You just spoke a string of profanity,” and they will say, “No, I didn't.” As scripture says, “How great is the darkness.”

I have also tried consecrating my cell by pleading the precious Blood of Jesus on every surface of it and binding up every spirit that enters or resides in it that hinders my relationship with Christ or disrupts my daily routine of growing in Him. I also read my bible out loud in hopes that the very words of God will have a lingering sanctifying effect that will render such evil spirits powerless against me. And that they

will have to flee from her or lose their hold on anyone or anything in it. However, my current cell mate, the one I brought to Christ, is proving to be a rather stubborn case in which the profanity spewing from his mouth routinely seems unwilling to come under the authority of this consecration or sanctification. It seems the only way I can get him to stop using it in this cell is to severely limit my conversation with him, or to read my bible out loud so that he won't be rude enough to interrupt my time spent with God. I've even tried telling him that I'm spending the time communing. With God even when I'm not reading my bible and he should also be mindful of that time as well but it apparently is not the same to him so he tends to treat it as a good time to interrupt me. However, he is becoming to be the least of my problems now. There is the particular jailer who seems to have me in his cross-hairs for some reason.

Since it is constantly very cool in this jail, and especially in the cells, most folks cover their heads with a towel or something and sit on their beds reading or playing cards. When I first encountered this jailer and had a towel on my head he jokingly asked if I intended to commit suicide. I told him no, that my head was cold, so he took his count of the men in the cell and left. Several days later he came in to take the count and as usual I was sitting on my bed reading my bible. This time he spotted a pamphlet I had laying on my bed with a picture of Jesus dressed with a covering on his head and wearing a beard. I guess the towel on my head and my beard were too much for him and convicted his spirit so he angrily told me to take the towel off my head. No mindful, there is no rule her against wearing a towel on one's head when you are in your cell and nobody but him makes a big deal of it. I've never heard any of the other inmates mention stuff like this so it must be a personal attach against me.

What I try to do is to fly below the radar of all the jailers and officers here just so I won't become a target for them, which could be very bad for me. I intend on trying to give this guy as much leeway as possible so he will go away but I must also be ready to rejoice because I'm found worthy to partake of Christ's sufferings and should glorify god because of it But, if I can remedy the problem by removing the towel from my head I think that's a small price to pay and I think God would also agree. It is truly amazing how Satan can sow discord amongst the brethren of Christ, whether one's in jail, prison, or in the church. After my arrival to this section of the jail and seeing the behavior of the very guys who walked around with bibles, I knew that it would be very hard to start a bible study here. I figured at best we could just pray for those men wanting prayer.

That way the hypocrisy would be minimized. So the first thing I felt I needed to do was to let my light shine by reading and studying the bible alone in the same place every day so all could see my dedication as well as sample and compare my behavior with the other so-called men of God there. Before long, I was being asked to join a bible study being moderated by one of the guys who was admittedly a babe of Christ and unfamiliar with such things but he felt it would be good for him to learn. I agreed and gave him my support. I know that if I declined to participate it would be viewed as rude and divisive. The bible study was doomed to fail because there was no structure, no rules of conduct, and no clearly established subject matter. Instead of following a passage of scripture put forth by the moderator and asked what they thought it meant; most guys simply quoted other scripture they were familiar with and sent the entire subject off on a tangent so disorder became the order of the bible study. I mostly relegated myself to answering all of the finer points of scripture that came up and avoided the discussions because all of these guys were babes in Christ but all of them felt they had just as much right to teach the lesson as the next guy.

This is truly the strength and power of Satan and his ability to divide and conquer. After about 5 days of this mash up of varying interpretations of scripture, the bible study imploded from within and for over 2 weeks has not surfaced again. In spite of the fact that my bible knowledge was far superior to theirs, as

was my behavior and my ability to teach, as well as me having an active street ministry that I shared with them, the ones who always walked around with bibles but displaying the conduct of Satan would rather see the bible study fail than to see me succeed as the bible study teacher, as it should have been. This has been the only clear cut victory for Satan since I've been here, and intended for it to be his last.

However, I am hopeful and I may attract some guys that can see through Satan's smoke screen and darkness and make their way to the marvelous light that shines through me. I anxiously await them with baited breath. Sometimes I catch guys watching me as though they sense there is something peculiar about me as well as different from the others who carry bibles, but for now they seem content on keeping their distance. The Lord has placed in on my heart to let them first approach me because he requires a measure of action from each of us and never intrudes. We are all required to knock first or at least open the door. I suspect that many of the bible carriers here resent me because I have raise the standard for the conduct of those who profess Christ to a higher level; a level in which they are unable or unwilling to attain due to their lack of faith or their attraction to sin, for whatever reason, they avoid any religious discussions with me, and probably speak evil of me because those in their circles of influences avoid me as well.

This behavior is well documented in scripture and is something I expected to happen to me, which brings me great delight, knowing it is because I do not behave with the same level of worldly conduct as they do; which defiles their Christian witness and puts Christ to an open shame. Well, my cell mate went to court this morning and received probation. I wish I could say I was sorry to see him go but that's not the case. He was 27years old and wined like a baby the whole week he was here. He was actually worse than the 56 years old man who left before him, and I thought he had it bad. They both wee addicted to using profanity and didn't seem to have a healthy fear of God, neither did they seem to have any knowledge of Him, which I found deeply troubling. I shudder to think how my next cell mate will be so I'm bracing myself for the worse, but being prayerful for somebody God can use to help me with my ministry here. After all, Jesus did send them out 2 by 2, so there has to be a reason for Him doing that right?

Praise the Lord, He actually bless me with a cell mat after my own heart, so to speak. This black kid was 24 but at least he had dreams, something that is as rare here as sex with a female. He also had respect for his elders and not once did I hear him use any profanity. The night he came into the cell, we must have talked, at least I did out of sheer delight that I had someone to talk to about 3 hours. He seemed genuinely interested in my inspirational talk about the challenges I faced in college and throughout my career. We talked about the obstacles facing black men trying to pursue their dreams, the issues facing young black men, as well as those facing blacks as a race in this country. We talked about the importance of trying to live a life that was not stereotypical of blacks, as well as living in areas where there may be very few blacks, like Seattle, WA. He was also from New Orleans so I shared my experiences of living there with him as we both recalled areas and street names that were prominent there. Then in about a little more than 24 hours he was gone, as were my hopes of ever having another cell mate like him. He had been arrested as part of a dragnet operation in which he said he got caught up in the while doing some music production work in the house that was raided. He said that because the coops did find pot and distribution supplies, they simply charged everyone in the house with the same charges, leaving it up to the courts to figure out, which is typical.

Although he did acknowledge drug activity was prevalent at that house, he had never thought he could be arrested in such a manner because nothing was found on his person, on or had he been implicated in

the search and seizure warrant. I sympathized with him and told him of my own experiences doing work in the music business at people's homes where pot and other drugs were plentiful and the risk of being arrested was a constant threat but folks tended to ignore the risk. Unfortunately, this is not the prudent thing to do, in which he agreed. Initially he said he would wait it out until his court date on Aug 26 so as not to burden his mother, which was where he was living at the time, with the cost of bailing him out of jail. Apparently, his mother didn't want her boy behind bars any longer than necessary so she bonded him out of jail several days later.

Due to the bizarre nature of the arrest, where he just happened to be at the house at that particular time, we both tried to make sense of it. The only thing I could come up with was that it was an act of God, and that it was not coincidence that fate had brought us together. I figured that he was actually a good kid who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and needed some kind words of inspiration to overshadow the negative reality of him being in jail and having to deal with the criminal justice system. I also thought that I would have plenty of time to witness to him about Jesus Christ, in case that was necessary, which at first I doubted since he tended to carry himself as though he was a Christian in which I never heard anything ungodly come out of his mouth. How so very refreshing this was to me in this place. Late that day his mother came to visit him and when he came back to the cell he said that she was going to get him out on bond that night. My heart sunk. I told him that I was very sad to see him go and tried to illustrate to him the negative behavior of my other cell mates I had to deal with. Now that I had very little time to witness to him, I simply asked him if he was saved. He started to search for answers, indicating to me he was not and then answered that he did believe in god. Well, I thought, here is a start.

He then started to justify his position by using an old tried and true strategy designed by Satan to convince unbelievers that Christianity is only 1 of many religions and who is to say that God is only approachable through it along. I told him that I had once believed the same thing and did not think that I needed to accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior just to talk to God. However, I did not know that Satan had the power to see which of us would become his enemies later in life and would try to destroy us before we could get to that point, just as he tried to destroy Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem. I started to tell him that acceptance of Jesus as Lord came not from being influenced or manipulated by man but by what was taking place in my life. Once I realized Satan, or something, was trying to destroy me, and then seeing the super-natural thing taking place in my life I could not explain, the miraculous ways I was being saved from death or great harm; it drove me to seek comfort in the work of God.

Then, once I did this, the Bible revealed to me the explanations I had been seeking. Suddenly, it all started to make sense so I ran into Jesus arms. I told him that I often wonder if I ever would have done this had I not first been threatened by Satan. Many people receive Jesus without such trials but then when their faith is tried they become like those whose seed fell by the wayside, the rock, or the thorn bush. I told him that my faith came not by way of man but the experience, and that this experience was unshakable and immovable. That my experience with God, as well as Satan, was just as real as my experience with mankind and nothing could change that. I then told him that if Satan saw him as a threat to his kingdom later in his life, he too would have to make such a decision to run to Christ or to risk spending eternity in Hell, which is where the Bible, out of all other religions, says he will end up. The very idea that Christianity alone would dare to propose this end to the unbeliever is evident of a sinister cover up by exceeding dark and evil forces conspiring to drive as many people as possible away from the life giving Salvation offered by Christ to them who call on Him as Lord and Savior.

This elaborate confidence game reeks of Satan, who is the father of all lies, of whom the Bible says,

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” John 8:44.

My cell mate responded that no one had ever really warned him of the consequences of not receiving Jesus as his Lord and Savior, so I quickly added that I just did, and that he was no longer with excuse regarding why he not receive Christ, nor the impending punishment of spending eternity in Hell because of his decision. I told him such a decision was at least worthy of some consideration and offered my website address to him for additional information and my personal testimonials of what the grace of God had made possible for me due to my trust and faith in His son. My offer seemed to give him some comfort and he told me he would get it before he left, then we both dose off to sleep. Later that night he woke me up to say that he was leaving and wanted me to write down my website address. I had actually forgotten about it but was delighted he had mentioned it, and was looking forward to a long-lasting friendship, if it was God’s will. He will be sorely missed as my cell mate but his brief presence has provided me with the refreshment of an oasis in the desert, giving me a renewed sense of trust and belief that God’s truly aware of my situation and will not place more hardship on me than what I can bear.

I must keep my eyes stayed on Jesus and learn from Him and of Him knowing that even He came not into the world to be ministered to but to minister to others. So too must I seek opportunities to minister to others regardless of how vile and lost they may be, After all, where is the reward if they are already saved and walking as Christ would have them. No, I don’t need to have someone like me as a cell mate but someone who needs me as a cell mate! I must stop thinking that God brought me her to establish a sterile environment within this cell to only meet my spiritual needs, and start thinking that this cell, and the rest of this jail are all parts of the spiritual battle field in which I am enlisted as a soldier of the Lord. And as such, I must be prepared for spiritual battle with everyone her. I must believe that the love and goodness of Christ is sufficient to win every soul and every battle. Personally, I wish they all would be like my last cell mate but then God doesn’t need any coward soldiers. I must prove to myself and to Satan that through Christ I am a very valiant man of God, and willing to take on all comers. “As thy days so shall thy strength be.” Det 33:25 “The trial will not exceed the strength that shall be given us to bear it. Then let us take up our work just where we find it, believing that whatever may come, strength proportionate to the trial will be given”- “Steps to Christ” Ellen White.

Last night I got another cell mate who was another young black guy about 28 years old. He too was very well mannered and respectful of his elders. He also didn’t use profanity in my presence and when I asked if he was saved he said he was, although he had not found a church to attend on a regular basis, so I wisely let his behavior speak for itself and gave him the benefit of the doubt. I’m learning more that most times it’s just better to inspect a person’s fruit than to take their word for it At least in here I have a bird’s eye view of their conduct over the span of 24 hours which should be sufficient for determining the character of most people. Their characters will speak louder than their words. This guy said he had been stopped for loitering but after the cops ran his background check they found he had an outstanding warrant in another county for failure to appear for a burglary case so they arrested him and were hold him until officers from that county came to pick him up. He said he had been homeless but had just gotten what could have been steady job.

He simply fell asleep in a breeze way of some apartments and someone call the cops. He had some run-ins with the law before but said he was really trying to turn his life around. Unfortunately, we didn’t get a chance to discuss scripture but the few hours we spent together were very delightful and meaningful

for both of us. He didn't seem to be educated or computer literate so I kept the conversation non-technical and simple enough for his understanding. Within the period of about 12 hours he was gone, and I was left alone waiting for my next cellmate.

At this point I would like to add something that should have been added much sooner. It happened during the time the first young black guy was with me. At the time of my arrest, the officer had retrieved the wrong reading glasses for me from my computer desk, which I only used for viewing my laptop screen and not for reading books because they were of a lesser magnification. This severely impacted my reading duration of the Bible I sue because of this small text size, so I really need reading glasses with a larger magnification index. I was able to get a friend of mine to come here and collect my property for me so he could help me contact my landlord and inform her of my arrest and to see if she was willing to allow me to live there until I got out of jail about 2 and a half months later. Her number was in my cellphone, which was included with my property, so he promised me he would contact her to find out.

He also told me he had gone by my house to pick up some of my belongings, like my TV, laptop, and clothing but was told by the guy I had rented a room to that the landlord had come and taken my laptop and tv but left the other stuff. The personal property I have at my house isn't germane to my point but is part of the backdrop for painting the scenery of this testimony. Anyway, all this was said to my friend when he came to visit me but have yet to hear back from him in over 2 weeks now. I also had him to drop off a stronger pair of glasses for me, which he did after about 5 days, but regardless of how many times I told him to make sure they had magnification index of at least 3.0, he still brought me glasses with a 1.25 index that was clearly marked on the glasses with a label you could not miss.

When I went to pick up the glasses, all of my expectation of finally being able to read the Bible for longer lengths of time and much clearer were dashed out when I saw the label. Immediately a rage began to emerge from deep inside me and I could not conceal my disappointment at my friend's stupidity or profound ignorance of what a magnification index actually was. I mean if he didn't know he could have easily asked for assistance, which is what educated people do. However, my friend, who I've known since I was 9 years old, was not educated and had spent most of his life in prison. As the fire inside me started to subside, I overheard the jailers who had given me my glasses say to the guy who came in after me that maybe he should swap glasses with me. I quickly became alert and rushed back to the des, asking the inmate if the glasses were too strong for his vision, in which to my delight he said they were.

I hurriedly gave him my glasses to put on and it was music to my ears when he said that my glasses were much better. Immediately, I started thanking and praising God for his mercy and goodness in having my back. This is why I love being a child of God, and why my faith remains as strong as it is. It's when we least expect that our situations require the time or effort of such a mighty God to intervene, that He reassures us that He is even concerned with what we would consider a small matter. I could have struggled through the Bible reading as my eyes allowed but god weighed in and said that it was not to be. How can I not love Him and serve Him with all my heart? He takes my breath away with the major miracles He does in my life, and even more with the minor ones. Again I ask myself, "who am I that thou are so mindful of me?" God's move in my life regarding the glasses, which happened to be the ideal strength I needed for prolonged reading of the Bible text, fortified my faith that regardless of what happened with my housing situation or my furniture, or my other personal items, told me in no uncertain terms that He had my back and that I was to put all my trust in Him; from the least things to the greatest. How can you not enter into His rest and peace after you know He has commanded the storm, 'Peace, be still!'

I generally have a regular routine for getting through my days here. The first part of the day is dedicated to prayer and consecration. Then mid-day until around 6pm, I indulge in writing, reflecting, meditating, and reading (both scriptures and religious material). After that I finally go out into the day room to present myself as a beacon of light for those wanting to get to know Christ and the Bible with my help. As I mentioned earlier, I normally take some time to exhibit a public display of my devotion to the study of God's word and over time these guys have come to expect this behavior from me. Many of them sense that I am very different from the other Bible carriers in both deed and speech, and the Spirit of God tends to point them in my direction for ministering. I have been trying to keep such ministering to a one on one basis but I must let the Holy Spirit have its way. One of the guys had previously come to me regarding his sin of adultery and wanted to know if I could recommend some scripture to him that would comfort him during this period of guilt and shame.

Since he had already professed his acceptance of Christ as Lord, I pointed him to Psalms 51, the prayer made by King David after he too had committed adultery but had also extended his sin to include murder. Once he had read the psalm, I had him to read the entire story of the tragic event in 2 Samuel, chapters 11 and 12. Yesterday night I was able to catch up with him and review the story with him just in case his spiritual insight was insufficient to discern the underlying message of the story, which turned out to be pivotal for his understanding. I also just happened to have another guy at the table I had been talking to about how we should prepare ourselves through prayer before reading the Bible who decided to stick around for this impromptu Bible study of 3 people. As I started out teaching from 2 Sa 11:1, I seemed to have been caught up in the Spirit of God and became very animated, dramatizing the despicable acts of King David as though from God's perspective itself. To accentuate a point, I thundered with a slam of my fist on the metal table which echoed the sound throughout the room, catching the attention of many of the guys.

As I was caught up in this frenzy of Spiritual bliss, some of the guys could hold their curiosity no longer and came over to the table to see what all the commotion was about. Then they too became spell-bound by my dramatics and joined in with the final reading of King David's heartfelt prayer for forgiveness. After it was all over, the guys wanted to know if this would become a regular Bible study and expressed an interest to participate. I told them yes, if it was God's will. I didn't mean to be so evasive but I do know that if I am to be a part of it I will have to be the only teacher and moderator, to give me complete control of the flow and content of the subject matter. This is to hopefully avoid the Bible study from becoming a victim of chaos, illiteracy, and demonic activity, which are the choice weapons Satan uses to diffuse such warfare against his kingdom. Otherwise, I will continue to keep things one on one as they are. We shall see very soon how things will play themselves out.

Well, the very next day the Bible study began on the heels of a visit from my friend James who had good news for me. He told me my laptop and TV were indeed in the possession of the landlord and that he would soon be picking them up for me. He also gave me her phone number and said she was expecting my call. Knowing that my laptop had been saved made my day, although gaining access to my other personal items was still an on-going issue. As I departed from my visitation, I went back to my table in the day room to proceed with the Bible study, where one other person anxiously awaiting me. We were soon joined by one of the other regulars. As I am still trying to lay this groundwork for how the bible study should proceed, I have been focusing a lot on the importance of the gospels and learning to know the man Jesus Christ, how he lived, what he taught, who he was, and why he suffered and died for us. It makes sense to me that unless they know who they are supposed to be becoming like, how can they

become like him. These guys are babes in Christ and need to first be nourished on the milk of the word before moving on to meatier portions of scripture.

However, they are chomping at the bit to chew on acres of scripture they do not have the intestinal fortitude to digest. This is where my expertise as moderator takes on its importance because if the bible study isn't focused in the right area of scripture, things rapidly begin to go off onto a tangent and become scattered. I've suggested that they read the gospels on their own time and then bring questions to the table for further discussion but they tend to lack the discipline for self-study and usually allow themselves to veer off into areas of scripture that are inappropriate for their present needs, which is to know who Jesus was so they can attempt to become like him who sets the standard for our character.

God has placed on my mind to use the book of John as the starting point for the bible studying because it casts a broader view of Jesus as both God and man. The use of the book of John was starting success and has solidly established itself as God's intended course for me to proceed. I am constantly amazed at how God is enlightening the Holy Spirit within me to fulfill His will and give me the guidance I need daily. After about a week of what I considered to be a very successful bible study, the group again began to long for more of an unstructured and disorganized approach to bible study in which they were freer to read whatever scriptures they wanted and then have me to interpret the meaning of the scriptures. However, all of these men were either new to Christianity or lack the proper understanding of scripture due to their education level, which was deficient to say the least. It became very apparent to me that they were being attacked by Satan and influenced to rebel against such an effective methodical approach to bible study and to be in favor of an approach that gives Satan a clear advantage.

My approach was anchored by the fundamental need to become like Christ, to first be fed with the spiritual milk of the word before they try to digest the more "meatier" portions of it which required a much more developed digestive system of spiritual maturity. As babes in Christ, they rebelled against this systematic approach as recommended by Paul and favored Satan's non-conformist and chaotic approach, making the proper consumption of the scriptures studied problematic. The more I would try to stress the importance of becoming acquainted with just who Jesus was, what he preached, why he gave his life, the more they were driven to satisfy their own curiosities about other unrelated scriptures that were beyond their spiritual development. They rebelled against the "baby" food which was meant to strengthen their limbs and wanted to jump right out of the baby chair and hit the ground running right to the grownups table for the meatier portions. I was not having any of that at my table! This was not a matter of control but of stewardship. I was being entrusted by God to properly teach them scriptures based on where they were in their spiritual walk with Christ, and according to their appetites. Their patience would be required until God saw fit to reveal His truth to them.

The group started to once again become reduced to more of what I refer to as a "babble study," where the sole purpose of the study is to serve as a platform for reciting scripture without any meaningful purpose or direction. Jesus showed when he was tempted by the devil that although Satan's grasp of the scriptures was excellent, his refusal to abide by them gave him no power over Jesus as he thought it would. If this was the same important power these guys were looking for by becoming hearers of the word, and not doers, then this bible study does not endeavor to promote such importance, and would be a waste of my time, and theirs.

After about a week, I decided to take in victory by asking the guys what had changed in their lives since they had come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. This would be important for them when telling others

what Jesus had done in their lives. I wanted them to name something specific they could reference in terms of something they used to do but don't do it anymore or something they never did but now are doing on a regular basis. I was trying to get them to say something like, "I use to lust after women but no anymore or I never gave much thought to praying but now I do it regularly." Not only was it difficult for me to get meaning across to them but many also found it to be offensive to them, as though I was challenging their ability to only understand the scriptures. It wasn't challenging their ability to 'hear' the scriptures, but only their ability to "do" the scriptures. I wanted them to realize for themselves that although they could quote scripture it gave them no power to effect change in their lives because their approach to understanding scripture was being tailored by the influence of Satan and not by God. God preaches a "follow me," "learn of me," and a "keep commandments" approach to becoming empowered by scripture.

Satan's approach concerns itself only with verbalizing scriptures as empty as powerless words, as demonstrated by him in the wilderness as he tried to tempt the Lord. Just as written in the bible where Jesus is figuratively instructing his disciples to "eat of my flesh" and "drink of my blood," where they would eventually walk with him no more, most of these guys abandoned the bible study group (Jn6:30 – 66) It wasn't so much that they were rejecting God's words but that they were rejecting the idea that they needed to "learn" of Jesus and become like him. These guys didn't seem to be interested at all with God looking at them, and not a better them through Christ. This happens to be the same issue that plagues today's church and renders its members impotent and powerless over their flesh because becoming like Jesus has so little importance as compared to becoming a better "you" but not at the expense of sacrificing the pleasure of the flesh. After seeing the bible study come full circle to where it was before when the other guy tried starting it, and me thinking I was really making progress, like Ezra when he heard that the Jews who had been taken captive had returned to mixing with the inhabitants of Canaan. I sat down astonished! (Eza 9:3,4)

During this time I also had another cell mate after the 28year old black guy who only stayed with me less than 24 hours due to an outstanding warrant he had in another county. This new guy was also black and about 26 years old. I will refer to him as Tay. He too mentioned how delighted he was to share a cell with an older person such as myself instead of with a young guy around his age because he wanted to avoid the drama, and try to get his life back on track with the Lord. Our first night was very emotionally charged as he was able to release a lot of pent-up emotions that he had been unable to share with anyone until he met me. I was honored to be there as a shoulder he could cry on, and as someone he felt genuinely comfortable with. Like me in my younger days, he was very glib and quick-witted, which was an immediate attraction for me, although he severely lacked the level of formal education I expected him to have.

It seemed his approach to education was determined by his audience which consisted largely of other people who education level was less or equal to his. This situation gives life to the dubious statement that when in the valley of blind, the one-eyed man is King. However it would require some very tactful diplomacy on my part to convince him that if he wanted to become more successful financially he would need to have more than an 11th grade education. What became very apparent to me was his deep-rooted resistance to formal education as though it was actually the enemy. The arguments he used were childish, illogical, and mostly framed by the negative aspects and philosophy of the gansta rap culture in which he would recite various lyrics that supported his views. Although he attempted to put up a fight instinctively, the iron-clad logic of my arguments were inescapable, as I reminded him of his current desire to be free of other who primarily supported those same views but of which he himself wanted be free of. I told him he was actually looking to be free from the philosophy, not necessarily the

young person. I then gave him a brief black history lesson so that would be compelled to place everything in its proper perspective and not to think in such a dissociative manner because what was denied to blacks back then and what he was willing to simply throw away without reservation was irrevocably tied to one another and worth much more consideration than youngsters like himself were willing to give them, in spite of their ignorance.

This kid had actually put quite a bit of time into learning the things that would give him competitive edge in a conversation of wit and comical bantering but did not have the maturity to understand that such work-play would do nothing to put food on the table for a family, of which he said he was involved with a woman seven years older than he who had 2 kids, which the baby was his. I decided that since he didn't know if he was 'saved' properly we would focus on that area of his life by finding him the spiritual food he needed. He assured me that he wanted to spend these 2 months working on him so he would not go back to doing the dumb stuff he was doing before.

We both agreed on the pitfalls associated with becoming a trustee, where there was very little time to feed one's soul with the work of God; where the daily stress level was not conducive to the requirement of a peaceful environment; an where each new day presented daunting challenges to maintaining one's humility and integrity that could very possibly result in a 25 day stay in the hole, and then being sent right back into the general population where one would have to take the chance of being assigned to a cell with someone of your liking. Needless to say, the odds were clearly against this. We both settled in and began to get to know each other better, with me availing myself as somewhat of a surrogate father and spiritual mentor to him. He attended all of the bible studies and to my delight listened very attentively to them. We would have lots of spiritual conversations about how God had worked miracles in my life, and actually allowed me to share quite a bit of my testimonials with him. Yes, we were both preparing to serve our time here in this cell together. Then, one day he told me that some of the younger guys his age were flashing gang signs at him intending for him to represent himself since he had a tattoo representing that he was a member of a Bloods gang. However, he told me that he had joined a Bloods gang in Alabama but not here in Georgia.

He said it was that nonsense he was trying to get away from when he came to Georgia to live, and had no desire to represent like that but those guys seemed to be insisting that he did represent. It was real gang banger stuff that I could hardly wrap my mind around. Then, I started to notice that he was beginning to feel more comfortable with socializing with the youngsters and would out talk them regarding matters of interest and I knew that this could be dangerous for him since he was an outsider and lacked the local pedigree of the gangs in this area. He said he was aware of that and would keep a lower profile. I agreed that he should because he had gotten into a debate regarding some sports trivia with a guy name Cain who I felt would be bad business for the whole dorm. I later learned from Tay that it had been Cain flashing the gang signals at him. Well, I thought, what do you expect when you put tats on your lower arms for the whole world to see. You are essentially sending up smoke signals to others about your gang affiliation, and your ignorance of this fact does nothing to set you apart from it. Tay should have known better.

After about a week and a half, my cell mate was being considered for a trustee position. I again reminded him of the risks and the negative impact it would have on his spiritual maturation and he said he would pray about it because he really did miss his kid, and his ex-fiancé of whom he had been dumped because of these continuous problems. When he said he would pray about it I knew he had already made up his mind. The next morning when the officer performed the head-count, my cellmate was asked if he wanted to be a trustee and without the slightest hesitation he quickly answered, "Yes!" I

pretended that I go no reaction but I couldn't help but feel sorry for him for making such a poor decision, even though he had every right to make it. I can't really say he gave in to his flesh or the influence of Satan, or even the pressure applied on him by the gang members but in my heart I felt he had made the wrong on, and would likely pay dearly for it. We would talk for hours at night since we both tended to sleep all day, and he would always say that it was meant for him to share the cell with me because it was what he needed.

I agreed, and tried to pray away any spiritual forces that wanted to prevent his remaining in the cell with me. However, the choice was his and he made it. Although we had agreed on sharing contact information with each other, I left choice to him as well as I was disappointed when he only shook my hand and asked me to pray for him as he hurried out of the cell, and out into the dark unknown. That was the last time I saw or heard from him but have continued to pray for him. The irony is that the earlier 24 year old black kid with the dreams, but who was not saved, took the time to come back into the cell and wake me up to ask me for my contact information and he was here for little more than 24 hours! During all of this time while my cell mate had been here, little did I know there had been brewing in our midst an evil spirit unmatched by anything I had ever seen in all the years of my imprisonment. I'm sure many others could make the same boast. Since most of this writing will be about him and his exploits, I will give him the fitting name of Cain since he was definitely not his brother's keeper.

Cain had been released back into this housing unit after serving 25 days in the hole for failure to comply with an officer's direction while he was a trustee. His presence back into population had been analogous to Satan's departure from Heaven and being cast to the earth, and his angels with him (Rev 12:7-12). His entrance, Cain's entrance that is, was marked by what was to become his primary weapon of choice which was to create as much ear-shattering noise filled with the most awful profanity as was humanly possible. Although his initial disruption was met with some resistance, his insidious determination would eventually propel him back into the spotlight and grant him rock star status over a group of youngsters that would actually praise his every warped and demented performance in a similar way as Satan's angels did as they mindlessly followed him in his futile attempt to overthrow the Kingdom of Heaven. Yes, Cain had also been released into this housing unit having great wrath because he knew he had only a short time to create this disturbance before he was discharged from this jail. It has been my experience that whenever I have been in situations where I have attempted to teach or preach the work of God, Satan has inadvertently given his stamp of approval by sending one of his agents to create disruption or strife for the sole purpose of making war against God and His Christ.

It was my spirit that brought me to the attention of Cain and I knew immediately that our encounter would involve spiritual warfare. After us both knowing about the other, and what our mission was, we both went about the business of making our presence known; mine through bible study and his through the constant and incessant ear-perching screeches he made throughout the day and night. During one night as I was caught up in the spirit of preaching and hammering away on one of the dinner tables out in the day room where I conducted them, Cain made his way over to the table and even joined in with my vocalization of the 51st Palms, the signature prayer of David after he committed adultery and murder. I immediately sensed that his participation was born out of mockery and accusation of this man David, a man after God's own heart, and not his sincere and heartfelt reaction to King David's remorsefulness and plea for forgiveness.

It also said to me that he was introducing himself and had no fear or respect for the word of God, and clearly making off all the territory in the dorm as belonging to himself and his master. But I happened to know that where the light shines there is no darkness, and that no amount of darkness can put out the

rays of Light. Sure he had made his introduction at that moment, but he would never come back to a single bible study for fear of that Light, which is what I truly believe. Now that we understood each other it was time to be about out Father's business. I began to intentionally raise my voice and hammer away during the lessons while he would contend for the attention of those not listening to me. Although the Light of the word would successfully shut down his ministry of revolting darkness during bible study his real strength lay in the times of day when I was not conducting bible study. Such times were capitalized on by him and used to create a stage for his damnable antics and his ferocious screams of senseless profanity or gnats rap lyrics, which are truly sometimes indistinguishable from each other.

These demonstrations were usually more intense during periods of lock down when everyone is confined to their cells for various lengths of time. It was also during this time when Cain first appeared that my cousin Perry was sent to this unit because of probation violation and assigned to his cell, which unfortunately for him he shared with Cain. When I realized this, my heart immediately went out to Perry and I knew I would have to help pray him through this. Now, my cousin is ex-military with 34 years active service under his belt, is about 6'4" and 275 to 300 pounds, or more. By all standards he is a very big man. Most of his stature was used explicitly by the Army as an MP due to his physically intimidating presence. That very first morning Perry was here, I stopped to see who he shared his cell with and that's when I realized it was with Cain. However, I was somehow relieved to see the two of them laughing and joking around in their cell and thought that maybe Perry's physique had saved the day after all, and that he would not be bothered by the troubling noise being made by Cain any longer. Well, that was during breakfast and Perry seemed to think that his cell mate was an ok guy, but I still had my doubts that things would continue this uneventful. After we were locked back down for a while, I started to hear the familiar howling and screaming, and thundering on the cell door made by Cain in one of his rages. It was as I suspected that Perry's stature had very little effect on Cain's determination to disrupt the peacefulness of the housing unit sought through the prayers of myself and others. I began to pray for Perry to have strength enough to restrain from using physical force to stop the guy.

Perry had told me during our initial conversation that morning that he was a deacon in his church, no longer drank alcohol, or fooled around with his wife of 20 years. He said he was retired after 34 years in the Army but had to tie some loose ends up as a result of his previous drinking problem. I was hopeful that Perry could help me rejuvenate the bible study group with his experience and words of wisdom since a minister had actually found him worthy of such an honored church ministry. Unfortunately, I was sorely mistaken, and Perry proved to me to be just as unchurched as many of the guys in the dorm. In fact, he was indistinguishable from them in both language and behavior. It became painfully obvious to me that he had more in common with them than with a man of God like me. Whenever we did talk, it was mostly about him and his world but hardly ever about the Kingdom of Heaven, which is what I believed to be the criteria used to select a person for the office of Deacon. He didn't have the grasp of scripture I thought was necessary for earning one a deaconship and I was convinced that as soon as he told Cain of his deaconship, Cain must have laughed out loud in his face.

I can imagine Cain thinking something like, "Douglas I know but who are you?" reminiscent of the scriptures where the evil spirits are actually starting that those who were trying to cast him out had no power over him to do so. And, as a final demonstration of this fact, the spirit "leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them..." (Act 19:13-16). Cain continued to hold my cousin, as well as all of us, as his captive audience, mocking those of us who would dare to call on the power of the Lord to stop his vicious attacks against God's righteousness and our sanity. I was basically reduced to prayer and what was being shared in bible study to contain his antics, and limit the influence he had on those in the group. I had even thought about countering his godly rants and ravings with an

extremely vociferous and persistent delivery of scripture specifically tailored to provide the inmates with simple comparisons regarding the wickedness coming from his mouth and what scripture said about those who uttered such wickedness, and what would eventually happen to them or others who followed them.

Their intentions, although quite appealing to my flesh, were quickly dismissed when held up to the infallible wisdom of the book of Proverbs which revealed the true outcome when contending with a wicked or foolish person under such circumstances. To do so would only exacerbate the situation and cause that person to appear wise in their own eyes. (Proverbs 26:4-5) Time was fortunately on our side since Cain's discharge date was a matter of several weeks. Unfortunately, this brought very little consolation to Perry, whose opining of his cell mate had run the game of misunderstood, to mischievous, to just plain crazy, to demented, and finally to being possessed of a demon, which is the conclusion my spiritual eyes had revealed to me when I first met him. It was the vacant look in his eyes and the devilish grin on his face, similar to the face portrayed on the Mad Comic books. Every time I looked at him, whom I avoided, as much as possible, that comic book image was all I saw. Cain was a dead ringer for it, even though he was black and un-freckled.

I thought it so uncanny for him to have such a close resemblance but not when I think of the devilish nature that the mad character had once been created to portray. The Christian community had that comic book once on the top of their hit list of books that were not to be read by Christian children, which ironically boosted the books appeal to them immediately, as well as others who beat a path to the newsstands to see what it was that made this book such a threat to the parents and others. Kids, as well as other drive by the flesh, made this comic book a must have for secretly readings of books scorned by the larger Christian society. The books character image became synonymous with all things unholy and defiled and the selection of this guy by Satan was designed and meant to illicit just the right response from me in connecting the dots and concluding that this was indeed Satan's calling card.

Cain's facial features are still indelibly stuck in my mind. Satan knew that since I myself had devoured many of their books for the same rebellious reasons as stated above I would be quick to see the hypocrisy of my own Christian upbringing and maybe even be amused by his sense of humor in using that particular image. It definitely told me that I personally was being singled out to engage him in battle, and that I should come with my A-game. Consequently, I did just that and conceded the battle to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords because the battle was never mine, but the Lord's and as was told to Jehoshaphat in 2 Chr 20:17, "You will not have to fight in this battle." This became manifested one morning as Perry and I were talking over breakfast. His cell mate, Cain, had stopped to chat with Perry after drinking some water from the fountain. No being the least interested in what he had to say, or hearing the profanity he wrapped within each sentence he spoke, I use that moment to walk away to a nearby table and sat down to eat. However, the musk from one of the inmates was so strong that I decided to move to another table but by then I saw Cain walk away from Perry so I headed back over to him.

At that moment I heard Cain raging about what I had done as if I had disrespected him, or even physically assaulted him. He was stomping around like a wild animal, drawing the attention of everyone whose stares were gradually pointing in my direction. I simply held my peace and pretended not to notice what was taking place, continued talking to Perry and acted normal. From hearing Cain's raging, I saw him from the corner of my eye hurriedly coming in my direction, with the eyes and the glances of the inmates growing more and more concerned as he made his way closer to me. Then, out of nowhere one of Cain's closest buddies stood up and grabbed him, hauling him off into one of the cells in the

process. To this day I still don't know what the guy said to Cain, nor did I ask, but I felt it was diving intervention at work on my part because had Cain put his hand on me, I would have given Satan a clear victory over me, and my ministry. My decision to step out on faith and humble myself, letting fight my battle for me was, I think, the decisive how that helped to take all the sting out of Cain's behavior.

Although Cain continued to act as before but his behavior was becoming more desperate and maniacal, as though he had run out of options and that nothing he was doing was causing me to fight Satan's battle in my flesh. With my spiritual eyes, I could see I had been the target all along, and the guys who followed and admired his antics were only weapons use by Satan to turn up the heat on me. As Cain's time became a matter of several days, he seemed to be trying to commit a type of "get out of jail" suicide by breaking as many rules as he could that would bolster even greater his 'rock star' status. It all looked so familiar to me throughout countless situations I've been acquainted with where Satan simply throws you away once you've done his bidding or have been unable to do it. Just ask the people sitting on death row, and if it were possible, the ones in the countless graves all over the world. That is his signature trademark that should warn all of humanity of the consequences of 'dancing with the devil.'

When we are called to let the Lord do our fighting for us it doesn't mean we necessarily take a passive position. On the contrary, we should be actively communicating with God through prayer to bind up and loose the holds of Satan's thought messengers who target the mind and heart of those taken captive by him at his will. That's where the spiritual warfare between God's angels and Satan's angels are being fought daily. It is our conviction and communion, the depth of our faith, and the level of surrender we give to Christ that ultimately determines the outcome of such spiritual battles. When Jesus mentioned to his disciples that some spirits are cast out only by prayer and fasting, I think He was referring to us being spiritually equipped to do so. I don't envy my cousin Perry's position and don't think I could have possibly occupied the cell with Cain without reading my bible out loud as I have done when faced with similar situations where Satan wanted control of my cell.

Once I gave my cell mates the choice of listening to me read the bible aloud if they insisted on using reciting rap lyrics saturated with profanity and ungodliness, they have so far chosen my silence every time. Perry was trapped in that cell without any real spiritual power to do anything about it. What really amazed me was that the thought of using spiritual warfare against Cain never occurred to him as a possible solution when we talked. I couldn't help but notice that this situation was also designed to make a mockery of those who dared to pass themselves off as being one of God's elite, but having none of the power that should qualify them for such a lofty office in the church. Perry was an embarrassment to me, and probably to God as well knowing that he had most likely wore the idea that he was a deacon like a badge of honor as soon as he spoke with Cain; he confirmed my suspicious when I asked if he had.

After he didn't, that he signed his own death warrant, so to speak. Cain's dominance over Perry was disturbing to me sine he should have easily been able to physically intimidate Cain without laying a finger on him. At times it seemed to me that Perry was slowly becoming enchanted with the guy, laughing with Cain's other followers when he did something outrageously stupid, playing cards with him, and just wanting to be close to him in the day room. Hell, even I was beginning to wonder what went on between the two of them in their cell. If someone was trying to make my life a living hell like Cain was doing to Perry, I would not even speak to them, less more go anywhere around them. I couldn't wrap my mind around Perry's behavior but I really do think Perry was simply afraid of the man, someone who was a little more than half his weight and towered at least 3 inches over him.

Perry actually asked me what I had done to Cain on the day Cain became angry with me as though he was coming to his defense. I was dumbfounded and just looked at him in amazement. I mean, hadn't he been standing there with me throughout the whole ordeal? He was actually turned facing Cain as he started to throw his temper tantrum, and when he walked over towards me. I asked myself what the hell was he talking about? I never spoke a word, and continued eating my food. Then, after about several weeks, it was all over. Cain discharged as expected, leaving behind his groupies, some who have been trying to imitate his bizarre and ungodly behavior but seem to be finding it rather demanding, as well as demeaning, since they themselves have not been empowered with the same level of wickedness and foolishness given to Cain by Satan.

However, Cain's influence on them is unmistakable and unfortunately his legacy may continue throughout my stay here, which now is about 28 days to my freedom. Perry however, decided to become a trustee and ironically enough, they both left the cell within a matter of hours of each other, with Perry leaving first. That was 3 days ago but I couldn't journal off of this until I could get a pen. By the way, this pen is the very pen used by Cain when he was here, and given to my neighbor who sold it to me for 4 slices of bread. I immediately pleaded the blood of Jesus over it once I found out so far, it is working like a champ and probably couldn't wait to pour its ink out on this paper, detailing the events surrounding these last few weeks. Anyway, I can't recall the ink skipping once! As for Cain's legacy, his band of groupies are still trying to carry on his antics of kicking on the cell door, loudly broadcasting profane rap lyrics, and making all kinds of senseless loud noises designed to irritate the inmates but fortunately they lack the true commitment and kind purpose to maintain their disruptions for any length of time, which was Cain's real power.

As bad as Cain was, I must admit that there were brief instances when he seemed to function normally. It was during one such episode of this normalcy that another Christian brother, a Nigerian, took the opportunity to approach him. Presumably, he spoke to Cain about his antics, why he did them, how disrespectful it was to do them. I say this because the African's social traditions are even more important to their people as the teaching of Jesus and seemed to always be his reference point when we spoke of Cain's behavior. Initially, their talk was primarily centered around Cain's upbringing and who he was as a person without the use of the bible. Then it developed into more of a bible-based conversation regarding scripture because I was summoned to locate a particular parable of Jesus for the African. Things seemed to be going rather smoothly and Cain seemed very at ease and attentive. I actually felt my prayers had been answered and that we would get some peace and quiet as a result. Late that day, to my astonishment, Cain was being accompanied by the African to my cell, in which he instructed Cain, rather firmly, I might add, to apologize to me. Cain rambled off a brief apology about not meaning to disrespect me as his elder, which he was sorry, and if I would accept his apology. At this point I told him yes. I would and we shook hands and embraced in a manly hug.

Apparently, being caught up in the awkwardness of the moment, Cain began to repeat a similar apology and we again shook hands and embraced as before. I thought it very strange he did that, as if the apology was manufactured and not being said through sincerity or conviction and that somebody forgot to turn the switch off. As I was standing there, I couldn't get out of my mind just how much Cain looked like the mad comic image, how vacant his gaze was, and how unnatural his countenance appeared this close up to him. I gave him the benefit of the doubt anyway, and felt that progress had definitely been made by the African, as well as a victory over Satan by God. For nearly 2 days Cain was quiet and I was happy for my cousin Perry being able to have peace in his cell without the disruptions for once. My current roommate, a 27 year old black guy sentenced to 60 days for probation violation, and I rejoiced

at the prospect of Cain turning over a new leaf on life, and that he would even point out to his groupies the error of his ways, and why they shouldn't imitate him. Fat chance!!!

After 2 days of calm, Cain was back with a vengeance, and even took his madness to a new level by addressing a more extreme element of his unpredictable behavior. His behavior began to unravel out of control even for him, and he began to rant and rave at nobody in particular but obviously at something that he was very angry with. This was indeed Cain's lowest point in the unit and was the one where I was most convinced he was possessed by a demon, or demons. His behavior was so unnatural, as were his physical demonstrations of things he chose to mock. He started to do things that were in clear violation of the rules, and was even caught playing basketball in his underwear as though daring anybody to do anything about it. The response of the guards was to stop everybody from playing basketball, and not to single him out for his misdeed. This approach became routinely used whenever it was obvious that Cain was the violator of the rules, or in some instances the officers chose to turn a blind eye at what I was witnessing. Only someone with this power of Satan could influence these guards to behave as passively as they did to him.

They would come into the dorm making all kinds of threatening speeches about what would happen to anyone caught violating the rules. They would even fabricate potential punishments for such violations they had no power to carry out. Incredibly, their every threat only involved punishing everybody for a single person's crime, and not only the guilty person! To me, this was nothing short of institutional madness being generated by a much higher power than man. Cain sparkled in this impotence and strutted around the dorm as though he knew he was untouchable. I could hardly believe what was happening and each time an even more threatening speech was made by guards, I simply shook my head in disgust and tried to tune out his feebleness of their words. To me at least, and some other, Cain was absolutely in charge of his destiny in this dorm, and demonstrated it every chance he got. He did so up until the morning he left.

However, as his intended target, I remained unscathed by his behavior and my response to such wickedness garnered me new found respect for truly being a man of God. Although the bible study group didn't fare well, the message it was intended to drive home did by my personal demonstration of how a Christian should behave in the midst of wicked and sinful men. We should behave like Jesus would by putting all our trust in God, and his ability to fight our battles. It's one thing to study this, but quite another to live it, which was the final lesson I shared with the group by publically demonstrating that scripture was to be believed, and not only studied. This was the hope that Cain allowed everybody in the dorm to see, and that the words of Col2:15 are not only to be memorized and quoted at will but embody a power to be used by the man of God whenever it is appropriate. Cain's power over me was effectively disarmed, and his presence here will soon be a distant memory. However, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth... for the devil has come down to you, having wrath because he knows he has a short time." Rev 12:12

After Cain's much anticipated departure, I was eager to ask the African how he thought his "project" with Cain had gone and he immediately quipped, "He's crazy man!" His remark immediately brought to mind the scripture he had so confidently quoted to me which had suggested that Cain was incorrigible and was not a project I would take on. He had said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I thought that such an all-purpose prayer would likely fail, at least for him. To me, crazy was an understatement, and not the most appropriate word to describe him. I don't think the African had the spiritual eyes I had to assess Cain's behavior and I don't think Cain took him very seriously. I think Cain only toyed with him in order to create the illusion of being persuaded by his efforts to reach him. Also I

don't think the African had any previous exposure to people possessed by demons like I had, and as a result, was reluctant to consider such a thing, even though the New Testament is full of such references. Unfortunately, this is not a deficiency unique to Africans, but is also embraced by many Christians in this country --- the disbelief that Satan or demons exist!

I'm unsure if the African was aware of the victory won over Cain as I described earlier or whether he thought his own actions somehow stirred up more trouble for us but hopefully one day he will look back on this situation and God will reveal the true nature of the spiritual warfare that he was caught in the midst of. He should be so blessed but meanwhile he should in no way believe that we in this dorm were overcome by Satan. It only appeared that way, which is a very effective ploy used by Satan, to cast doubt in the mind of those whose faith has them unsure of God's ability to defeat the works of the devil, and tend to think Satan is actually winning this battle for souls.

I would like to recall episode of star trek to illustrate my point regarding how Satan uses delusions to convince Christians that our efforts to stop him are futile. The pilot of Star Trek to episodes began without the familiar William Shatner in the leading role of Jim Kirk and was being played by another actor who was later replaced by Bill. In this pilot, the Enterprise is taken captive by a race of intellectually superior beings who assumed the appearance of white elderly females. Their secret mission was to try to save their species by using other races to breed for them the off-spring most likely to serve as hosts for the living energy that was the essence of their being. After Jim Kirk and his female crew members were selected, they were taken by force to a secret mountain entrance on a planet below to begin the experiment of influencing the two to cohabit and produce off-spring. In vain, the Enterprise tried to blast a hole into the mountain that was believed to be the entrance to the alien's hide-away. Held against their will, the aliens subjected Curt and his female officer to a series of visual delusions intended to instill fear in them and produce the illusion that these beings held the power of life and death over them in their hands, or more precisely, in their heads.

These delusions were quite effective because the aliens would actually tap into the minds of the two and use the very fears they themselves were afraid of most. They also appealed to the woman's innate desire to have children by providing her with various trinkets that reinforced this desire. Captain Kirk, on the other hand, continued to resist the alien's trickery and soon managed to take control of a phaser one of the aliens had taken from a crew member on the Enterprise. After taking one of the alien hostages by force, he then tried to fire the laser blast from the phaser at the cage containing his female accomplices but it appeared that the phaser had been rendered useless by the aliens who confirmed this by insisting on Kirk's surrender. Then Jim Kirk got the idea that just maybe these aliens had simply been using the power of delusion to convince everybody that their threats were real and not illusion. He deduced that if this were true then maybe they could also make real actions appear to be ineffective actions. Kirk told the aliens of his theory and threatened to carry it out by shooting his hostage with a lethal blast of laser fire from the phaser.

He pointed the phaser at the alien's head and said that he believed the laser blast fired from the phaser at the cage containing the woman had actually blasted a large hole through it but they were somehow being prevented from seeing it by the alien's power of delusion and that he would fire another shot at the alien's head to test his theory. At that point, the aliens surrendered and relinquished their hold on the minds of Jim Curt and his crew, and revealed to them for the first time the damage that had been done by their weapons but were prevented from seeing. The cage containing the woman suddenly revealed a large hole blasted into it by the phaser as the mind control began to diminish, and the side of

the mountain concealing the entrance to the alien's hide-away suddenly revealed a very large hole that was actually blasted into it by the Starship Enterprise.

I particularly like this story because it emphasizes the power of faith, and reveals illusions for what they are ... *only illusions!* I have even come up with my personal quotation to epitomize it.

"At the heart of every matter is a matter of perspective."

This suggests quite definitively that much of our reality is due to our understanding of it, the way we see it. Sometimes our "vision" can become skewed or diminished by our belief system. For example, if we think we are powerless against Satan's power, this very belief can make us more susceptible to his perceived power. "The devil made me do it!" has been used by many Christians in excusing their weaknesses or intentional behavior. My belief is that the devil does exist but his power over me is only as great as I allow it to be. It is totally based on my belief in the inerrant word of God that I am thoroughly equipped with the power to overcome Satan's perceived power for, "greater is he that is in [me], than he that is in the world." 1 John 4:4.

Yes, I would eventually be released from that hellish place but I would take with me comforting memories of how God was there in the midst of it all. I never felt the absence of God's presence all the while I was in there, and even rested in the love, peace, and joy that he made possible. Before I was released, I actually felt there was nothing I could not succeed in doing. I felt that God was calling me to take my street ministry to another level, and that being in that jail was what I needed in order for me to spend the time I needed to with him. It is truly ironic that God works in this way but it drives home what scripture says about God:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD." Isaiah 55:8.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor 2:14.

I knew when I first arrived there that I would return back to the world much more closer to God than if I had not come. I decided early on that I would "do the time" but the time would not "do me." I made a conscience decision when I first got there that I would be the master of my fate, and the captain of my ship. Of course I had to follow the rules like everyone else but my thoughts were my thoughts, and were independent of the negative influences around me. I had decided that when I emerged from that place it would be so clear to others, particularly Christians, that I had been with Jesus!