

# CAVES AND PRISONS

## THE PROBLEM

Even a casual reading of scripture indicates that God's people have the potential to live a kind of freedom unique only to them. Such comments as "It was for freedom that Christ has set you free", "I came that you might have life, and that more abundantly", "We can have a "peace that passes all understanding " {not peace such as the world gives}, and "walk in the light as He is in the light and you will have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse you from every sin clearly have meaning and may even be said to be somewhat fundamental. Fundamental in the present context means that they present an underlying theme which is carried through scripture. Indeed some, perhaps many, Christians do so live. Many, but not all. Many but not most. Many but not enough! If we look beneath the surface of the shallow, superficial, public, images which are displayed by most "normal" Christians (surely the situation is much more extreme for non-Christians) we seldom find the kind of peace and abundant living that scripture leads us to expect. Either the clear teaching of scripture is false or we are missing our mark. The reasons why we are missing the mark are several but not simple. The way back is simple but not easy. George MacDonald eloquently states that "God is easy to please but difficult to satisfy". We please Him when we embrace Jesus, God's Christ, as our savior and our Lord. We satisfy Him when we come to "Be like Him". The following scripture in Isaiah indicates a time when God's people were driven into "caves" and "prisons".

Is 42:21 The Lord was pleased for His righteousness sake to make the law great and glorious. But this is a people plundered and despoiled; **all of them are trapped in caves or are hidden away in prisons; They have become a prey with none to deliver them, and a spoil, with none to say, "Give them back".**

We have again arrived at such a time. God's people have once again been driven into caves and find themselves incarcerated into prisons. No, these are not physical caves nor prisons made of steel but make no mistake **IF THE UNSEEN SPIRITUAL WORLD IS REAL THEN THESE ARE REAL CAVES AND REAL PRISONS.**

One of the great disappointments in reading much of today's Christian

literature is that they often are outstandingly excellent in "defining the problem" but either I can not relate to their solution , or I can not find out their solution. I am going to make a valiant attempt to both define the problem and provide a clear solution. It will be simple but it will not be easy.

I think I see many of my Christians brothers and sisters trapped in caves and hidden away in prisons. What kind of Caves ? What kind of prisons ?

A cave is a place where one goes to hide from things which threaten and terrify them. When the stress, depression, and uncertainty become oppressive we send our spirit forth seeking a hiding place. This is very much like an Ostrich who puts his head in the sand so he will not see the danger -- then he feels safe regardless of the actual circumstances. Our caves are much the same. Our bodies are continuing normal activities, our minds are functioning in their usual human fashion but our spirits go into hiding and a significant part of our mind is "blacked out" Many enter the cave of religion, even Christianity, where they can immerse themselves inside a cloister of unreality, reinforced by other likeminded refugees. Here they can comfort one another with doctrines and bake sales and grope for a comfort which eludes them. Sadly, the cave is a dark and lonely place where no sun ever shines. The only light which reaches within is "artificial" light which can not illumine the Spirit. Given sufficient time we grow moldy and dank within our caves and many finally reach the point where we will never come out -- for the light is too bright and the smell of freshness has become a stench in their nostrils.

Many others enter the caves of counseling. They enter a murky world of "buzz words" and terminologies. They are told that with many words and an "understanding" of the root causes of their problems they will find release. It is a world where we are allowed, often encouraged, to shift blame on others and look for healing through dead concepts and useless groups. Here again true Spiritual light does not enter through this endless maze of silly labels and distorted reality. To some who may be outraged by the previous comments let us consider the following. Sin has a devastating effect on the human species. Original sin, generational sin, and our very own personal sins have wounded us terribly, often in deep ways that humanistic, Freudian, psychologists can never understand. Our spirits are the central aspect of our being and they, like the Holy Spirit, are very sensitive. I do not want to go into these things very deeply at this point but the combination of spiritual wounding and mental strongholds caused by ungodly actions of ungodly persons have caused many to be desperate for help.

They need help and God desires to provide this help. Unfortunately, few

counselors or pastors have the understanding or power to bring relief. Because the help is either slow in coming or does not come at all many of these people retreat to one kind of cave or another because their pain is great.

There are countless other cave-like refuges which house multitudes of people. Sadly, these people have mostly come to a rather listless contentment within their lonely caves and no longer hope for release. Indeed, most are very suspicious when God's spokesmen tell them that release exists. It is a dirty little cave, but it is their cave, and they have come to believe that it is the very best that God has to offer [them]. There are numerous other caves and each of us should seek the Lord for revelation concerning our own particular cave. It is one of our blessed Holy Spirit's functions to "teach" us and if we seek Him, I am confident that He will lead us into the truth we need.

Others live in prisons. Whereas a cave is a hiding place, a place to go when we need to escape -- a prison is much different. A prison is an entrapment. A prison is an environment which contains bars and gates which prevent our leaving. Man has devised many such traps for animals. For example, monkeys are commonly trapped by making a small hole in a coconut. The monkey reaches in and grabs some food but cannot withdraw his clenched fist full of food. He will not let go of the food and cannot carry the coconut into the trees and is thus easily captured. The world system has also been very cleverly designed by the prince of this present age. He has designed it so that many of the things most attractive to our flesh are in fact traps which become our prisons. That which we had expected to "serve us" and make provision for us -- instead becomes our master and often a very HARD master indeed. It is ironic that we search for these prisons desire them, and often spend years in preparation to enter them. From the outside it does not look like a prison at all. It looks like a mighty fortress which can withstand almost any kind of bombardment. In here, we think, I will find safety and fulfillment. In here, I will be protected from financial ruin and I will find comrades who will walk with me, and herein I will soak up success all my days. The prison may be a prison of business or a certain kind of profession, or it may be a prison of education. We can observe countless community leaders, physicians, nurses, teachers, professors, and politicians who have entered their chosen prisons with great dreams and lofty ambitions only to find that it was not a grand hotel -- it was and indeed remains, a prison. Once inside, the freedom we once knew is slowly eroded away. We find ourselves being consumed by the rules and regulations of the custodians of our prison. We have invested ourselves, our talents, our energies, even our very lives into the purchase of this field and discovered that THERE IS NO PEARL buried here..

There are many kinds of prisons, of course, although I have described some

that seems most attractive to multitudes. There are also prisons of hopelessness, prisons of addiction, prisons of desperation, and prisons of hate and violence. Whatever prison you may find yourself in , you know that you have a life sentence and escape is very difficult. This is true because we entered the prison willfully. It was our own choices and our own desires that brought us into this prison and we can not get out until we choose to "turn around". Yes, we can only escape by choosing differently than we have been choosing. We would likely think a person "insane" who would choose to live in a prison. Mumford has stated that "insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different outcome". Yet this is exactly what those who choose to dwell in prisons are doing. They choose to seek after the same hedonistic goals, the same social positions, the same financial status. They seek approval from those who are like themselves and then wonder why they are never pardoned nor paroled. Clearly, what is needed here is a reality check. In the same way we know that every one of us "**become**" what we "**feed** on". If you feed on mathematics for enough years you will become a mathematician. If you feed on fear long enough you will become fearful. If you feed on hate long enough you will become hateful and if you feed on foolishness long enough -- well, you figure it out.

## THE SOLUTION

**THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN GET OUT OF YOUR PRISON IS BY REJECTING THE STRONG BONDS THAT HOLD YOU IN PLACE.** God has declared that He is here to help us do this very thing but one initial thing is required of us. It is called REPENTANCE. It is very common, in my experience to have very honest, conscientious, intelligent Christians respond with the comment that they do not know of what to repent. At first this frustrated me greatly but after reflection I began to understand. These wonderful people are involved in a life long "life style". This is the way they have been living for a very long time and everything is very normal and natural to them.[comfortable] There is often nothing "wrong" with their lives and they honestly do not know that they have been putting themselves first for so long that they do not see it as such. In fact, it becomes pretty frightening when you begin to consider that you might need to make some SIGNIFICANT changes in your life. It is imperative that we first spend a enough time with the Lord that we:

1. Get past the cloud of thoughts and images which are constantly clamoring in our heads due to the noisiness of the world in which we live.
2. Come to the place where we can begin to hear that "still small voice".
3. Write down the thoughts which come to you. With some diligence and some time given to this you will begin to discern the voice of God , the voice of the

enemy, and YOU. Throw away all but the voice of God.

4. Ask Him what you need to repent of. It is likely that there are several things but He will probably begin with only one - specific - thing.

It is likely that your response will be "Oh, is that all ?" **Yes that is all** and you will find that it is enough, PLENTY. You will need to exercise a strong will, yieldedness, and obedience to follow that which the Lord has said. DO IT !! It will be a most important beginning because you are now on your way to the Throne Room of your Lord. This is the first step in your escape from prison and out of your cave. This is the road to Freedom, Peace, and Intimacy with your Lord. It is the beginning of your being able to "hear" your master's voice. (His sheep do hear Him, you know). As you begin to respond to Him you will find two wonderful things happening, almost without your being aware. First you will find that a "relationship" with God and YOU is becoming a REALITY. This is truly wonderful and will be the most exciting thing you have ever experienced. Secondly you will discover that your attitude towards others of God's kids is changing radically. As you experience Father's love for you , you will understand that He has exactly that same love for them and you will begin to have that same love for others in the family. This comes slowly and often stumbling blocks are put in our paths but --**IT DOES COME** !!

You will find that you have made a decision against what you have been doing and made a choice that you will "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness", trusting that "all else will be added to you. Is this easy ? No, it is certainly not easy ! It requires admitting that many of the most precious foundations in our lives were made of SAND. It means admitting that we have been absolutely wrong about some of the most important things in our lives. It leaves us, for awhile, feeling like we are standing in mid-air with all our foundations taken from us. It is very scary but you will not get out of your prison without it.

Jesus has said some hateful things which would make us very angry if we ever stopped and took them seriously. He said "take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, what you shall drink, nor what you shall put on. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and **all else will be added to you.** He also said " Truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal."

Because we fear leaving our caves and losing the structure and order of our

prisons we find these words frightening. All we can think of is what we might lose. **Jesus knows what we might lose.** We might lose our chains, our dankness and musty smell, we might lose the constraints and confinement of our prisons. Jesus also knows what we have to gain and it was for this ---- HE DIED. He said that He came that we might have LIFE and have it MORE ABUNDANTLY. This is why He came and this is why He instructs us to throw off the chains which amount to a lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and a boastful pride of life. **Though all the world should seek these things they are not good things.** Instead, Jesus calls "Come little sheep. In Me are green pastures and still waters. I will give you REST for your weary souls.

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