

# ***I Surrender My Despair***

***If ever a person “walks through the valley of the shadow of death,” (Psalm 23:7, KJV) it is in a prison. But despair need not conquer us. When we trust God, our lives can become joyful despite the circumstances. Our God is all-powerful. He will comfort and care for us.***

## **Bruised But Not Broken**

*“A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out.” (Isaiah 42:3)*

When I arrived in prison, I was on the edge of a complete mental and physical breakdown. I had known Christ in my youth, but had strayed so far from Him that I no longer believed He existed. I had traveled all over the world, lived in Haight Ashbury in the late sixties, built a lucrative narcotics business, and been on the run from the “feds” for almost 10 years. My nerves were completely shot.

By the time I got to prison, everyone was waiting for me to fall apart completely. I could feel a battle going on in my consciousness. On one hand I wanted to blow myself away and take as many people with me as I could, but the other side of me was restraining that destruction. Yet I was growing weaker and weaker. I was terrified I would soon lose all control.

Finally I came to that breaking point and cried out to Jesus Christ, “If You want me to live, you’re going to have to save me!” And I suddenly knew His presence; I knew He would spare me from destroying myself.

I began to read the Bible and discovered it was full of people like me who had made big mistakes and caused a lot of pain, yet had been forgiven and healed. I committed my life to Christ.

Then I saw that same healing process slowly taking place in me. I had been bruised and battered inside, but I was not broken. He restored me. I was no longer bent on destruction, but filled with new life. And as I told others about Christ’s work in me, I saw their lives change as well.

Those of us who have spent time in prison may well be “bruised reeds,” but God, in His grace, has restored us completely!

Mark,\* released from federal prison

**PRAYER:** Lord, I came to the end of myself and You were there to save me. Thank You for Your incredible love and grace. Amen.

### **For Further Study:**

Deuteronomy 4:29-31  
Joshua 1:9  
Psalm 16:7-11  
Psalm 18  
Psalm 40  
Jeremiah 29:11-14  
John 8:31-32  
John 16:33  
Romans 8:35-39  
II Corinthians 4:7-9

## The Love of Jesus

*“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)*

This text kept running through my mind as I sat in the cold, damp holding cell in the courthouse. It was the day I was to be sentenced, and questions raced through my mind. My heart cried out for love and forgiveness from my heavenly Father. Why had I permitted myself to lose faith, sink into such deep depression, and commit such a crime?

As the tears flowed down my face, I shook from the chill in the room. But my entire inner being was warmed as the love of Jesus came over me.

Then, as I faced my earthly judge and was ordered to repay society, I had the assurance of my heavenly Judge that He had forgiven me and would be constantly beside me in prison. That Bible verse became real. I knew He would never leave me or forsake me.

Jenna,\* incarcerated

**PRAYER:** Dearest Father, please imprint your holy Word in my heart and mind. Protect me from the depths of depression and from forgetting that You will never leave me or forsake me. Amen.

## Bound or Free

*“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.” (Genesis 50:20)*

I was like a man without a country, without hope or any real meaning in my life. After years of living with this despair, my deeds caught up with me. I had no choice but to face the consequences of my wicked heart and evil intentions.

I had to learn the hard way because of my disobedient heart toward God. As long as I was physically strong and healthy, enjoying the lustful life, there was no room in my heart for God. Therefore I took His love for granted and turned my back on Him.

Today I sing praises and thanksgiving to the Lord for His truth that has opened my eyes and set me free. If I hadn't ended up in prison, I would probably never have come to know Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior.

Now, whether I am a free man or locked up behind bars, only one thing matters – that I have Jesus in my life. God has taken my evil heart and turned it to good.

Thomas,\* incarcerated

**PRAYER:** Lord, my desire is to be used by You in any way You see fit. Bound or free, I will always serve You. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain – I will be with You. Thank you. Amen.

## **A New Life**

*"I am sending you...to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:17-18)*

Even though I was raised a Catholic and knew that God loved me, I can't remember ever feeling His love.

At the age of 51, I committed a terrible sin. For three years, I carried its heavy burden in my heart. I felt lost, as though my life was over. All that was left for me was just going through the motions of living.

Then, in prison, I attended a Prison Fellowship seminar. I learned more and more about God and His love for me. During the final session, I prayed and asked God to forgive my sins; I committed myself to Jesus Christ.

I knew a change had taken place in me, for I finally felt God's love for me. When I accepted Christ into my heart, the burden of guilt and despair I had carried for so long was gone. I felt relieved and released, happier than I had ever been. I realized that God had actually forgiven my sin; I was "born again" through God's grace and my faith in Jesus.

Now I'm living a new life!

Steve,\* incarcerated

**PRAYER:** Father, thank You for allowing Jesus to come into my heart, for the forgiveness of sin, and for letting me feel Your love. Amen.

*\*Names have been changed.*