

***You are sentenced, given a number, locked away from the world. Life seems hopeless. You feel like a failure in the world's eyes, worth nothing. But you must look at your life in a different perspective. You are a child of God, made in his image. Jesus loves you more than you can imagine and He gave his life to save yours. You are worth a great deal to him.***

## **Bruised But Not Broken**

*"But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters." (Hebrews 2:9-11)*

When I was first in prison, I struggled with the feeling of shame and despair that my time there would be an utter waste. But one day not long after my arrival, I read Hebrews 2:9-11.

God himself, the Creator of heaven and earth, became a man, a prisoner, so He could understand us, feel our fears, and know our needs – and become our brother! God through Christ becoming our brother! That thought overpowered me.

I realized that my being in prison was a parallel situation. If God was willing to lower himself to become one of us and share our sufferings, surely I could joyfully accept my position of being in prison so that I could know these men as my brothers.

I could never have known the needs of these brothers by simply visiting a prison, just as God could not have known us without living among us. I had to become one of them. I also saw that my going to prison was nothing. God's own Son had gone to prison, was sentenced to die, and was then brutally executed.

I no longer felt shame, just a deep gratefulness to God.

God also showed me that He had a purpose, a mission for my incarceration. I could not separate myself; I had to become involved in the lives of my brothers. And as I loved them and shared their pains, He would give me opportunities to minister. I would never lose my special identification with inmates, for I was one of them, just as Jesus Christ will always be our brother by becoming one of us.

Charles W. Colson, Founder, Prison Fellowship®  
Released from Maxwell Federal Prison Camp, Montgomery Alabama, 1975

## **For Further Study:**

Psalm 8  
Psalm 103:13  
Psalm 139:1-18  
Isaiah 40:1-12  
Isaiah 53  
Matthew 6:26  
Mathew 11:19  
Mark 2:17  
John 3:16  
John 15:13-16  
Romans 5:6  
I Corinthians 1:27  
I Timothy 1:15  
Hebrews 4:15-16  
I John 3:1

**PRAYER:** Lord, thank you for becoming our brother. I ask that you would free those in prison from the bondage of their shame and disgrace. Let them see prison as a time to share in the sufferings of their brothers – and to know that you share those pains as well. Amen.

## **Precious in His Sight**

*“Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all His benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” (Psalm 103:1-5)*

My whole life I’ve felt unloved and unwanted. At 13, I was thrown out of the house. I got in trouble of every kind, so I was put in a boy’s school, then a mental institution, and finally, prison.

There I realized I had fallen far enough. I wanted to lift myself up, but I didn’t know how. I called on God for help. At first I thought, “How could He care for me, of all people? What good could I be to Him? What could I offer God in return for His help?”

But God made me realize that my life does count, that I am precious in His sight. And now I can see that good things have come out of my tough past. I have learned to get along with all kinds of people from different races. I have learned not to worry about my need for food and clothing and shelter. God provided all those things for me, even when I didn’t see it.

There is always the dark before the dawn, but I thank God he brought me out of the pit and into the light of his presence.

Derek,\* incarcerated

**PRAYER:** Precious Father, help me to trust you in the dark, for faith is a light, and though I may not see the end of the road, I know you have a plan for me. Amen.

## **Jesus Is Here**

*“He said unto Him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with you, both in prison and to death.’” (Luke 22:33)*

Peter, at one point in his life, made a serious commitment to follow Jesus. He even said he was willing to go to prison and to die for Him. Peter was truly sincere, but when tests and trials came, he blew it! But Jesus had prayed for Peter and He didn’t give up on him.

Have we also failed? Have we denied our Savior, backslid, and totally blown it? Take hope. Look to Jesus. He is still there. He still loves us. He has prayed for us and in spite of all our failures, He is ready to lift us up, to dry our tears, to heal our broken hearts.

We can go on to become that man or woman of God, to keep our commitments, the promises we made to Jesus. No matter where we are, even in a dark prison cell, no matter what our circumstances, Jesus is there. We can take courage and again say to him, "I am ready, Lord, to go with you to prison and to death!"

Randy,\* incarcerated

**PRAYER:** Thank you, Lord, that even though we fail, you never give up on us. Amen.

*\*Names have been changed*