County Corrections Gospel Mission

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June 27, 1990

Warden

Dear Warden:

"The Lord is near unto all those who call upon Him, to all who call on Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them."
- Psalm 145:18,19

I just finished addressing 200 men whose lives and homes were ravaged by substance abuse. They stood now as individual testimonies of the grace and mercy of God. The transforming work of a personal relationship with God had been the common cause of their deliverance. My challenge to them and their precious families was threefold:

1) Maintain above and before all else an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus Christ;

2) Constantly recall God's mercy and grace which saved you so as to live with a thankful spirit; and

3) Develop a sense of urgency, realizing the brevity of life and the critical needs confronting your generation.

Once understanding the truths of God's Word, life takes on new meaning and direction. First, it is possible to have sins forgiven. This is the purpose of the cross work of Christ: that lives separated from a holy God by sin might be made nearer through the loving sacrifice of the innocent on behalf of the guilty. The Old and New Testaments boldly declare the necessity of the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins.

We who work in the field of Justice ought to understand more than most that the penalty exists for the lawbreaker. Payment for the transgression is mandatory and often the guilty offender is unable to bear the weight of his deeds. Mercy is at the discretion of the judge; the defendant begs for his pardon.

Whether Old or New Testament, the blood of an innocent lamb was shed on behalf of the guilty sinner. This act indicated in one crucial event the

penalty of sin and the grace of God. The lamb paid the price of justice; mercy came to the sinner. In this context, John the Baptist declared of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world!"

You might ask, "Why write such a letter to Corrections leaders?" I'll tell you! Recently, a Prison Director and I were talking and he said, "Justice and mercy will never meet in the same place." I strongly disagree! The entire point and necessity of the Cross allowed a Holy God to both punish sin and save the sinner. Herein do mercy and justice meet!

As leaders in these critical hours of our nation's life, I trust somehow to have the growing privilege of encouraging you to consider the threefold challenge mentioned earlier in this letter. These issues touch the heart of the crisis facing Corrections daily. They're not as unrelated as some might wish!

Respectfully,

Jack Crans
Director

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