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Introduction

As we have come to the twenty-first century one would think that our penal system would have discovered a way to deal with the problem of crime in the United States. However, it would seem that the very opposite is true as all types of crime is on the rise, our prisons are so overcrowded that even violent offenders are released into society before having served their full terms and many find that the percentage of repeat offenders is staggering as well as frightening.

Though research has been done that offers the statistics of why men and women enter into a life of crime, of why our society not only can't cope with the influx of crime, but actually seems to entice the criminal element through lax laws/punishment and our affluence (compared to their poverty), and the statistical evidence of repeat offenders and their reasons for finding their way back into the penal system is overwhelming; it doesn't seem to offer any real solutions. Everyone seems willing to admit there is a serious problem, but as yet no one seems to have come up with a solution.

The world tells us that education is the answer, so we were forced to bus children long distances to foreign territory in a misguided attempt to make the 'playing field' equal. Needless to say, this is shown as a failure for we now just have some better educated criminals. We were convinced that environmental training and/or single parent households was the culprit, so we provided resources to combat this, even financing former criminals to return and offer advice to this new group of gangbangers. As the influx of drugs, weapons that provide better firepower than many police officers possess and larger gang membership attests, this too was a failure. One could go on for pages rehashing the 'cures' our liberal and educated society has foisted upon the American public that they assured us would combat urban and inner city crime. Instead of combating it, we have seen the same violent crime and gang activity spread to even small town America. Even the upsizing of the police force has not helped for the criminals vastly outnumber the police and, as stated above, often even outgun them. One could conclude that mostly the efforts of our learned professionals have been failures if not out and out jokes.

We find very little research or statistics on actual rehabilitation that is offered or the role of the Church in the rehabilitation of offenders. It would almost seem that

but for a very few, we have stuck our collective heads into the sand, praying that Jesus returns soon and delivers us from the madness of the criminal element, while in the meantime keeping us and our loved ones safe.

Sadly, this is where we find most of our Christian brothers and sisters. We go about our individual lives and unless a crime touches us (or a loved one) directly, we ignore the statistics, the fact that our society is suffering from a malignancy that would make Sodom and Gomorrah seem saintly by comparison. There are some who do recognize the problem and understand that Jesus provides the only solution, but they are few and often possess limited finances and/or the political power needed to institute consistent programs that would bring Jesus into the lives of these prisoners, both while incarcerated and upon release.

What, we might ask, is the solution? As the statistics on crime and repeat offenders clearly show that something is awry, something needs fixing and what is in place isn't working, we must begin to question whether the prison system as we know it is working, whether rehabilitation is even an option therein and what the collective churches should be doing to answer the call not only for the protection of society in the USA, but also out of a desire to answer the call of the Great Commission.

It is my contention that Scripture alone offers the answer to the problems of what to do about crime and the criminal and the problem repeat offenders; not only here in the United States of America, but world-wide. Crime is rampant, but that trend can be reversed; our prisons are overcrowded, but we can begin to empty them and the percentage of repeat offenders is staggering, but again, we, the Church of Jesus Christ, can bring about permanent and effectual change. We can do this one person at a time, we can do this through group gatherings and we can do this in such a way that these men and women will experience true change and will therefore not return to lives of crime.

It will take a re-education of those in power, it will certainly take the combined effort of all Christian groups working together and it will take showing the world that living by the precepts set forth by Jehovah will cause mankind to live in harmony; helping one another instead of taking advantage of one another.

Statistics and Other Information on Prisoners and Their Rehabilitation

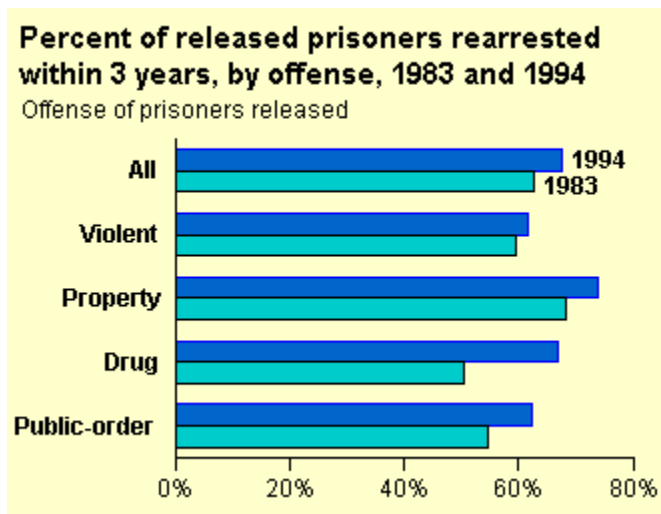
As these statistics comparing crimes for the past 50 years show, there has been an increase nearly every year in all manner of crime.

United States Crime Index Rates Per 100,000 Inhabitants

Year	Population	Total	Violent	Property	Murder	Forcible Rape	Robbery	Aggravated assault	Burglary	Larceny- Theft	Vehicle Theft
1960	179,323,175	1,887.2	160.9	1,726.3	5.1	9.6	60.1	86.1	508.6	1,034.7	183.0
1961	182,992,000	1,906.1	158.1	1,747.9	4.8	9.4	58.3	85.7	518.9	1,045.4	183.6
1962	185,771,000	2,019.8	162.3	1,857.5	4.6	9.4	59.7	88.6	535.2	1,124.8	197.4
1963	188,483,000	2,180.3	168.2	2,012.1	4.6	9.4	61.8	92.4	576.4	1,219.1	216.6
1964	191,141,000	2,388.1	190.6	2,197.5	4.9	11.2	68.2	106.2	634.7	1,315.5	247.4
1965	193,526,000	2,449.0	200.2	2,248.8	5.1	12.1	71.7	111.3	662.7	1,329.3	256.8
1966	195,576,000	2,670.8	220.0	2,450.9	5.6	13.2	80.8	120.3	721.0	1,442.9	286.9
1967	197,457,000	2,989.7	253.2	2,736.5	6.2	14.0	102.8	130.2	826.6	1,575.8	334.1
1968	199,399,000	3,370.2	298.4	3,071.8	6.9	15.9	131.8	143.8	932.3	1,746.6	393.0
1969	201,385,000	3,680.0	328.7	3,351.3	7.3	18.5	148.4	154.5	984.1	1,930.9	436.2
1970	203,235,298	3,984.5	363.5	3,621.0	7.9	18.7	172.1	164.8	1,084.9	2,079.3	456.8
1971	206,212,000	4,164.7	396.0	3,768.8	8.6	20.5	188.0	178.8	1,163.5	2,145.5	459.8
1972	208,230,000	3,961.4	401.0	3,560.4	9.0	22.5	180.7	188.8	1,140.8	1,993.6	426.1
1973	209,851,000	4,154.4	417.4	3,737.0	9.4	24.5	183.1	200.5	1,222.5	2,071.9	442.6
1974	211,392,000	4,850.4	461.1	4,389.3	9.8	26.2	209.3	215.8	1,437.7	2,489.5	462.2
1975	213,124,000	5,298.5	487.8	4,810.7	9.6	26.3	220.8	231.1	1,532.1	2,804.8	473.7
1976	214,659,000	5,287.3	467.8	4,819.5	8.7	26.6	199.3	233.2	1,448.2	2,921.3	450.0
1977	216,332,000	5,077.6	475.9	4,601.7	8.8	29.4	190.7	247.0	1,419.8	2,729.9	451.9
1978	218,059,000	5,140.4	497.8	4,642.5	9.0	31.0	195.8	262.1	1,434.6	2,747.4	460.5
1979	220,099,000	5,565.5	548.9	5,016.6	9.8	34.7	218.4	286.0	1,511.9	2,999.1	505.6
1980	225,349,264	5,950.0	596.6	5,353.3	10.2	36.8	251.1	298.5	1,684.1	3,167.0	502.2
1981	229,146,000	5,858.2	594.3	5,263.8	9.8	36.0	258.7	289.7	1,649.5	3,139.7	474.7
1982	231,534,000	5,603.7	571.1	5,032.5	9.1	34.0	238.9	289.1	1,488.8	3,084.9	458.9
1983	233,981,000	5,175.0	537.7	4,637.3	8.3	33.7	216.5	279.2	1,337.7	2,869.0	430.8
1984	236,158,000	5,031.3	539.2	4,492.1	7.9	35.7	205.4	290.2	1,263.7	2,791.3	437.1
1985	238,740,000	5,207.1	556.6	4,650.5	8.0	37.1	208.5	302.9	1,287.3	2,901.2	462.0
1986	240,132,887	5,480.4	620.1	4,881.8	8.6	38.1	226.0	347.4	1,349.8	3,022.1	509.8
1987	243,400,000	5,550.0	609.7	4,940.3	8.3	37.4	212.7	351.3	1,329.6	3,081.3	529.5
1988	245,807,000	5,664.2	637.2	5,027.1	8.4	37.6	220.9	370.2	1,309.2	3,134.9	582.9
1989	248,239,000	5,741.0	663.1	5,077.9	8.7	38.1	233.0	383.4	1,276.3	3,171.3	630.4
1990	248,709,873	5,820.3	731.8	5,088.5	9.4	41.2	257.0	424.1	1,235.9	3,194.8	657.8
1991	252,177,000	5,897.8	758.1	5,139.7	9.8	42.3	272.7	433.3	1,252.0	3,228.8	658.9
1992	255,082,000	5,660.2	757.5	4,902.7	9.3	42.8	263.6	441.8	1,168.2	3,103.0	631.5
1993	257,908,000	5,484.4	746.8	4,737.7	9.5	41.1	255.9	440.3	1,099.2	3,032.4	606.1
1994	260,341,000	5,373.5	713.6	4,660.0	9.0	39.3	237.7	427.6	1,042.0	3,026.7	591.3
1995	262,755,000	5,274.9	684.5	4,591.3	8.2	37.1	220.9	418.3	987.1	3,043.8	560.4
1996	265,284,000	5,087.6	636.6	4,451.0	7.4	36.3	201.9	390.9	945.0	2,980.3	525.7

1997	267,637,000	4,927.3	611.0	4,316.3	6.8	35.9	186.1	382.1	919.6	2,891.8	505.7
1998	270,296,000	4,615.5	566.4	4,049.1	6.3	34.4	165.2	360.5	862.0	2,728.1	459.0
1999	272,690,813	4,266.5	523.0	3,743.6	5.7	32.8	150.1	334.3	770.4	2,550.7	422.5
2000	281,421,906	4,124.8	506.5	3,618.3	5.5	32.0	145.0	324.0	728.8	2,477.3	412.2
2001	285,317,559	4,162.6	504.5	3,658.1	5.6	31.8	148.5	318.6	741.8	2,485.7	430.5
2002	287,973,924	4,125.0	494.4	3,630.6	5.6	33.1	146.1	309.5	747.0	2,450.7	432.9
2003	290,690,788	4,067.0	475.8	3,591.2	5.7	32.3	142.5	295.4	741.0	2,416.5	433.7
2004	293,656,842	3,977.3	463.2	3,514.1	5.5	32.4	136.7	288.6	730.3	2,362.3	421.5
2005	296,507,061	3,900.5	469.0	3,431.5	5.6	31.8	140.8	290.8	726.9	2,287.8	416.8
2006	299,398,484	3,808.1	473.6	3,334.5	5.7	30.9	149.4	287.5	729.4	2,206.8	398.4
2007	301,621,157	3,730.4	466.9	3,263.5	5.6	30.0	147.6	283.8	722.5	2,177.8	363.3
2008	304,374,846	3,669.0	457.5	3,211.5	5.4	29.7	145.7	276.7	732.1	2,167.0	314.7
2009	307,006,550	3,465.5	429.4	3,036.1	5.0	28.7	133.0	262.8	716.3	2,060.9	258.8 ¹¹

Though the studies concerning repeat offenders nationwide were from much earlier years, I would suggest that the trend in the data below continues and probably has worsened. The study cited shows that there is certainly a problem in this area as well:



[D]

Two studies come closest to providing "national" recidivism rates for the United States. One tracked 108,580 State prisoners released from prison in 11 States in 1983. The other tracked 272,111 prisoners released from prison in 15 States in 1994. The prisoners tracked in these studies represent two-thirds of all the prisoners released in the United States for that year.

Re-arrest within 3 years

¹ UCR Crime Statistics prepared by the: [The Disaster Center](http://www.disastercenter.com/crime/uscrime.htm) From the website: <http://www.disastercenter.com/crime/uscrime.htm>

- 67.5% of prisoners released in 1994 were rearrested within 3 years, an increase over the 62.5% found for those released in 1983
- The re-arrest rate for property offenders, drug offenders, and public-order offenders increased significantly from 1983 to 1994. During that time, the rearrest rate increased:
 - from 68.1% to 73.8% for property offenders
 - from 50.4% to 66.7% for drug offenders
 - from 54.6% to 62.2% for public-order offenders
- The re-arrest rate for violent offenders remained relatively stable (59.6% in 1983 compared to 61.7% in 1994).

Reconviction within 3 years

- Overall, reconviction rates did not change significantly from 1983 to 1994. Among, prisoners released in 1983, 46.8% were reconvicted within 3 years compared to 46.9% among those released in 1994. From 1983 to 1994, reconviction rates remained stable for released:
 - violent offenders (41.9% and 39.9%, respectively)
 - property offenders (53.0% and 53.4%)
 - public-order offenders (41.5% and 42.0%)
- Among drug offenders, the rate of reconviction increased significantly, going from 35.3% in 1983 to 47.0% in 1994.

Returned to prison within 3 years

- The 1994 recidivism study estimated that within 3 years, 51.8% of prisoners released during the year were back in prison either because of a new crime for which they received another prison sentence, or because of a technical violation of their parole. This rate was not calculated in the 1983 study.²ⁱⁱ

From the first study we can see that the rate of crime in this country continues to skyrocket, but it is what the second study reveals that concerns me the most. This study clearly states: “Among, prisoners released in 1983, 46.8% were reconvicted

² From the Department of Justice website: <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/reentry/recidivism.cfm>

within 3 years compared to 46.9% among those released in 1994.”³ Nearly 50% of all criminals serving time have been incarcerated before! With a statistic such as this, I doubt one needs further evidence to show that our efforts at rehabilitation are not working and one hardly needs to look further than the first study to see that our combined efforts in keeping young men and women from turning to crime would be laughable were it not so heart-rending.

But why do they turn to crime? Why do nearly 50% of those released go back to a life of crime? As it would seem that criminals don't like to share why they got into a life of crime and end up being repeatedly incarcerated; here is what some others say about these questions. From a website called Justice-explained.com we are given these three gems as to why people become criminals; 1) Increased unemployment is a major factor, 2) Their high ambitions (the desire for the accouterments of the wealthy) drives them and 3) The advancement of technology has opened the doors for long-range, impersonal, hands off crime.ⁱⁱⁱ A 'Google' search on 'why do criminals say they become criminals' gave a bevy of even stranger reasons for why people turn to crime: 1) Criminals are born ugly, 2) They liked candy as children, 3) The old 'it's because of their environment', 4) They have uncommon/strange names and 5) the one that ties many of these strange reasons together, They feel cast out of society.^{iv} As to why some continue to go back to a life of crime and imprisonment we have these thoughts found on answerbag.com: from Penny the Wise, "If you can get away with something, why not try and push it, and see how far you can take it without getting caught. Sometimes it's just a thrill like shoplifting, or sometimes people just don't care. Or maybe, people don't realise they are actually doing something wrong, and continue to do something that think is okay."; from cristnaly, "My Bro-in-law has spent most of his adult life in and out of jail and I think it is because he never learned how to function in the real world. He can't grasp the idea of working for minimum wage and earning for yourself. He goes right back to dealing drugs because it is quick and easy and when he gets locked up again he feels more at home then he does on the outside." and there's this from lizizhere, "Because the laws are set up where the punishment ain't harsh enough for the crimes they do. If they would make them have to suffer for their crimes instead of having all these

³ Ibid

rights they would not repeat the offenses. The criminals have more rights than the victims & that is why they keep doing worse. I bet if we had a government more like overseas where if u were caught stealing & they cut your hand off, shop lifting would be a thing of the past. Also if you raped a woman & would have ride bare backed, oiled down camels to their home & what ever part of you falls off the camel gets cut off I some how think violating a persons body would be a thing of the past too. As well as if you murder someone you are shot down your self. But we are to into wanting to know why they commeted these hideous acts of violence instead of punishing them for doing it. Not fair to the victims & their families. But if you can do the crime & not spend no time, why would you do the right thing if you could take something w/o working for it or hurt someone just because you can & get away with it why wouldn't you. Most criminals can do enough drugs to numb what lil bit of a conscios they would have & the laws protect them more then their victims.”^v Spelling and grammatical errors have been left untouched in these quotes.

As stated in the introduction, there are lots of statistics and ideas, but no concrete method that would point to a solution. From my understanding of the criminal life, having been involved in that lifestyle many years ago, and my relationship with a brother and a sister who are serving long sentences for past crimes, I found but one expert who seemed to have some understanding of the problem and who perhaps would offer some sort of humanistic solution. Dr. Stanton E. Samenow, Ph. D. in an update of a book he first wrote in 1984, ‘Inside the Criminal Mind’ offers what some believe are understandable glimpses into the myths we have been taught as truth. From the website <http://www.enotalone.com/article/4486.html> one can read several excerpts from this book. From the first chapter:

Dr. Samenow's three decades of working with criminals have reaffirmed his argument that factors such as poverty, divorce, and media violence do not cause criminality. Rather, as Samenow documents here, all criminals share a particular mind-set-often evident in childhood-that is disturbingly different from that of a responsible citizen.

While new types of crime have grown more prevalent, or at least more visible to the public eye-from spousal abuse to school shootings-little has changed in terms of our approach to dealing with crime. Rehabilitation programs based on the assumption that society is more to blame for crime than the criminal, an assumption for which a causal link has yet to be established, have proved

to be grossly inadequate. Crime continues to invade every aspect of our lives, criminal court dockets and prisons are oppressively overcrowded and expensive, and recidivism rates continue to escalate.

To embark on a truly corrective program, we must begin with the clear understanding that the criminal chooses crime; he chooses to reject society long before society rejects him. The criminal values people only to the extent that he can use them for his own self-serving ends; he does not justify his actions to himself. Only by "habilitating" the criminal, so that he sees himself realistically and develops responsible patterns of thought, can we change his behavior.^{vi}

Thesis Statement

Only when the criminal sees themselves realistically and develops responsible patterns of thought can we change his behavior, is my assumption exactly; the difference may be in our methods of instilling this change. One could only offer speculation on Dr. Samenow's methodology without reading his entire book, so I will remain silent on that; however I believe the only answer to this problem is found in Jesus Christ and the change He brings to a person from the inside out. It is long past time the Church unites as one unit, working together to bring the truth of Jesus to prisoners; both for the sake of their eternal souls and to ease the strain of the criminal element on our society. It is my contention that this is one of many areas in which the Church has veered away from the teachings of God, leaving so many of those Christ died for in spiritual bondage that the numbers are surely astronomical. I have always accepted the truth that every generation of saints is responsible to witness to that generation of sinners. I postulate that today's believers have, like so many past generations, left these men and women in a bondage that is by far worse than that of imprisonment in some state or federal institution.

Make no mistake; the programs won't work because they address the symptom, not the root problem. The bondage isn't that of being addicted to drugs or crime, it doesn't matter if the crime is 'white-collar' or 'blue-collar' or if it is violent or non-violent for the bondage is spiritual, these men and women are given over to sin and unless Jesus breaks their shackles, they will remain in the clutches of the devils whether they are in or out of a physical prison. And only the Church of the first-born can offer He who will bring inner change.

Personal Assumptions and Observations

Without the interference of Jesus Christ in enough lives to begin to make a difference the cost of crime will continue to escalate. Though the loss of human life per year eclipses the loss of life during many of our wars, the cost in property is also outrageous. According to the website: <http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbName=DocumentViewer&DocumentID=38710> quoting The Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2007: Statistical Tables," (soon to be published), Table 81,^{vii} "In 2007, for crimes both reported and not reported, the total economic loss to victims was \$2 billion for violent crime and \$16 billion for property crime." We can be sure that in the ensuing years, this cost has only grown higher, and in this time of economic depression, our country can ill afford this loss. When we add the cost of keeping a prisoner, which from what is gleaned on the web is approximately \$25,000.00 per year, one can clearly see that something needs to be done – and done quickly.

Not only is the cost of crime and punishment causing great loss to the working citizens of the United States, but so do the 'rehabilitation' programs set up by private, state and federal organizations – and as we've already discussed, they mostly fail because they attempt to treat the symptom and not the root cause of this epidemic.

Though I firmly believe that the Church has the answer, as already stated, this 'aid' seems to be very little, spotty and with no national or even statewide umbrella organization that unites Christians from all walks and provides the much needed preaching, instruction in discipleship and the support group needed to assure the prisoner's success when they leave the prisons.

The organization that former White House counsel Chuck Colson has put together filled a void that had been in place for many years. However, even this needs to be expanded upon. If all the Church would get behind his Prison Fellowship Ministries, or one like it, by supporting them with finances and by volunteering to help in any way possible; we would take a huge step toward fulfilling those needs in the previous paragraph.

It is only as we work together as one body, instead of each group trying to do the job alone, that we would see men and women making decisions to follow Jesus; and this is the beginning. Then, as we disciple these men and women, we would see lifelong commitments forged and these men and women would be the missionaries in their places of incarceration. As the process grew in numbers and these same men and women went back onto the streets, in their former neighborhoods or elsewhere, they would continue to carry the message of how the love of Jesus changed their lives. And as they came out of the prison system and found Christian brothers and sisters waiting to help them in any and every way so as to assure them a life in Christ Jesus that would free them from the 'need' to re-enter the criminal life; this may well be the 'miracle' that would completely deliver these men and women. It wouldn't happen overnight, but if we would commit ourselves to this, we would see crime decrease, we would see the percentage of repeat offenders shrink and we would see our prisons empty – we would see true rehabilitation in the changed lifestyles of those who would be drawn to a life of crime.

With all this in place, why are the statistics so dire?

One can easily see that the statistics speak loudly to the failure of not only the prison system to rehabilitate prisoners, but to the failure of every other group, including the Church, to make any headway in the area of rehabilitation of a significant number of people so as to stabilize or even reverse the lure of easy money that crime holds like a carrot dangled in front of a dumb animal.

We continue to try to treat the symptoms here and in many other areas instead of accepting what God has told us about sin and what His Son instructed us to do about it. The voice of God thunders down through the ages through His leaders, His judges and His prophets saying, “The problem here is sin; you people continue to attempt to go your own way in rebellion against Me, refusing to ever admit that all this leads to is hardship and heartbreak.” Jesus tells us that we are to take His Gospel, the Good News that tells all men and women that they can be freed from the real shackles that hold them. He and His apostles tell us over and over that sin has been defeated, but we act as though we are still bound by it; maybe not personally, but collectively as we huddle in our ‘safe’ areas and pray that the criminal doesn’t find us. Brothers and sisters it is time we rise up as a mighty army of God, work together and tear down these strongholds of satan. We can and we must take a strong Gospel message to the youth before they fall for the false lures, the smoke and mirror magic show; we must take the truth into the high crime areas and we must take Jesus to the prisoners in such a way that many come away with changed lives. To do otherwise damns us here and may well cause Jesus to turn away from us when we stand before Him in glory.

Personal Testimony

When I was younger and into young adulthood, I fell for the lure of what I thought was easy money. First there were shoplifting excursions to, later two other young men and I began breaking and entering local businesses; all this led me to several visits and one extended stay in reform school. I got out of the last reform school by enlisting in the Marine Corps, but my past came with me, both on paper and in my spirit. I ended up with an undesirable discharge from the Marines and a new found way of getting that easy money; I became a drug dealer. In the summer of 1972 I was arrested on several charges of possessing and dealing in dangerous drugs and narcotics with undercover narcotics police.

Facing a long prison sentence, I began to play what I thought would be a con to obtain a lighter sentence and a stint in a drug rehab program. I settled on going to Teen Challenge (a Christian drug rehab program) as it seemed to be the easiest; I thought I could 'play at Christian' for a year or two, but God had different ideas. Without going into great detail as this is not the focus of the paper, God showed me beyond doubt that He was real and this would not be a game. Using Teen Challenge to deepen my understanding of Him, He began a work that continues today as He rearranges my very self (my thoughts, my childhood training, my morals [or lack thereof], my mental capabilities, my all). From the inside out, God has made me into a different person and as time goes by and I grow to walk more in His Holy Spirit, I no longer have the desire to do the things I used to do. I have been wondrously and miraculously changed from one whom many believed would be either dead or imprisoned for the long haul by the time I reached 40 to a man of integrity, a man of God.

What I really want to call the reader's attention to, besides the proof of my deliverance from crime, is the statistics that were spread around Teen Challenge while I was there; even should these statistics be shown to be slightly askew, the tale they tell is none-the-less true; I know because I was there. At this time the government and private drug rehab programs were citing 'cure rates' of about 3.5%; Teen Challenge at this time boasted of a nearly 80% rate of graduates who went on to become productive members of society and had remained drug free for over five years. They, and I, attribute this vast difference to Jesus Christ; they

didn't focus on the symptoms of drug abuse, alcohol abuse or gang activity – they focused on the real problems – sin and a lack of the leadership of God in our lives.

I would never say that I have been entirely faithful to God since the day He met me in my cell, but I can say that He has been faithful. He has ever been there, wooing me back when necessary, convicting me of wrongdoing, chastising me when needful and always opening my eyes a bit more to see the reality of His way as being best for all.

Conclusion

By looking to the statistics already available concerning the crime rate in the USA, the lure of easy money and the 'no hope' attitude that many prisoners face upon release, we can easily see there is a major problem. By viewing the rehabilitation structure offered within the penal system and by humanistic centered groups, we will see that their percentage of repeat offenders is not something to be envied. At the same time, as we look to what individual Christian groups are accomplishing; again we can see there is vast room for improvement.

Finally, as we look to Scripture and the instructions found therein for the radical change of sinful mankind into the very children of God, I believe we will see the solution. And as we compare existing worldly programs, individual attempts and even the aid offered by churches or denominations with what happened to the gang/drug/alcohol problems when they were faced by a country preacher from Pennsylvania who believed he was sent by God and with the problem of repeat offenders as this problem was brought to national Christian attention by a man who experienced the hopelessness of prison himself and decided God would have him to do something about it – we will see that there is help and there is a way out for 'the least of these.'

Though the evidence of the problem and of the solution is clear, one might ask what they can do as an individual Christian to bring Jesus to this problem. There are several ways we need to incorporate to address the problem of the Church's lack of commitment to those so desperately in need.

First, we must recognize that there are local, statewide and national Christian organizations already in place, struggling to do what they can. Most suffer from a lack of funding, a lack of volunteer workers, a somewhat limited lack of vision and a severe lack of organization.

What the individual Christian can do concerning the first two is obvious, we can offer of our time and our money to support these ministries and bring some resources to bear on this massive problem.

As to the somewhat limited lack of vision; we need to begin to take the Word of God as our literal truth, our manual of operation for life here as we live in the world, but as part of God's spiritual kingdom. We need to see that neither the Israelites after they were delivered from Egypt nor the early Christians after they were delivered from paganism were left without instruction in discipline, discipleship into the ways of God so they would be assured of success. We have this misguided tradition in our churches where we see an individual 'saved' and we turn them over into God's hands, having done our part. God on the other hand never meant for this to be. In both Covenants, He provided for material and spiritual success; if His Word is heeded.

We who have are to care for those who don't until they come to a place where they can support themselves and possibly help others. This can be done by providing employment, money, housing, food; whatever God directs you to do within your means must be provided. What is essential is that every local body of Christ must understand that they need to make an effort to reach out to these new-born believers and provide the material necessities that will keep them from slipping back into the life of crime.

As Paul instructs, we who are more learned, more mature, must care for those who are younger and weaker. We must give of our time, in teaching, mentoring, counseling or whatever is needed; and we must do this without judging. We must make sure this too is offered consistently, freely and in love.

Both spiritual and material needs must be addressed until the ex-prisoner can stand on his/her own as a strong, mature Christian and as a productive member of society who has employment and sufficient wealth so as to live comfortably. If we don't begin to offer both, we will continue to see this country decline until chaos and anarchy reign.

We must also work within the organizations already in place so that these and other needs are addressed. There must be enough time and money volunteered to force management to organize their structure so as to expand upon what they are doing. As we work from within, we must offer concrete ideas and suggestions that meet both spiritual and economic needs; both while they are incarcerated and upon release.

Finally, we must realize that no individual or even those groups in place can accomplish much more than what is being done. However, if large groups of Christians, whole churches, nearly every congregation in the area – if we all join together, we will effect change. We are promised,¹⁰ One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he *it is* that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you^{4viii} and elsewhere that as the first number is added to, the number chased is multiplied. Instead of ignoring the problem of sin, we need to face the devils and send them packing. I state emphatically that only our Lord and God can turn the plight of this nation, or any nation, as we fight crime, into victory. He has ordained that we who believe are His ambassadors and we are to carry this message of deliverance from sin to all men. One can only ponder as we look to these terrible statistics, when will we, His hands, His feet, His mouth, rise up to drive back the forces of evil?

⁴*The Holy Bible : King James Version*. 1995 (electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version.) (Jos 23:10). Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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