

YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING TIME NOW!

A message to prison inmates everywhere

by Billy Morrison

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

—John 3:36

Think about it...

When the judge passed sentence on you, how long did he sentence you to? Six months? A year? Five years? Life imprisonment? The length of sentence will vary among most of us (prisoners), but one thing is common to us all: we are locked up because of our crimes. Most of us despise prison and look forward to the day that we will be released. But how would you like to be in prison, not for six months or six years or even twenty years, but for eternity?

Just think of a prison sentence that will never end, one where conditions are so bad that you thought that such conditions could never exist? It does not matter what your conditions are at the moment: in this prison they will be beyond your experience. Jesus describes this place as a place of “everlasting punishment,” where all the unsaved people will go at their death (Mat 25:46).

Does hell really exist?

Does such a place exist? Men tell us that it does not, but the Bible tells us that it does. Jesus Christ tells us in Luke 16:19-31 about a place called hell (v. 23), and He tells us that those that end up there are “tormented in this flame” (v. 24), and that there is no escape from it (v. 26).

This place could be called God’s “remand center”¹ for those that are awaiting the Day of Judgment!² But unlike the human remand prisons, no one will be released by the Judge; everyone will be found guilty at the Day of Judgment because their guilt is recorded in heaven. The apostle John tells us of that day when we will all stand before the court of God to receive His judgment (Rev 20:11-15), and in verse 12 we read, “And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works*.” Every sin and every evil act is recorded in these books, and when the evidence is presented none will be found innocent before God. This is why John tells us that “death and hell were cast into the lake of fire” (v. 14). The Bible tells us that hell is the place where God puts the unrepentant³ sinner after death until the judgment day, when they are cast into the lake of fire, which is described as the “second death.” John tells us in verse 10 of this chapter that those who are cast into the lake of fire “shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

So we see that although we are in prison here on this earth, our sentence is nothing compared to what the Bible tells us our sentence will be if we die in an unrepentant state. At least here we are released from prison after we have served our sentence, but those who go to hell are never released from this prison. Nor can we hope to escape the judgment day, for “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27). As the apostle Paul tells us, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2Co 5:10).

¹ **remand center** – holding center for accused persons until a judge renders a final decision in their case.

² **Day of Judgment** – day when the works of men will be judged by Christ (Mat 25:32-46).

³ **unrepentant** – remaining in rebellion against God; continuing in sin; absence of turning from sin to God.

The King's pardon!

How can we escape such a sentence? The apostle Peter was asked a similar question in Acts 2:37, and he answered, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (v. 38); or as Jesus tells us, "Repent ye and believe the gospel" (Mar 1:15). Repentance means a deep sorrow for your sin and a genuine desire to turn away from sin to serve Jesus Christ instead. To believe the gospel is to rest upon Christ: to trust Him, to lean upon Him, to depend upon Him and Him alone to save us from our sins—to receive from Him the gift of salvation. As Paul tells us, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom 10:13).

If we repent and have faith that through Christ we will be saved, we will not come under the condemnation of God; for the Bible tells us "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). Jesus tells His disciples that they should rejoice that their "names are written in heaven" (Luk 10:20). This is because all those that repent and believe in Christ for salvation have their names recorded in heaven in the "book of life." This book is opened on the judgment day along with the other books, and all those who have their names in this book will not be cast into the lake of fire (*see* Rev 20:11-15). This is why Jesus tells His disciples to rejoice that their names are written in this book. They have received the King's pardon!

We too can receive a free pardon from God if we repent and have faith in Christ. This costs *us* nothing, it is a free gift; but like all free gifts, it cost someone something. Before a gift can be given it must be purchased by the giver, and this is what God did for man: He purchased the salvation of sinners by the life of His Son. Christ bore our sin on the cross and became our substitute. Instead of the sinner paying the price for his sin, Christ paid the price for him so that he could receive a free pardon from God. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Gal 3:13). As Jesus says Himself, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mat 20:28).

Eternal prison or eternal life?

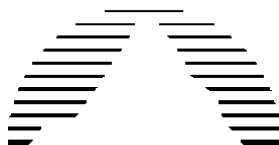
There we have it. One day you could be facing an eternal prison sentence with no chance of release or escape. You think that you are doing time now; this is nothing compared to what hell will be like! But if you repent and have faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ, you too can receive the King's pardon—and have your name written in the book of life. ☞

The author is serving a life sentence in H.M.P. Maghaberry, N. Ireland.

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