

Building a Church Behind Bars

Matthew 9:11-13 King James Version (KJV)

¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

¹² But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be **whole** need not a physician, but they that are sick.

¹³ But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Today my topic of discussion is **Building a Church Behind Bars**.

We already know that according to scripture jail and prison ministry are ministries that Jesus was specifically concerned about.

Matthew 25

³² And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

³³ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

³⁴ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

³⁵ For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

³⁶ Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: **I was in prison, and ye came unto me.**

³⁷ Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

³⁸ When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

³⁹ Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

⁴⁰ And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, **Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**

My topic today is going to relate more to those involved in prison than in jails because many times in the local jails your time with one man or woman is very limited because they are moved and transferred or released, but sometimes not.

We understand today that Jesus has already stated that he didn't come for those that have it all together, but his ministry and purpose was about repairing and restoring the broken. It is interesting that when Jesus was approached about his fellowship with sinners that he compared that relationship to the relationship between a doctor and a sick person and said that the whole need not a physician.

One of the first things that a doctor does upon contact with a patient is diagnose the problem that the patient is having and see what is causing the sickness so that he can then prescribe the best plan for treatment.

Of course, we know and understand today that our greatest need that we have is to deal with the issue of sin, because that is an issue of eternal consequence, but we also must keep in mind in dealing with men and women behind bars and even juvenile offenders that they have other issues in their life that need attention besides sin. Yes, our greatest goal is to prepare someone for eternity, but we must also realize that while we are pressing towards the mark of spending eternity with God that we are still living in this present world and we have to deal with and address real life issues.

Notice that when Jesus addressed the sin in the publican and sinner's life that **he did not say that the healed** need not a physician but he said **the whole need not a physician.**

There is a difference:

Luke 17:11-19 King James Version (KJV)

¹¹ And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

¹² And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

¹³ And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

¹⁴ And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

¹⁵ And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

¹⁶ And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

¹⁸ There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

¹⁹ And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: **thy faith hath made thee whole.**

In this setting of scripture 10 lepers were healed but they were still parts of their body that was missing as a result of the effects of leprosy. Only was restored and made **whole** when he returned to worship Jesus.

We have to keep in mind that while we must preach to them this great salvation message of **Acts 2:38** which I love with a passion and we must teach them that there is One God and his name is Jesus, that just like with leprosy when they repent, get baptized in Jesus Name and receive the Holy Ghost that what we have done is stop the effects of sin from progressing any farther into their lives but there are still areas of their lives where things are missing as the result of sin and the lifestyles of the past and our purpose is not just to introduce them to God but to help them to become whole so that they can become productive and reproductive men and women of God.

In order to do that we must be prepared to minister to and build up the whole man or woman. We must strive to build a strong church behind bars that will continue to pray and teach the Gospel and win souls on the inside long after we walk out the front gate.

To accomplish this, we need to understand that we are dealing with broken men and woman that many of them even after they receive the Holy Ghost struggle with self esteem and self-worth and it is hard to be used by God when you don't feel like you are worth anything to anyone, including God. We must show them that they are not identified by their issue but that through Jesus Christ they are a new creature!

Many times, in life we are identified by our issues or our failures: the woman with the issue of blood, blind Bartimaeus, the lame man at the pool but notice that after their encounter with Jesus they left behind things that identified them with their issue.

The woman with the issue of blood

Mark 5:33-34 King James Version (KJV)

³³ But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

³⁴ And he said unto her, **Daughter**, thy faith hath made thee **whole**; go in peace, and be **whole** of thy plague.

First of all Jesus didn't just heal her and stop her bleeding but restored the level of blood in her body so that she was whole.

Then after that *Jesus addressed her with a term that gave her value and not as a problem.*

Bartimaeus

Mark 10

⁴⁶ And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.

⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

⁴⁸ And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.

⁴⁹ And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

⁵⁰ **And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.**

⁵¹ And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

⁵² And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

When God spoke to Moses in the Old Testament he didn't just tell Moses that he would deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt but he would carry them into the land of Canaan.

Exodus 3:7-9 King James Version (KJV)

⁷ And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

⁸ And I am come down **to deliver them out** of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land **unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey**; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

In the New Testament we are called out of darkness and into the light.

1 Peter 2:9-10 King James Version (KJV)

⁹ But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;

¹⁰ Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

It is imperative that we not only teach them how to come out of sin but how to come into the church or in reality **how to become the church.**

We must teach them about **prayer and fasting** and the value of it so they can stand when we are not there to lift them up.

We must instill in them the value of daily devotion to the word of God and rightly dividing the word of truth.

We must teach them how to live a holy life unto the Lord and being a living sacrifice.

We must teach them how to be a good father or mother to their children because many of them are where they are today because they come from very broken and dysfunctional environments, but at the same time we must teach them that they don't have to be a victim of their past but have victory over their past.

They must be taught that the difference between the blessing and cursing of God in their lives is just simply decided by their choices and not their environments or their family traditions.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28 King James Version (KJV)

²⁶ Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

²⁷ A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day:

²⁸ And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

We must keep in mind that yes, God did call us to preach to them the death, the burial and the resurrection and the coming of the Lord but he also called us to instruct and teach them to become disciples that will be equipped for the work of the ministry.

If we train people to merely be our followers then we will be very limited in how we effect the kingdom but if we train others to be leaders of other men and women and equip them for ministry then there is no end to the impact that we can make in our generation.

Let's work to build a church behind bars!

