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SUBJECT: ***Request to Staff*** MASON, FREDERICK, Reg# 55487056, TCP-B-B
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To: UNICOR
Inmate Work Assignment: nil

Applying God's Word In Prison
(Seeking Peace)

Jeremiah 29:7 "And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it, for in it's peace you will have peace".

It's amazing ho much life the Word of God has, and how it was written for literally ANY circumstance you're going through- even prisoners.

Now today we've changed the word of "captives" or "prisoners" to "inmates". But they all mean the same thing. These are people that have lost their freedom and way of life, and live in a lower standard than the average citizen.

Now, we can get technical and talk about "them criminals" and how they "deserve" to be in prison... don't go there. Don't judge a single person unless you can discern perfectly everything about that person. What you hear a prosecutor say or what you read in a paragraph is not the complete story of a human being. So, unless you are God, don't judge.

My discussion of today's Bible verse is unique for most, because the prophet Jeremiah was given this word to give not to citizens- but to prisoners. If you read Jeremiah, chapter 29, it clearly indicates to whom this word is for: "to all who were carried away captive..."

At this period of time, King Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Jerusalem, and taken the people captive to Babylon. The Jews, were in effect, prisoners... inmates, in today's vernacular.

Even though it looked hopeless, God was reminding these people to not give up hope and to trust God to deliver them. But this was a tall order, looking at the circumstances. Their enemy was powerful, and by all circumstances, had already won. How could God save the prisoners?

Society often feels that way about prisoners. We get pre-conceived ideas that every person in prison is a "monster", because this is what prosecutors are taught to tell the jury. In their eyes, every person is guilty. And while there are some bad people, not everyone arrested is guilty. Not everyone in prison is guilty, or as terrible as the courts make them. Anybody can be indicted and put in prison... even Jeremiah.

Don't believe me? Read Jeremiah 33, verse one. Where was the prophet when God spoke to him? In PRISON:

"Moreover the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time, while he was still shut up in the court of the prison..."

God was encouraging Jeremiah (the inmate) to trust Him, saying, "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know".

I say all this to set a foundation here, that the prophet knew a bit about "doing time", but more so, he knew God was able to do the impossible for the captives. So, let's take Jeremiah 29:7 to the 21st century, since God's Word is timeless. We have to get past the thought that the Bible is an old, outdated history book. It is God's Word, and it is as alive today as the day it was first introduced.

Now, we're talking about seeking peace, in one of the most unlikely places- prison. God is telling us to seek peace and pray for peace in the place of our captivity. Let's make it personal, so I can be honest with you. As of this date (of typing the original) April 25th, 2019, I'm an inmate -captive- at USP Tucson. It's 1:30 in the afternoon, and I'm currently in my cell while the entire compound is on lockdown. Apparently, across the way, at a nearby FCI compound, either an inmate was stabbed in a fight, or an officer was stabbed. So, even though this compound has nothing to do with that event, here we are, suffering a lockdown.

Seems like we're nowhere near that peace God mentioned. Yet, as I said, that event didn't take place here. This compound,

though it has NUMEROUS issues, isn't that violent. I tell you this, as a fact, there are hundreds of federal inmates that would do anything to get to a prison like this that is very low on violence. People want to be safe while doing time, and sadly, many prisons are very violent. A 20-year old kid can gee at 3-year sentence, go to prison, and end up getting mixed up in a fight, and getting an additional 10 years, even if it was self defense. He could also end up getting killed while in prison, while prison authorities pass it off as "the natural order of prison".

That is not God's will to see thing like this happen. God is full of mercy and compassion; what does Psalm 103:8 say? "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in mercy". Psalm 146:7 says, "Who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners". Psalm 147:11 says, "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in His mercy". Psalm 69:33 says, "For the Lord hears the poor, and does not despise His prisoners".

I could go on, but what I'm establishing is this: God cares deeply for the captives, even when society rejects them.

And because God hasn't thrown them under the prison walls, as prosecutors have done, He has a good plan for them. In fact, Jeremiah says about these very same captives in Jeremiah 29:11:

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord. Thoughts of peace, and of evil, to give you a future and a hope".

There's that word, "peace" which is also in verse 7. Why is God commanding us to pray for peace while in prison? Why in the world should I pray for SUP Tucson, or the city of Tucson? Like most inmates, there is a sense of anger, resentment and hopelessness while in prison.

But trust me, there's a reason- a good one. First, we all have value, and God has made a terrific habit of taking those society rejected, and doing incredible things with them. Every inmate, and I'm one of them, has, in the eyes of God, tremendous value, especially the captives, because they know more intimately what its like to be dishonored. But God has a great plan for them- IF they can trust Him.

And in order to trust God, you've got to take your eyes off the problem. God is FAR bigger than a courtroom, a prosecutor or a Justice System that isn't always fair. God wants us to look to Him, and one way of doing this is by praying for peace in the city you are in.

God cares about everyone, something we as human beings haven't fully embraced. We still have our prejudices, whether against race, gender or even inmates. But because God loves everyone, He cares for everyone. yet, if nobody cares enough to pray for peace, how can God help others? What if the protection of a group of people is left to only one person... YOU? If you don't pray, then those people are left to suffer because there is no peace. What if the answer to a problem is you?

Do you care enough to pray, or do you forfeit it, thinking that somebody else will eventually help, or worse, that the person doesn't deserve it. If a person you didn't like was drowning, would ignore him, expecting someone else to help him (even if you're only 10 feet away), or would you ignore him because he "gets what he deserves"?

Either way, he dies because you had no compassion.

God isn't like that, and He wants us to be like Him: merciful and compassionate. He wants us- the inmates- to pray for peace, so guys can do their time safely, and get back home to their families, instead of being murdered while in prison, or illegally persecuted or tormented by officers and staff...

It happens a lot.

But if we pray for peace, God gets in on the scene, and protects not just the person who prayed, but everyone he prayed for.

If we do that, we're doing God's will, and if we're doing God's will, He has a future, and a hope for the captives, which is deliverance, the same that Jeremiah got, the same that the people of Jerusalem got.

The same any captive, or inmate, will get if they will trust God, and stay in faith in His Word.