

Remember Those in Prison (3)

Scripture Reading — Psalm 145:14-21

Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners ... Hebrews 13:3 —

Some theologians have claimed that our text from Hebrews refers only to believers in prison--and specifically those who are imprisoned and mistreated because of their faith. That kind of interpretation would be handy for relieving the church of its call to aid millions upon millions of prisoners.

But the first readers of the book of Hebrews knew what the Old Testament said about caring not only for our own but also for strangers in need as if they were our own. In fact, the preceding text in Hebrews calls us to show hospitality to strangers.

We are to remember prisoners with so much empathy that we imagine ourselves in their place. Many prisoners throughout the world suffer and are mistreated. Recall, for example, the Abu Ghraib scandal in Iraq in which prisoners were abused. Daily there are reports of rat-infested prisons in underdeveloped countries where inmates die of malnutrition, starvation, and exposure. Even in Western countries conditions are far from ideal with low-budget, overcrowded facilities that lead to neglect or tensions that can escalate to violence. But when the church remembers to bring food and clothing to inmates, to visit them or write them words of encouragement, they experience a touch of God's grace that can end the downward cycle of despair.

Prayer

Father, we pray for prisoners who are mistreated. Lead your people to their aid so that they can be inspired to make godly choices for living. In Jesus' name, Amen

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Printed on June 24, 2019

