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Fall 2020

Prison Epistles

NO LONGER A CAR WITH SPINNING WHEELS

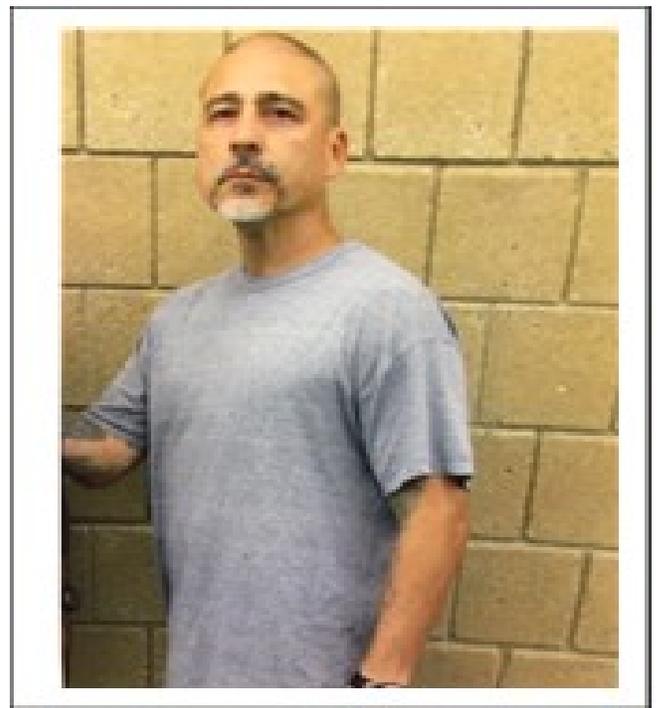
I remember my life once a gang member and how many times I put my life on the line for the gang. It took me a number of years to really take a very good look at myself. My life was like a car spinning on its wheels with no promise or true direction.

Once I had climbed up in ranks I learned something that gave me great sadness. What it truly foreshadowed, "Evilness lurking its next victim from within" ... homeboys, favoritism, protecting each other's wrong doings.

Slowly I began to feel sadness, not anger. My sadness and that reality gave me the strength to step down. I was once worried what would people think or say about me; the lies, slander and the propaganda that would follow. Later I came to find out I was not the only one and it really didn't matter what people thought or said about me. What mattered more was what did God think or had to say when I would have to face judgment in front of Him and not in front of man... *"In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."* (1 Peter 4:4-5)

The Lord has been good to me. My life is no longer spinning as a car spins on its wheels. I now have a

purpose and direction and a light to see. I now trust the Lord with all my heart... *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."* (Proverbs 3:5-6)



God plans a good future for all who trust in Him and salvation will be forever... *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. That He may exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon Him for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:5-6)

And remember our God is a Jealous God who will not tolerate your affections for any other gods... *"you shall not bow down to them nor serve them."*

For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:5) and “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other. You will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. (Luke 16:13).

When we examine our life closely we may feel cut off from God considering the scope of what we have done. We may feel unworthy to ask God for anything. Maybe our sinful behaviors are despised as the lowest kind of evil by those whom we consider respectable. We may struggle with self-hatred. Our genuine remorse may cause us to wonder if we ever dare approach God to ask for His help. God welcomes us, even when we feel this way. Jesus told this story in *Luke 18:10-14* "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men-- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Tax collectors were among the most despised citizens in Jewish society. Pharisees, on the other hand, commanded the highest respect. Jesus purposely chose this illustration to show that it doesn't matter where we fit in society's hierarchy. It is the humble heart that opens the door to God's forgiveness.

Free yourself from sin with God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. With Him in your life all things are possible. "But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, 'With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible'" (Matthew 19:26). Glory be to God!

I now help facilitate a program for former gang members. I am very grateful for the opportunity to be able to bear witness. It also gave me understanding of values that I used to have that are no longer a part in the life I am living today. It helped me to replace old values with spiritual ones. *See Titus 3:2-5, and Colossians 3:1-17.* I have been living a healthier life ever since. The values and decisions I now make are definitely to do God's will.

Seek the kingdom of God above all else and live righteously and He will give you everything you need. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). Free yourself from sin... *Romans 7:14-25.*

I encourage you to read the prayer of the Lord Jesus in *John 17:1-25.* He is our high priest and intercessor (*Hebrews 8:1-6*). He makes God's will known to us and our heartfelt needs known to God.

People ask if I hate these people who would like to see me dead but I say, "No." I feel empathy and compassion for them because they've not yet seen the light that I've seen. I find I'm able to carry their hats. *Please read... 2Corinthians 4:6, 2 Corinthians 5:15-18 and John 8:12.*

God bless and be with you.
Francisco Ybarra
Federal Prison, New York



**ARE YOU JUST
SPINNING YOUR WHEELS!**

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**SEND YOUR TESTIMONY
FOR JESUS CHRIST TO...**

**Some Christians who are only
and sufficiently a part of the
church the Lord is building, of
which all and only His children
are members (Acts 2:47)**

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