

A View From A Prison Cell

My first experience of prison was in Mt Eden Prison, New Zealand. The atmosphere was electric. It was a Saturday. Everyone was on edge. There were rumours of a prisoner riot.

A few days earlier in the week a prisoner, found guilty of killing a prison officer, had reported been hung. [There is no official record of this]. That day no one was in the mood for jokes. Prisoners were reluctant to play basketball with our team. Some seemingly more volatile prisoners were locked down, denied access the exercise yard that day.

I sat beside an older prisoner. Slowly he began to share a part of his story. Now over 60 years old, he'd spend more than eighty percent of his life in prison. He was a plumber. Most of his day was taken up with repairing prison plumbing.

As we talked about his view of the future from his prison cell, he revealed he came from near my home town, Dannevirke. For him prison was home, his community, his family. Frankly, he confessed, that if released, he'd commit a crime serious enough to ensure his immediate return to Mt Eden prison! He believed he no longer was wanted or belonged in the outside world. Too much had changed.

Another prisoner, John, a Christian, imprisoned on an Island in the Mediterranean Sea, just off the coast of Turkey sees a starting, confronting, terrifying, encouraging vision of Jesus Christ. He is petrified before this figure. But Jesus asks John to send mail to seven churches in Turkey. Mail that contains a local, universal and eternal message to any church.

So John sends mail from his cell. Today we begin opening that mail. Most weeks until Easter we'll be opening this mail from Jesus to CGCC. Interesting that if we "hear," "read" and obey these words contained in this mail we will be blessed.

I wonder if my mail "blesses" anyone?

"How blessed the reader! How blessed the hearers and keepers of these prophetic words, all the words written in this book!

Time is just about up" Revelation 1:3