WE ARE SO SORRY

Last month we told you about doing a radio show with VOP from Death Row in McAlester. These plans had to be changed so I went to California to do the show. Don Hawkins’ execution has been set for April 8th, Yvonne and I will be there unless a lot of effort and prayer changes things.

WE ALL LIVE TO DIE

Yvonne and I have spent a lot of time reflecting death and dying. It is a joy to talk to someone like Don who has no fear of death. Even with the horrible crime behind him, he knows he will go to heaven when Jesus comes. He has made himself more ready each day and never stopped writing to set down on paper his experience, how he met God, how he learned, how he prepared.

There is a still glimmer of hope. The sister of the woman killed told the State of Oklahoma she does not want Don executed. The victim’s two young children, now grown, who were kidnapped and released, don’t want Don killed. Don does not want to die but knows he did the crime and deserves the punishment.

Questions we hope to find the answers to: Why was nothing done on his case for 8 years after sentencing? The appeals should start at once. Why were two other cases, identical to Don’s, given appeal? One of the Clemency Board was an investigator on Don’s case. The other board members were friends of his; why was the whole board not set down? We have always told you there’s no justice in the justice system. Two men have been released after 15 and 16 year sentences for killing. Their crimes were brutal. Remember Hebrews 13:3 and pray for Don.

DOERS OF THE WORD

Many years ago my wife and I, at the prompting of our daughter and son-in-law, went to hear Don and Yvonne speak about Prison Ministry through Someone Cares. We must admit we were impressed and gave a donation, putting us on their mailing list. We really enjoyed these letters and continued giving monthly.

About ten years ago the four of us decided to write an inmate. God’s hand was on each match and it has been wonderful. I like Don’s version of age: “as old as my tongue and a little older than my teeth.”
Tony, my Pen Friend, asked for a Bible study. We enrolled all four through Don and VOP. Don suggested we also take the lessons. I cannot remember when I did not go to church, nor can I remember when I studied the Bible. I can, with no reservation, say it was the most pleasant experience I have ever had. Mostly I learned there are things God wants us to do. We have, or are writing to, 8 inmates each, both men and women. We are having a Bible study weekly and soon will be teaching in prison.

Three of us are joining the Two care Program and will visit inmates attached to Someone Cares. The most important lesson this has taught me, if I had gone on as I was, doing nothing for Jesus, I would have never made Heaven on my church attendance. We took a collection from our group to help with the expenses if Mr Hawkins is executed and to help with burial. God Bless You and Yvonne.

The Masons

NEVER GIVE UP

Often it is easy to get discouraged being a Christian. We often wonder why things go the way they do. Too often we have folks sign up to write an inmate then get cold feet and don’t tell us. Then the extra work of rematching and explaining to the inmate that not all Christians are called to do certain ministries.

Our bookkeeper, who needs your prayers, helps us keep everything in order but in these troubled times fund raising is difficult. If we increase our speaking engagements our funding does go up. But then we have to cut something. Soon we are going to have to set up 4 areas in The United States to do what we do. But it is hard to find folks with the background to do the inside work. If God blesses you, we sure can use a MITE. Also if you are a Pen Friend, please use your name, not “Someone Cares” in writing your friend or friends. I have six letters from inmates to Someone Cares from their first names only!

CHECK IT OUT

We have had a bit of a problem where folks were working with their hearts, not common sense. If your friend asks for money in anything over a bit, please ask us first. An inmate told his friend he was getting paroled and needed money to get home and get started. He is nowhere near parole and a ticket to home is on his books from a family member.

Another inmate informed his Pen Friends she was dying of a form of AIDS that could be treated if she had $500.00. In both cases and others, we had to call the prison and find out that the first was not close to parole, the second did not have AIDS. If you need to know, call us, or call the Chaplain and see what route you should take. Conditions in prisons are getting worse and worse. Overcrowding is terrible and because of Government financial problems, many programs are getting cut. Men and women who want to change can’t. Even getting a GED, which some states require, is impossible as many teachers have been let go. Even many volunteer programs are cut back due to lack of staff supervision. We have opened a new door. If you have a question or problem, send it with a self-addressed stamped envelope and we will respond.
WHAT HAS SOMEONE CARES DONE FOR YOU?

Since many of you have, on your own, decided to write direct, share experiences you are having, like:

Our daughter of eleven has been writing to an inmate since you spoke at our church. Then my husband and I started writing him and the blessing was massive. Last year, on our vacation, we went to visit him, not contacting you. We got to the prison and we could not get in. Outside the entrance we prayed for help. A man walked over and said "I'm a Chaplain here; can I assist you?" We told him our plight and he arranged to get us in to visit. We are on his approved visiting list. Our daughter told the story in school and six others are now writing inmates. Praise God.

Then writes Joan: I had been writing my Pen Friend for about a year and he asked me a difficult question about the Bible. I called my pastor and was informed “No! Quit writing, this is not a job for women of the church, or even the church. Strange.

Jesus seems to have a different idea. She contacted us and I referred her to another preacher in her town, were she now attends, and he helped her.

YVONNE’S CORNER

I have an unusual request but who better than a minister's daughter to ask this question? I would like to urge all of you to encourage your pastors or ministers to get involved some way in a form of Prison Ministry, even if you need to help them. Sometimes that is what it takes. Now, to stay on the safe side, I must say that ministers and pastors are overworked and not paid enough; however, when I was a child, my Father, a pastor, always took those who were willing to the local jail once a month. He pastored three churches, but still managed to care about the local jail. If we could encourage you to have your pastors mention the Pen Friend Program on a monthly basis, or put it in their bulletins, that would really help, as we have so many inmates who are waiting for a Pen Friend, and so many church members who would like to do something, please HELP!!

Who Am I? I am the result of all people and factors that influence my life. I am the child of my parents who were the children of their parents. Besides all that, I have learned many behaviors that have become part of me that have little to do with my parents. So, I am the sum total of my heredity and my learned behavior and I am more than that! I am a person who is different from anyone ever born. I am everything that has shaped me; but I add my own uniqueness.

Please keep us in your prayers. At times like this we need all the prayer warriors and then some. Please be assured that each of you is in our prayers daily! May God richly bless each of you!

TEN MONTHS TO LIVE, cont’d
by Don Hawkiins
When Christ returns, the heaven will depart as a scroll when it is rolled together (Revelation 6:14). The sky opens up! “If the dead rise not Then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished” (1 Corinthians 15:16-18)! Why would dead Christians be perished if they are already in heaven? Why do we need the resurrection if the dead are already in heaven? If the argument is that the soul in heaven needs to be reunited with the dead body in the grave, then where is the scriptural proof of this? A new, glorified body is given at the resurrection. From dust to life, the old body returned. “Perished” cannot refer to the dead body for it’s the soul that sinneth which surely dies. The old body does perish regardless; so Paul is speaking of the soul, or person, that perishes if not raised from the sleep of death. “If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call and I will answer thee” (Job 14:14,15). Wait where? The grave (Job 17:13).

“Behold I show you a mystery. WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump and the dead shall be raised incorruptible (not capable of decaying or rotting – glorified body) and we shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51-55). Not all will sleep, says Paul; some will be alive to see Christ coming in the clouds with His angels.

Paul says, “with the shout, the dead in Christ will arise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18). “Marvel not at this for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the GRAVES (not heaven or hell) shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection (second) of damnation (John 5:28-29). Jesus clearly said they are in the GRAVES when He calls them.

Paul said “we are confident, I say willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.” On eight of those words have doctrines been written regardless of what Paul wrote about death as a sleep in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. Paul knew he’d get his reward at that day (Christ’s appearing) when all were rewarded with eternal life; for he said “them also that LOVE His appearing” (second coming) (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Taken out of context, the eight words make void everything all the other Bible writers penned and what Paul and Jesus clearly said elsewhere. Peter warned that men would twist and distort the writings of Paul unto their own destruction (see 2 Peter 3:15,16).

If the dead are alive and conscious in heaven or Abraham’s bosom, then why did the Bible writers say the dead are not conscious? “The living know that they shall die, but the DEAD KNOW NOT ANYTHING” (Eccliastes 9:5,6). That scripture clearly refers to the soul or person who has a mind to love, hate, envy or know things, and not referring to a body. Today’s English Version says “Their loves, their hates, their passions, all died with them. “When a man dies, his breath (spirit) goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day, his thoughts perish” Psalm 146:4). A person without thoughts cannot be conscious (which will aid in revealing the parable of the rich man and Lazarus later).

“There is no knowledge or wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest” (Eccliastes 9:10). It is clearly whither thou, not your body, goest. “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any who go down into silence” (Psalm 115:17). “O Lord, in death there is no remembrance of Thee, in the GRAVE who shall give Thee thanks” (Psalm 6:5; Isaiah 38:18,19)?

The popular teaching of the dead being conscious and even able to look down on us causes
problems. If they can see you in the living room, they can see you in the bath room or marriage bed, etc. The Bible speaks of the dead as not knowing what the living are doing. “When a man dies, his sons come to honour him and he knoweth it not, and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them” (Job 14:21). God’s ways are the best ways. The dead know not anything, so they aren’t in heaven looking down to weep at the sufferings of their loved ones and the continuing sin and tribulations that befall man in this mortal state. Of all the dead raised to life in the Bible, not one spoke of a glorious heaven or any after-life experience. It would have been recorded, had they had any conscious recollection of life after their death.

Lazarus was the Lord’s friend, so it would have been no favor to bring him back from heaven to this sin-cursed world. Lazarus would have complained if he had any awareness of life in heaven after death. None of the seven people raised back to life in the New Testament ever spoke a word about an after-life experience.

An understanding of the soul and spirit helps to reveal the truth. The soul, spirit and body are three different parts of the complete person. Paul said, “I pray God your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The Hebrew nephesh and Greek psuche as the Bible word for soul means: “person, being, live creature.”

When God formed man from the dust to make a body, He breathed into his (Adam’s) nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). The same chemical composition found in the dust of the ground is found in our body as well: carbon, calcium, iron, etc. God said man became a living soul, not that he already had one. Man is a soul, a living person or creature. Soul means “PERSON.” Most other translations say he became a living person, or being. He is a person or living being.

Again I say, “...The soul (person) that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). Today’s English Version (TEV) says: “the person who sins is the one who will die. The Living Bible (TLB) says: “It is for a man’s own sins that he will die.” New American Version has a footnote that shows “soul” to mean “person.

The person can die or lose his/her life; so sometimes the soul and life are used to show mortality. “For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul” (Matthew 16:26)? Peter said eight souls were saved on the ark, meaning eight people (1 Peter 5:20).

Even animals are called “souls” as living creatures. But they have no intellect of reason, worship, language, moral nature, conscience, nor will they face judgment, as will people who are created in the image of God. If the word “soul” is used for man and beast, then “immortal soul” as taught by popular preachers would equally apply to animals.

“That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts; even one thing [death] befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preëminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:19-21). To be Continued.