

DELIVERANCE TO THE CAPTIVES

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4:18-19)

Everybody knows about captives. We have seen on television. When they praise their captors we take that praise with a grain of salt. We assume they have been tortured. We assume they have been threatened. We assume that whatever they say is not an accurate description of their captivity.

But wait, this is the very terminology used in Scripture to describe the followers of Satan. He takes people “captive”. Paul told Timothy to speak in kind and gentle terms to those who had been taken captive by the devil (2 Tim. 2:24 - 26). They need to be pitied. We must understand that we cannot take at face value anything they say. They are captives! Their behavior is orchestrated by the wicked one who is trying to deceive us. He wants to take us captive as well.

Isaiah said that the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. No matter what they say they have no peace (Is. 57:20 - 21). From a distance, however, the sea does seem peaceful. When Spanish explorer, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, first saw the world’s biggest ocean in 1513 he called it “pacific”, which means “peaceful”. Sometimes, parents can gain a little peace by giving their baby a “pacifier”. No matter what Balboa said, however, the Pacific Ocean is not peaceful. When you see it up close you know that Isaiah was right. Nothing can really pacify the ocean. It has been restless since the day that God created it. Just like Isaiah said, it cannot rest and its waters cast up mire and dirt.

When you see your favorite actor or actress from a distance, they too may seem peaceful. From a distance they often appear good looking, healthy, wealthy, and wise. Up close, however, it is a different story. These people, like the troubled sea, have no real rest. They move from one romantic liaison to another, from one therapist to another, from one bottle to another, from one pill to another, and from one cause to another. They are captives in search of freedom, but they are looking for it in the wrong place. Jesus would set these captives free if only they would let Him!

On April 9, 1942, approximately 75,000 Filipino and United States soldiers were taken captive by the Japanese army. Then began the infamous “Bataan Death March” when 18,000 of these captives died or were executed on their way to prison. When these captives were set free in January 1945, only 511 were still alive. Their dramatic rescue has been chronicled in many books and a recent movie called “The Great Raid”.

One of the most amazing aspects of the story is the reluctance of these prisoners to accept deliverance. Several things contributed to this confusing situation. First the Army Rangers came into being while these men were in prison. Thus the prisoners had never seen the new Ranger uniforms and weapons. When the Rangers yelled to the POW's to come out and be rescued, many of the POWs feared that it might be a trap so the Japanese could mow them down. Many of the prisoners hid, forcing the Rangers to search for them in their barracks. Some of the Rangers were even challenged by the POWs. Many Rangers had to resort to physical force to remove the prisoners, throwing or kicking them out. Once out of the barracks, they were told by the Rangers to proceed to the main, or front gate. Prisoners were disoriented to them because the 'main gate' meant the entrance to the American side of the camp. Many of the POWs collided with each other in the confusion but were eventually led out by the Rangers.

They were out of the prison camp at 8:15 p.m. but the rescue was a long way from being over. The Rangers and the weary, frail and disease-ridden POWs made their way to the appointed rendezvous at the Pampanga River, a mile away. Here a caravan of about a dozen water buffalo carts waited. They were still deep in enemy territory but the long journey home had started, and would ultimately be successfully completed.

Jesus came to earth to bring deliverance to the captives. Please do not resist Him!