



# Compassion

2023 - Third Quarter

## “My Dear Friend Epenetus”

Before leaving Corinth and making his way back to Jerusalem to close out his third missionary journey, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome. While Paul had never visited this city, his letter concludes with personal greetings to nearly two dozen individuals who were now living in the city of Rome. Paul had come to know all of these Christians during the previous decade while doing mission work throughout the Mediterranean. One of those greetings was to “my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia” (Rm. 16:5).

As I read through these greetings recently, it brought to mind the many Christians that I have come to know over the previous two and a half decades of doing mission work in correctional institutions. Like the apostle Paul, I have my own “Epenetus” – that is to say, I have my own “first convert to Christ” in the prison system.

The first time I met my *Epenetus*, however,

was not in the prison system but in the home of a relative whom he was living with. While his relative was a Christian, *Epenetus* was not. In fact, every time I came to share a devotion with this relative, *Epenetus* would quickly leave the house. *Epenetus* wanted nothing to do with God or His Word, at least not until I met him again a few years later in the county jail.

Now, I think *Epenetus* initially came to my Bible study just to escape the boredom of being locked up, but the Holy Spirit eventually won him over, and his attitude began to change. Before long, *Epenetus* began looking forward to studying God’s Word, and in time, he even went through an adult instruction class with me and was eventually confirmed.

Many years later, I ran into *Epenetus* again while visiting one of our churches. By this time, *Epenetus* was married and had two children attending Christian day school. Not only had the Holy

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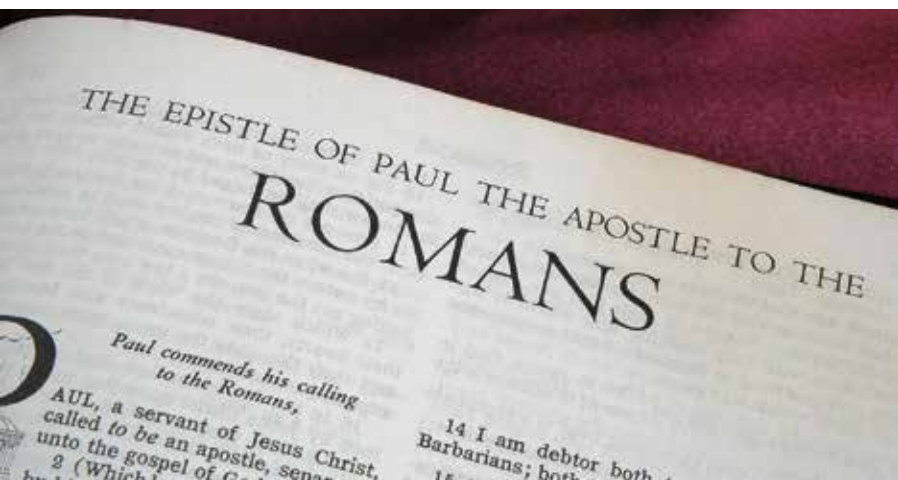


### Plank Road Legacy

**“God’s Word works miracles with inmates, changing their lives for time and eternity. We want that work to continue, funded in part by our Plank Road bequest.”**

**- Rev. Robert & Lynn Pasbrig**

**Consider including IM in your estate plans. Contact Tammy at 414-259-4376 or [tammy.schmidtke@im.life](mailto:tammy.schmidtke@im.life)**



# Encouraging Christians in Jail

Have you ever thought about how hard it is to be an incarcerated Christian? Yes, Christians commit crimes, too. Both women attending my jail Bible study recently brought up that they were appropriately jailed for theft. They expressed remorse. They also echoed the gratitude that I hear from many women in jail – for being in a safe, sober environment to heal and later re-enter “the outside” with tools to make better choices.

These two women were faithfully trying to support and encourage one another in their Christian walks, despite many barriers. One of the women, *Jill*, had a life-long struggle with addiction. She knew that her abuse of alcohol and other drugs led her to jail instead of being available for her children. The other women in her bunk room also have addictions and frequently talk about happily anticipating reconnecting with their drug dealers, getting high and even prostituting themselves for more drugs. Hearing these conversations often

“triggered” *Jill* into longing for alcohol and other drugs again rather than focusing on God’s grace and promises.

*Kelli*, the other woman at the Bible study, bunked between two women who verbally fought day and night. She was desperate for sleep, but no other bunks were available. Her anxiety worsened as she grew more tired. If *Kelli* asked the other women for some peace, they verbally abused or gossiped about her. *Kelli* found that suffering silently was safest.

*Jill* and *Kelli* attempted to do a brief devotion each night for their entire unit of the jail. Some of the inmates seemed interested and even participated in the prayer. Others openly mocked them and disrupted their few minutes of public worship and prayer.

*Kelli* asked me, “Do you know any passages about strength?” She probably hoped to hear how to be strong herself. Instead, the Holy Spirit plunked

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 into my mind. I read portions aloud, “My (God’s) grace is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak. ... I (Paul, the writer) am glad that I am weak. I am glad in hard times. I am glad when people say mean things about me.... When I am weak, I am strong” (NIRV). *Jill’s* and *Kelli’s* eyes started to water with relief.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, we found that Psalm 18:1, “I love you LORD, You give me strength” (NIRV), was a passage for *Kelli* to repeat to herself when distressed with her quarreling bunk neighbors. As usual, our Bible study ended with grateful tears for God’s grace and comfort. I again left the jail spilling over with God’s joy.

Thank you for your interest and support in bringing comfort and encouragement to fellow Christians who are incarcerated in jail. Please contact our office about becoming an IM volunteer.



by Director of Development  
Tammy Schmidtke



# God's Word Is Our Treasure

Cindy's past was riddled with troubles. She had suffered brain injuries in utero. She had been involved in episodes of violence and trauma. She had noticeable physical features that made evident her past trauma. Though not noticeable, she suffered from much damage to her mind and spirit.

Despite all this, Cindy lived a life of thankfulness. Cindy took her relationship with God very seriously. Cindy strove to obey God's command to put him first in her life, no matter what it took.

My contact with Cindy often occurred through weekly Zoom visits at the jail. She valued having someone to listen, care, share, and pray with. Then technology glitches prevented our visits for several consecutive weeks. It would have been easy for Cindy to sit back and complain to the other women in the jail. Cindy could easily have just resigned herself to another instance in which being locked up meant frustration and loss of freedoms. However, Cindy did not do that.

At the risk of being ignored or being

labeled as annoying; at the risk of suffering ramifications from the guards, Cindy spoke up. She wrote a note to the jail administration as well. With assertiveness and perseverance, Cindy did everything she could think of to be given permission to resume her chaplain visits.

Given her background, I wouldn't have blamed Cindy for not speaking up. It would have been understandable that the events from her difficult past would have stripped her confidence. It would have been easier and safer for her to remain silent.

While inmate requests may at times be ignored, God graciously allowed Cindy's request to be heard and acted upon. God answered her prayer. Administrative officials took steps and followed through. Cindy's visits with me were restored. The next time we met, we rejoiced together that God had blessed her in this way.

Cindy's courage reminds us of so many people from the Bible who did the right thing by seeking God and his righteousness first, even in hard circumstances. Cindy's courage



reminds me of the courage of Daniel, the three men in the fiery furnace, Esther, and many more. Cindy's courage reminds me to take God's command seriously when he says to love and trust him above all else and make him our highest priority.

I thank God that Cindy has so much love for God's Word, and that she was able to bravely ask for help to hear it. I pray that you, too, will make hearing it your highest priority and joy. God bless us all as we grow in our faith through our study of it.



by Chaplain  
Sarah Guenther

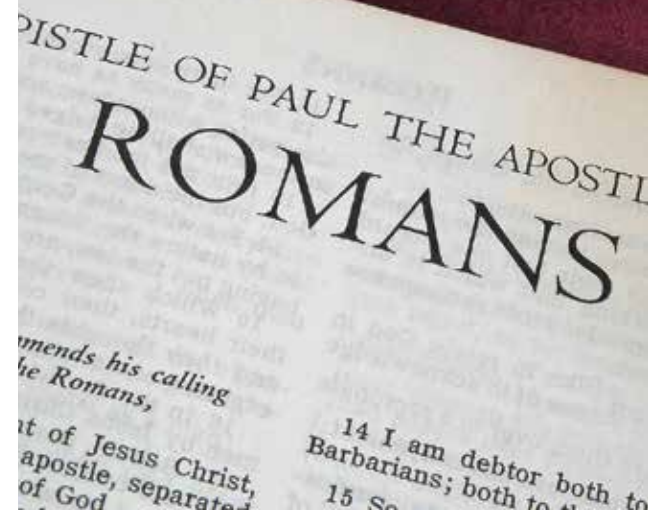
Spirit made a home in Epenetus' heart, but He had also completely turned around Epenetus' life.

When Paul finally made it to Rome – years after writing this letter– I wonder what changes he witnessed in the hearts and lives of the people that he had come to know while sharing the gospel. How had the Holy Spirit impacted their lives? What transformations did he observe?

Jesus once said, "You will be my witnesses..." Mindful of these words, we continue to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, *shining the light of His love behind the walls.*



by Chaplain  
Joseph Radsek





Shining the light of Jesus' love  
on the walled-in souls of our communities!

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## OUR MISSION

*To provide  
direction, comfort,  
and hope by shining  
the light of Jesus'  
love on the walled-in  
souls of our  
communities.*



### Special Gifts & Memorials 4/11/2023 to 7/17/2023

#### IN CELEBRATION OF The Guiding Word of our Lord Jesus Christ

Mrs. Carolyn Reineck  
**Rev. David A Tetzlaff**  
Mr. Larry Debbert  
**Our 50th Wedding  
Anniversary**  
Mr. & Mrs. Garry Sydow  
**Easter**  
Mr. & Mrs. Steve A. Ahrens  
**Peggy Moll's Birthday**  
Mr. Philip Moll

**IN HONOR OF**  
**Geraldine Babinec's  
95th Birthday**  
Mrs. Donna Tetzlaff  
**Gordon Gehrig**  
Ms. Darlene Sankey  
**John & Carol Schram's  
50th Wedding Anniversary**  
Mrs. Myra Gehrke  
**Denise Protzmann**  
St Mark Lutheran Church  
**Chaplains Phil Merten,  
Sarah Guenther & Joe  
Radsek**  
Rev. & Mrs. Steven Stern

**IN MEMORY OF**  
**Al Schlegel**  
Mrs. Barbara Schlegel  
**Alfons Woldt**  
Mrs. Ruth Woldt  
**Rev. & Mrs. Arthur W.  
Schupmann**  
Ms. Deborah Bradford  
**Barbara Stoegbauer**  
Mr. Duane Stoegbauer  
**Betty Hoover**  
Mr. Franklin Hoover

**Carol Davidson**  
Mr. Daniel Davidson  
**Jerry Hilfiker**  
Mrs. Elsbeth Kietzmann  
**Charles H Weinheimer**  
Ms. Pam Zauner  
**Chloe Gessner**  
Mr. & Mrs. David Jackson  
**Christopher Zabrowski**  
Mr. & Mrs. Patrick Zabrowski  
**My Sister Who Suddenly  
Passed Away**  
Ms. Cynthia Pagel  
**Our 64th Wedding  
Anniversary**

Mr. & Mrs. Dan Milbach  
**Daniel Wolgramm**  
Rev. & Mrs. Arno Wolfgramm  
**Don & Jean Villwock**  
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Gebert  
**Dorothy Linde**  
Mrs. Donna Ohrmundt  
**Elaine Bullens**  
Mr. Bob Bullens  
**Pastor Wilmer Hoffmann**  
Mrs. Faye Hoffmann  
**Faye Wierschke**  
Mr. & Mrs. Mark Wierschke  
**James A Schumacher**  
Rev. & Mrs. Philip Henselin  
**Wendy Folven**  
Rev. & Mrs. Philip Henselin  
**Pastor James P Olsen**  
Mr. Robert Karlen  
**Rev. John W. Mattek**  
Ms. Elsie Mattek  
**William & Elda Tietz**  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Schulz  
**Joe Tometzak**  
Mr. & Mrs. Art Peavy  
**Joyce Dolan**  
Mr. David Beyer Sr.

**Rev. Kenneth Lenz**  
Ms. Stephanie Windle  
**Marvin Krueger**  
Ms. Carol Krueger  
**Fredrick Piippo**  
Mrs. Patricia Piippo  
**Our Daughter, Renee Maas**  
Mr. & Mrs. Larry Maas  
**Richard Zinke**  
Mrs. Sharon Zinke  
**Barbara Yauk**  
Mr. Ron Yauk  
**Sandra Rose Eastman,  
My Sister**  
Mr. David Beyer Sr.  
**Shirley Ehlert**  
Rev. Ronald Ehlert  
**Theora Utke**  
Mr. & Mrs. Steven Auchtung  
Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Utke  
**Wayne Krueger**  
Ms. Kristin Krueger

**IN THANKSGIVING FOR**  
**52 Years of Marriage**  
Mr. & Mrs. Jim Daubers  
**My Wife & Family**  
Mr. James Boisen  
**The Holy Spirit's Work  
through this Ministry**  
Ms. Katherine Wendland  
**God's Goodness & Grace**  
Mrs. Lois Weber  
**Faithful Servants**  
Mrs. Lois Weber  
**A Successful Surgery**  
Ms. Ruth Lampe  
**My Grandchildren**  
Mrs. Sharon Zinke  
**God's Mercy & Grace**  
Mrs. Shirley Noah



### Save the Date:

**This year's Annual  
Delegate Meeting is  
at St. John's,  
downtown Waterloo,  
on November 4th.**