

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

I saw two prisons yesterday. Although the first was just a replica, it was the most oppressive space that I have ever experienced. It was located at Gunter Air Station in Montgomery in their "Air Force Enlisted Men's Museum" and depicted a North Vietnamese prison cell. The space was about eight feet by four feet. There were roaches on the wall, a wooden cot, a refuse bucket. They had allowed visiting ex-POWs to autograph the walls. It was a despicable place! I wanted to give a bloody scream at the inhumanity! Over the years, I've had the privilege of hearing three different POWs tell their story. Each had stuck a barb deep in my heart - and this eight-foot-by-four-foot space brought their stories to life. You could almost smell the filth - the heat - the humiliation - the oppression.

After this museum tour, we went to Maxwell Air Force Minimum Security Prison in Montgomery. I had always heard that it was like a country club. True, it was nice - new buildings, good food, tennis courts, exercise facilities, no cells but dorms - but it definitely was a prison. I saw no joy in the faces of these green-clothed men. They were allowed to walk freely around the facility, but that freedom was limited. They were bound, not shackled like the POWs, but nevertheless bound

- limited, restrained. Their freedom was gone. You could see it in their eyes and in their posture.

Some days, I feel like we have those same eyes - that same posture. The prison walls are our own making, built by our own unconfessed sins. We use slimy fears and doubts for mortar. Pride and self-centered actions are our furnishings. The rotting smell is similar to the POW's world.

Why, O Lord my God - why do we imprison ourselves from you? But, thank you Lord - you continually rain Your grace upon us, causing the mortar to wash away and the walls to crumble down. The shackles fall away. Your grace brings confession, brokenness, and freedom. Isn't it a paradox that with our total surrender - our total brokenness --- comes total freedom? But how often is God's way diametrically opposed to this "world's" way?

"You want freedom - surrender completely - then I'll give you freedom."

In three of the Gospels it says, "Jesus was bound." Matthew 27:2a, Mark 15:1b, John 18:12b. It was this binding - this surrendering to the cross that allowed His eternal victory - our eternal freedom.

My mind dwells on the man who lived in the tombs (Mark 5:2-20). Tombs - how awful! An unholy place for the Jew. A place of decay and death. A leper was avoided physically, but this "tomb-dweller" would have had it even worse - totally ostracized, despised and hated. It says, "He had often been

bound with shackles and chains.” And then Jesus came - sent his demons into the swine. His walls were knocked down - he was healed - made whole - set free.

Have you had “tomb dwelling” days? Built your own prisons or sepulchers? The good news - I mean really “Good News” - people - is that the “Grace Rain” causes floods daily and those old walls won’t stand - they’ll just be washed away - in the blood of the Lamb.

Your sister in Christ,

Lucy