

Colossians 4:18

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

Remember my imprisonment.

1. As we conclude this letter, and consider what we have heard, let us remember Paul's imprisonment
2. Think about the reality, that as he signed his name, his chains probably rattled...and he thought...remember my imprisonment!
3. Doesn't that add some weight to his burden for the church? Doesn't it cause you to look up and pay attention to what he has said?

What verse could be more fitting for today: IDOP?

1. We not only need to remember Paul's past suffering and imprisonment
2. We need to remember the present suffering and imprisonment, and persecution of millions of believers today.

What does it mean to remember?

1. To think of and consider; to meditate.

Psalm 63:5-6 *My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. 6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches*

Take a moment to envision and imagine being in prison with our brothers and sisters around the world today.

1. Try to put yourself in their shoes.
2. This is actually commanded in Scripture!

Hebrews 13:3 *Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.*

A. Let us remember the prisoners of Iran, as though in prison with them.

The police take you into custody after a prayer meeting.

1. You initially think...I could go to jail for a year...and you begin to mentally prepare.
2. The problem is that prison terms are getting longer for Christians in Iran so you don't really know when you will get out.
3. You are faced with interrogation after interrogation.
 - a. You are beaten, deprived of sleep, and interrogated again.
 - b. The guards bring you tea, which is a welcome refreshment because you are weary, hurting, and your throat is dry, but they not allow to go to the bathroom.
 - c. They begin to threaten you spouse...your children...your grandchildren as you suffer from your bladder being too full.
4. You are placed in solitary confinement for 34 days.
 - a. Sickness sets in but medical treatment is withheld because you are a Christian.
 - b. You are given no Bible and no Christian literature. You are alone.
5. Good news eventually comes...you are being released.

- a. You find out however that you are being released because your spouse purchased your freedom with the deed to your home.
- b. You also find out that your employer has been pressured to release you from your job.
- c. And you are not technically “free.” Instead you are sentenced to two years of exile in the south of Iran, far away from your now homeless, income-less, family.

6. Based on a true story...

B. Let us remember the prisoners of North Korea, as though in prison with them.

- 1. One day, as you are going about your business, a black car pulls up next to you.
 - a. You think the man wanted to ask for directions, but other men step out and grab you.
 - b. You re taken to a North Korean prison.
- 2. The first day, you are forced to strip off all your clothes
 - a. They searched every part of your body.
 - b. You are then ordered to put on different clothes that don’t fit and don’t match. (Probably from a previous prisoner.)
- 3. They shave off all of your hair and bring you to your prison cell.
 - a. You are never called by your name.
 - b. Every morning at 8 a.m., they call you by a number “42.”
 - c. To get to them, you have crawl on your elbows through a cat-flap.
 - d. When you stand up, you must keep your head down.
 - e. You are not allowed to look at the guards...you learned that the hard way
- 4. Each and every day begins the same.
 - a. You put your hands behind your back and follow the guards to the interrogation room.
 - b. Each day for an hour, they ask the same questions.
 - c. Every day, you are beaten and kicked—it hurts the most when they hit your ears. They ring for hours, sometimes days.
- 5. At the end of the day, they bring you back to your cell.
 - a. It’s warm during the day, cold at night.
 - b. The space is so small you can barely lie down.
 - c. It isn’t often that you get to lie down anyway.
 - d. They force you to sit on your knees with closed fists and never allow you to open them.
- 6. This goes on every day for a solid year and there is no end in sight: no appeals, no rescuers, no bail, not hope.
 - a. Your skin has not been touched by a single ray of sunlight since you arrived.
 - a. One day they will call you, and you won’t move.
 - b. You will have died here in a North Korean prison.
 - c. They will dispose of your body, and no one will know what has happened to you... and the first new prisoner that comes in will get your clothes and be another “Prisoner 42.”

7. Based on a True Story

C. Let us remember the prisoners of Eritrea, as though in prison with them.

1. You men...

- a. You are arrested for being a Christian and sentenced to 6 months in jail.
- b. You are tied up in front of the other prisoners and hit over the head with a stick for a solid hour.
- c. The message to the other prisoners is clear: the Christian faith will not be tolerated
- d. You are bruised and battered, but medical treatment is not available for Christians so you suffer alone.
- e. You are locked inside a metal shipping container for 2 weeks in solitary confinement.
 1. The temperatures soar inside the container under the heat of the sun
 2. When nightfall comes, the heat quickly becomes extreme cold.
- f. As a prisoner, you are only given a small amount of food every 18 hours, yet you are forced to do strenuous labor collecting stones to be made into building materials.
- g. Six months turns into a year...a year turns into two...and finally after 3 years you are freed from your imprisonment, only to be watched carefully to ensure you don't practice your faith.

2. You women..

- a. You are arrested for singing Christian music and are kept in a metal shipping container without adequate ventilation for the entire duration of your sentence.
- b. Sometimes you are confined with so many women that you can't lie down. The stench and the heat are unbearable.
- c. Then...in a turn of events, you are alone...solitary confinement day after day
 1. You are lonely...there is no Bible...no literature
 2. You decide to sing. In song, you find comfort...until the guards hear.
- c. As punishment, they locked you up for 10 solid months with a mentally ill woman who constantly lunges at you, slaps you, and grabs your hair.
- d. Sleep is almost impossible.
- e. Finally, you are beaten and chained to a pole in the desert sun for days.
 1. Your legs atrophy due to the torture and the conditions of your imprisonment.
 2. You are released, on medical grounds...lame, but free.

3. Both true stories...I will have one linked to FB.

Remember my imprisonment

1. Think of, consider, and meditate on...
2. Hebrews 13:3 *Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.*

2. To bear in mind with the purpose of assisting or relieving.

Matthew 25:40 *The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'*

1. Specifically about "being in prison" and us visiting Him
2. Not in jail for murder but for Christ

How can we remember in this way...with the purpose of assisting and relieving?

- A. We can pray.
 - 1. VOM app
 - 2. Open Doors app
- B. We can sign petitions
- C. We can write letters to those in prison. Voice of the Martyrs

3. To put in mind; to remind

Remember my imprisonment can mean...let my imprisonment be in the forefront of your mind.

- 1. Be reminded of my sufferings!
- 2. Don't forget me
- 3. This do in remembrance of me...

Throughout Scripture we are reminded that we are one church, one body, part of the family of God

- 1. Sons and Daughters by adoption, joint heirs with Jesus
- 2. Matthew 12:46-50 *While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. 47 Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." 48 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."*

Remember my imprisonment...let it be in your mind.

- 1. When you understand and truly grasp that persecuted believers are part of the church, body, and family you belong to, remembering the prisoner becomes part of your DNA.
- 2. If it was your mom, dad, sister, brother, son, or daughter, you would be burdened! You would pray.
- 3. It is your family...blood kin...brought into the same family by the most precious blood in the world: the blood of Jesus.

Conclusion:

Let us remember them this morning.

- 1. Pray
- 2. Offering/video
- 3. Communion
- 4. Baptism/Closing—Tom