

The background of the image is a photograph of a stone wall and floor, likely in a prison or dungeon. The wall is made of large, rectangular stone blocks, some of which are weathered and discolored. The floor is also made of stone blocks, arranged in a pattern. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights, creating a somber and oppressive atmosphere.

PRISONER

A TRUE STORY

BY ROBERT PRINS

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He had done his job and he had done it well. The new prisoners had been sufficiently beaten with rods and humiliated. The jailor had pushed their mutilated bodies down the dark and slippery stairway, thrown them onto the cold stone floor and locked their feet in stocks. They wouldn't cause any more trouble.

As soon as the men were secure, he made a quick exit from the cell, slammed the door shut behind him and raced back up the stairs gaging from the stench in the dungeon.

With the door closed, it was pitch black down there. They only company they would have would be the rats and the groaning of the other prisoners. That would teach them for releasing a demon possessed girl from her bondage and preaching freedom through Jesus Christ. The jailor took a welcome gasp of fresh air.

A jailor learns to sleep through a lot of noise. He also learns to filter out the good noises from the bad, knowing when he needs to be awake and when he can continue to sleep. Tonight, the usual shouts

and groans from the prisoners had been replaced with singing. The new prisoners were singing happy songs of praise. His prisoners might have been in a dungeon in the stocks, but their spirits were free.

It was not a good night for sleeping. As he lay there frustrated and awake, an earthquake struck.

Heart pounding, he pulled on his armor, clenched his sword in his hand, and raced for the cells as soon as the shaking had subsided. What he saw stopped him in his tracks: the prison doors were swinging open. The prisoners would have escaped by now. Trapped. He felt like he was a prisoner in his own prison.

Drawing his sword, he prepared to kill himself. Escaped prisoners would cost his life. Better he took his own life than the Romans deal to him.

A voice stopped him. One of the singing prisoners, reassuring him that no one had escaped.

It was then that the jailor realized that he was the one who had been taken prisoner. A prisoner of the Roman system. A prisoner of hate and violence. A prisoner of sin. A prisoner of circumstance. His prisoners were free even when they were in chains.

“What must I do to be saved?” he asked.

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The jailor had done his job well. The prisoners were secure. But when singing and praise came ringing from the cell, the jailor began to wonder who was free and who the prisoners really were.

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