



Ocala, FL

I was twenty-two when I caught this charge. I was pregnant with my second daughter and knew that I would be facing prison time and that I would not be part of my daughter's life for some years, possibly fifteen years. I was very grieved in spirit, anxious and completely broken when I finally got to prison. I was just so, so broken, so hurt, so worried. I came to the firm conclusion that while in prison, I would seek the Lord with all my heart, because that's the only thing that would give me peace. I knew the Lord before prison, but did not follow Him, which is what led me here. For the first few weeks I was in prison all I did was pray to God, read His Word, and cry out to Him. I just couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel. I felt broken, hopeless, and the only peace and hope I got was when I read His Word. After a few weeks of going to church services, crying out to God, and staying in His Word, I went to a particular church service, one that would change my life forever. Prior to this service, I kept seeing the verse, "Spiritual blessings in heavenly places" found in Eph. 1:3. In little pamphlets and Scripture cards, it was like this verse kept coming to me, and literally "popping out" to me. But when I walked into the chapel that day, I could feel His presence, and all I wanted to do was worship Him in song and cry. A song came on, and the words to the song were talking about how God's will for our life is best, and how the singer was sorry for not following the Lord. So I'm standing in the pew, eyes closed, hands lifted, crying my eyes out, telling the Lord I

was sorry, and repenting, and asking Him to help me; and boom, in that second, I had this vision, this revelation if you will. I do believe I was transported to a "Heavenly place" and everything was white, and all I see is me. I'm very skinny, as if I'd been fasting, and my clothes were torn, like sackcloth, and I was hunched over, with this torn rag in my hands, and the torn rag had tangible things on it, like a sphere, pyramid, cylinder, and cube. These things represented my anxieties, my hurt, my deep pain, my expectations, my shame, and my hopelessness. It was like I knew exactly what each thing was or symbolized as if I could put these spiritual burdens into a tangible, touchable thing. So I'm holding all these things and all I feel in my body and spirit is brokenness and pain. I'm so weary and tired, I feel like I don't want to carry these burdens anymore, so I look down at my dirty, torn clothes and I fall on my knees and place the cloth of things on the ground. In that exact moment, like immediately, I was transformed into the child figure of myself and I FELT it. I was running, my hands wide open. The feelings of loneliness and abandonment and pain were all gone, all I felt was this intense desire to be loved. I was running forward, and Jesus was in front of me. He was so bright and He had his arms wide open, waiting to embrace me. I felt so light, so free, and when I finally reached His arms and ran into them, He embraced me, I felt so much love, I felt complete and whole and loved. All I ever wanted. Eventually I opened my eyes and I couldn't believe what had just happened. But that was a spiritual blessing in

heavenly places, how I came to Him heavy burdened, weary, and how when I finally laid it at His feet, He transformed me into a child and loved me and completed me. That vision was the best moment of my life and from there on out my heart has just wanted to feel His love more than anything. **A.B.**

Livingston, TX

So a couple of times this year already I was feeling like I was not spending enough time in the Word. However, God has shown me that it's not about the amount of time as much as it's about the kind of time I spend in His Word. So He led me to Matthew chapter one, the genealogy of Jesus Christ. I stopped at verse 17 and I am compelled to go no further. So I look back over the verses and asked the Lord to show me what He wants me to see. I look at who's there, and recall some of their Old Testament stories. Then it hits me. All these people were part of the plan so much bigger than themselves. In spite of the events of their lives, regardless of who they were, or what they were doing, they were important in the plan. Rahab the prostitute was part of the plan, she was significant. The message became clear. God has a plan in action. No matter what I've done, or didn't do. I'm a part of it, and it leads to something important. I look at the list of people in Matthew chapter 1 verse 1-17. Everybody is part of the plan, but not everybody is part of the promise. I look at the people who are not listed, and this does not make them insignificant. They were part of a great plan. But those listed are a part of the promise. So is your name written in

the Lamb's Book of Life as part of the promise? Or are you just a part of the plan. You can choose this day whom you will serve. Choose wisely. You already are part of the plan. Get in on the promise. **J.J.**

Avenal, CA

I grew up in Fresno California. I joined the military in 2005 and received an honorable discharge in 2009. After the military, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in law-enforcement. I eventually got hired with the probation department in my county and at this point life was good. I bought my first house for my family, and thought I had it all. The house, the cars, the beautiful family, the white picket fence out front - the "American dream". Little did I know I was suffering from PTSD, severe depression, anxiety, and deep insomnia. My drinking began to increase and so did my depression, I became more isolated from my wife and kids, and had this huge hole inside that couldn't be filled. So I tried filling it with more alcohol, more over-time gave me more money, and then began cheating on my wife in hopes maybe another woman would fill that void. Little did I know, this was a hole only God could fill. I continued this way for years. I didn't think I had a problem, because I was still excelling in my career. I bought a bigger home and on the outside life was good, but on the inside I was battling a war that was bigger than me. Eventually I lost everything, my job, my house, my car, and my family; well, it's hanging on by the grace of God. I landed myself with two separate arrests involving alcohol, which I began fighting in court. I was defeated, I felt hopeless, and didn't want to live anymore. But there was this one night I was sitting in my apartment alone, when something inside told me to drop on my knees and cry out

to God. So I did. I cried like I never cried before, and told God to please do something, because I didn't want to live like this anymore. A few days later, the cops were knocking on my door with a warrant to arrest me. Little did I know God was working in my life. I was taken to my new cell, a cell that God wanted me in, a cell that was occupied by a Christian brother who brought me to Christ. There's so much more to my story- which would take pages to write, but what I want to say is, all glory to God for the man I am today. I am off all mental health medication, been sober for two years, and have never been happier. God has used me in here, and I know he's going to use me when I get out next year. God bless you all! **S.A.**

Abilene, TX

Growing up in a small place in West Dallas was never easy for a Mexican and going to school was the hardest thing for me because I did not even know how to read and write. Everyone would make fun of me and I never took on that feeling well so I dropped out as soon as I could. Hanging out with the bad kids was so much easier and they never cared if I could not read or write because all we would do is go to the store and steal anything that we wanted and then brag about it at the end like it was the thing to do. Well, as I got older the crime got bigger and by that time fast money and women was the thing to do. Well, over the years people left and I started to feel this pain that I could not understand but I remember waking up in jail looking at the four walls asking God for help because no one else would come to help me. I got out only to do the same thing, and then I would wake up with more and more time in jail to see that no one really cared to even come see me for fifteen minutes to let me know that I was not forgotten and

that's when I had to learn the hard way. I'm forty years old now and I've been in and out of prison and this is my fourth time in prison. I can say that God never gave up on me. He was with me the whole time and never let me go at all. I learned how to read through the Bible and write through letters to those I loved. I have found a little heaven on planet earth. Hope is what I call it and soon I will be able to give back for all the wrong I have done and do something good for this world. I never in my life thought God would use me this way but I have to say that it is so much better than the way I was living. So I'm here till everyone knows that there is a better way, a better life, a little heaven on planet earth and it starts with you. **E.R.**

Thy Will Be Done

It may seem hard to say sometimes,
When trials and troubles come,
But then is it not a consolation, to say,
"Father, thy will be done?"

Even when affliction comes
And He takes away some loved one,
Is it not a comfort, to say,
"Thy will O, God, be done?"

Though the clouds are dark around us,
And our pathway drear and lone,
Oh! is it not sweet to say
"Father in heaven, thy will be done?"

When joy, pleasure and happiness,
Profusely to us come.
We are not slow to say,
"Father, thy will be done."

Still it is the same kind Father,
That sends of joy some, of sorrow
some,
And ought we not always say,
"Father, thy will be done?"

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