

## ***Day 37 Devotion***

*Let me have silence, and I will speak, and come on me what may. I will take my flesh in my teeth and put my life in my hand. See, he will kill me; I have no hope; but I will defend my ways to his face. This will be my salvation, that the godless shall not come before him. Listen carefully to my words, and let my declaration be in your ears. I have indeed prepared my case; I know I shall be vindicated.*

Job 13:13-18

*Let no one deceive you with empty words, ...Therefore do not be associated with them.*

Ephesians 5: 6-7

Mack was standing at his mother's grave, grieving, and shackled with a prison officer nearby. These were difficult days - his receiving the news, preparing for the trip to Darien, and seeing all his relatives. What he remembers most about the sad occasion, however, was his niece at his side looking up at him and asking, "Uncle Mack when you coming home?" "When?" This question was seared in his mind because there was no answer. He had only served twenty years of a life sentence.

How was he surviving in prison for life? His story was much like Job's who refused to curse his god and die. His mother had been a praying mother; those gathered were a praying family; and Mack too was a praying son. He had in his youth accepted the fate pronounced on him by the legal system as from god, because he had sinned and had broken the law. (But who among us have not fallen short of the mark?) In prison he had adapted to life inside, accepted his sentence, and still prayed.

On July 21, 2015 he received a letter from the Southern Law Center for Human Rights. The "Revisions to Georgia's Drug Recidivist Law: House Bill 328's Parole Eligibility Provisions" had just become effective on July first. Would this finally be the answer to his niece's question?

After serving twenty years for a non-violent drug offense, he had his prayer answered. Having met all the requirements for parole, he was one of only seven released in Georgia.

This was a small reprieve among the thousands of young black men caught up in a modern form of repression - the mass incarceration of minorities. In this system, minorities are robbed of their freedom with sentences that far outweigh the crimes they committed. Applying such sentences for drugs is systemic and insidious racism. It even reaches beyond prison, because they have lost the right to vote, the way to address the system that represses them.

Johnnie Washington, Grant Chapel

*Heavenly Father, we pray for our sisters and brothers who, like Paul of old, are in prison. Bless them with the strength of your presence. Whether guilty or innocent your Son treated visiting them as visiting him. Speak your truth through them and their plights that we may be open to your mercy and have a passion for justice transformed. So may your Spirit break us out of confinement. Amen*

**RESOURCE:** [Mass Incarceration – Southern Center for Human Rights \(schr.org\)](http://schr.org)