

Blue Ridge Brandmarks

“...I bear on my body the brandmarks of Jesus” - Gal. 6:17

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Not Chained

National Public Radio (NPR) reported this week that the recent fall of the Gadhafi regime in Libya resulted in the release of several American who were being held in Libyan prisons. The news report included the testimony of two American men who experienced the prison system of a ruthless dictator from the inside.

The first was a journalist in his early 30s from Maryland, Matthew VanDyke. He went to Libya earlier this year in an attempt “to do whatever I could to help the revolution”. While out with a group of rebels in March, his party was ambushed and he literally never knew what hit him. “...Next thing I know, I wake up in a cell, there's a man being tortured in the room above me. I could hear it.”

He describes his six month ordeal in disturbing terms. Although he was not physically abused he lived in constant fear of it. In one prison he had only a 7 foot by 4 foot cell, and he sat and stared at the walls all day. Later he was moved to a larger cell, where he could walk a few steps before turning around and walking back. “So I would [walk back and forth]

all day, with the idea that if I could make myself tired, I could sleep. And if I could sleep I could dream, and in my dreams I wasn't in prison. And then when I'd wake up, the nightmare would begin.” VanDyke felt that his solitary confinement was psychological torture and that not even Gadhafi should have to endure it.

What would you do if you were in such a circumstance? How would you deal with the fear, the filth, the monotony, the loneliness and hopelessness of being imprisoned in a foreign country by a notorious government that considers you to be an enemy?

A second American released this week had what the NPR report described as an “experience ... very different from VanDyke's.” He is Richard Peters, from Idaho, and he was in Tripoli negotiating a business contract when the rebel fighting broke out. He was driving east to offer training to the rebels when he was captured and imprisoned.

He was also imprisoned for six months with no expectation of release. He experienced the same isolation. Though his cell was slightly larger than

Not Chained - from Page 1 ►

VanDyke's, Peters is over sixty years old. Yet his assessment of his daily life in a Libyan prison was this, "My agenda was pretty positive..."

What made the difference? He had something VanDyke did not, a Bible. Not only that, Richard Peters knew how to use it. He said he spent in time in solitary confinement "working out, reading the word, and praying to God."

Let's consider this for just for a moment. Where did that Bible come from? Was it just amazing good fortune that Peters was assigned to the only prison cell in Libya which happened to contain a Bible? Is there some here-to-fore unknown Gideon's society providing Bibles to every inmate in a Muslim dictatorship's prisons? I have serious doubts about that. I am convinced that there was a Bible with Peters in his prison cell because there was a Bible with Peters when his was captured by the Libyan authorities.

It was not just any Bible, either. The NPR report states, "he also read his Bible regularly." It was HIS Bible. I submit to you that there is a big difference between HAVING a Bible and OWNING a Bible. A Bible is not yours just because it is on your shelf, or you bought it, or it was given to you, or your name is written in it, or even engraved on the cover. A Bible is not yours unless you have taken possession of it, so that you know what it is and what its value is. It is not yours until you know your way around it and you spend time there regularly.

In real estate, the principle of adverse possession means that if someone holding no title to a piece of property uses the property for long enough (15 years in

Virginia) and the property's rightful owners do nothing to dismiss them, the "squatters" actually gain ownership of the property. The law recognizes that the land belongs to those who are actually using it. It is similar with God's word. There are many copies of the Bible that have no owner because no one is living in and making use of them. On the other hand, there are a faithful few who OWN any Bible that may fall into their hands, and who OWN God's word even when every physical copy of God's word has been taken away from them.

Lessons Learned

- If you never want to experience solitary confinement, then develop a close relationship with Someone whose presence can never be taken away from you.
- If you want to make sure you have a Bible with you no matter what happens, always have a Bible with you.
- If you want to ensure that your Bible is capable of comforting and strengthening you in every difficulty, then start taking advantage of its comfort and strength in the difficulties you are facing right now.

Don't be like Robinson Crusoe who spent months on a desert island with five copies of the Bible before it occurred to him to turn to the Book, and then to the Author of the Book, to bring him from a life of wild rebellion to a life of content devotion.

If I were Richard Peters, there are many passages that I would want to bookmark or memorize. Here are a few:

Rev. 2:10 Do not fear any of those

Cont. on Page 3 ►

Not Chained - from Page 2 ►

things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Psalm 69:30-33 I will praise the name of God with a song, And will magnify Him with thanksgiving. 31 This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bull, Which has horns and hooves. 32 The humble shall see this and be glad; And you who seek God, your hearts shall live. 33 For the LORD hears the poor, And does not despise His prisoners.

Psalm 79:9-11 Help us, O God of our salvation, For the glory of Your name; And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, For Your name's sake! 10 Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Let there be known among the nations in our sight The avenging of the blood of Your servants which has been shed. 11 Let the groaning of the prisoner come before You; According to the greatness of Your power Preserve those who are appointed to die;

Psalm 107:8-16 Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! 9 For He satisfies the longing soul, And fills the hungry soul with goodness. 10 Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, Bound in affliction and irons-- 11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, And despised the counsel of the Most High, 12 Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; They fell down, and there was none to help. 13 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. 14 He brought them out of

darkness and the shadow of death, And broke their chains in pieces. 15 Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! 16 For He has broken the gates of bronze, And cut the bars of iron in two.

Acts 5:17-21 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, 18 and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. 19 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." 21 And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught.

Acts 16:22-25 Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. 23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. 24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

2 Tim. 2:8-9 Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.

◀Brent Paschall▶

[SOURCE:

<http://www.npr.org/2011/09/01/140116105/americans-emerge-after-months-in->

SEPTEMBER 2011 DUTY ROSTER

Weekday	SUN	WED	SUN	WED	SUN	WED	SUN	WED	SUN
Date	9/4	9/7	9/11	9/14	9/18	9/21	9/25	9/28	10/2
Opening Prayer	Leo R.		Matt M.		Ed M.		Randy F.		Bill A.
Morning Message	Larry P.		Don H.		Charlie K.		Eric B.		Alan M.
Announcements	Matt M.	John M.	Jimmy F.	Jimmy F.	Leo R.	Brent P.	David T.	Matt M.	Larry P.
Leading Songs	Alan M.	Leo R.	Larry P.	Eric B.	Bill A.	Brad F.	Matt M.	John M.	Charlie K.
First Prayer	Ed M.	Eric B.	Leo R.	Leo R.	David T.	Kevin H.	Tim P.	Larry P.	James M.
Lead at Lord's Table & Contribution	Jimmy F.		David T.		Randy F.		Alan M.		Ed M.
Assist	Jeremy P.		Bill A.		Jerry D.		James M.		David T.
Assist	Charlie K.		Kevin H.		Brad F.		Ed M.		Cody M.
Assist	Eric B.		Cody M.		Don H.		John M.		Kevin H.
Read Scripture	Don H.		Jerry D.		James M.		Charles K.		Brad F.
Preaching	Brent P.		Brent P.		Brent P.		Brent P.		Brent P.
Wed. Exhortation		Alan M.		Larry P.		Jimmy F.		Kevin H.	
Closing Prayer	Randy F.	Brent P.	Tim P.	John M.	Matt M.	James M.	Jimmy F.	Randy F.	Jerry D.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Sunday

9:15 - Morning Message
 10:00 - Bible classes for all ages
 11:00 - Worship

Wednesday

7:30 - Bible Classes for all ages

Elders:

Jim Fields, Alan Moeller & Leo Rodrigue

Deacons:

Eric Bridge & John Malloy

Evangelist:

Brent Paschall

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 class material at

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