

Pastor Dilson's Letter From Prison #1

February 6, 2013

*Very dear and precious brethren:*

*As you know, today is the 6th, and it has been 90 days since we were imprisoned because of the Word of Truth, because of the Way that we follow and the One in whom we believe.*

*We are certain, however, that our affliction throughout this time is very distant from the afflictions that Jesus suffered for us. We bless and praise our Lord because these singular afflictions have served for the salvation of several prisoners, even as we have witnessed to many about His Lordship over all and everyone. We have had opportunity to distribute hundreds of Bibles, pamphlets and New Testaments. There are many stories and experiences to tell. I know that I have many things to share with all of you.*

*For 31 years, I have shared the good news of the Gospel, not only in Brazil, but also for 22 years here in Africa. Now the Advocate and Judge have granted me a new audience. I have been chained (not literally, but imprisoned) together with people to whom I would never have had access for this sharing in another situation. And I would certainly never have chosen to be here of my own free and spontaneous will. However, during my three months here, I have seen many experiencing this new life and others who have become doubly free (what joy!!!). We pray that the Word preached may find shelter in these thirsty hearts and that the "birds," the "thorns," and the "rocks" will not destroy this seed but, rather, that the Lord may allow growth in His time.*

*Throughout the most anguishing days, the Lord gave us strength (I speak for myself and also for sister Zeneide) to be able to encourage and continue praying, feeding and dressing several others, who are suffering afflictions even greater than ours, with the additional aggravation that they do not know to whom to go for help. Our consolation is that Christ is "chained" together with us (He is sovereign and free; nevertheless, I refer to the fact that He is present with us every day and in every moment), and He shows me this in many ways, also through the love of the brethren who come from afar to meet with us on Mondays and Fridays, even when it is only for 5–10 short minutes.*

*I feel Jesus speaking to me through each phrase sent, each e-mail, each encouraging word on Facebook, each prayer, each plate of food or treat sent, each contribution manifesting a desire to help us with the general expenses that we are having, and even with the help towards building a new cell so as to help other prisoners to be transferred and relieve their suffering with being unable to sleep (there are 45 people in my cell, and I only have 30 cm of space for sleeping – imagine a cell of the same size, with 200 people. It is almost impossible to understand the suffering of these men).*

*This love has made an impact on the entire prison and even on the court, because the judge mentioned the fact that we are receiving so many visitors. He was impressed.*

*I have asked the Lord that these "chains" may serve as consolation for each person who has participated and prayed for this cause – and that this may help you to give more value to Jesus and to His presence in your lives. May you enjoy his love, presence, and peace more, regardless of your circumstances. Make*

*this great love of Jesus known to each person who comes near you, and feel privileged when you suffer for His name.*

*I can affirm that my imprisonment is known here all the way from the President of the Republic down to the street cleaner. The newspapers have published that we (Zeneide and I) are called a “diabolical couple,” and because we have been portrayed through the country’s two major newspapers, plus the local radio stations, we have come to be hated by an entire nation. Nevertheless, those with whom we have had contact always tell us: “You are people of God,” and others say, “This prison will never be the same after you have been here.”*

*One after the other within my own cell has come to know me, as I share food, fruits, medicines. They become impressed and start asking, “But why do you do this? You are sharing with me? You remembered me?”*

*For Christmas, I asked Marli [his wife] to buy a few presents to give to these men to give to their children. Neither wives nor children can expect anything from these imprisoned men. I can’t express the joy they felt when they got those little gifts. How good and joyous it is to be able to share with those who have nothing.*

*I share my 30 cm [1 ft.] wide mattress with another man. We had two, one on top of the other, because there was no room. The man in front of us also had two, but he was having terrible back pain and couldn’t sleep. So he asked me for one of mine. I got up and gave it to him. Now I sleep with my colleague on a 2.5 cm [1 in.] high mattress, and the other one is serving the other so that he can sleep better. May God be praised! I have felt the Lord making my mattress softer.*

*There have been days in which I shared my food with 12 other prisoners, and do you know what is best? I haven’t lost a single kilo. Two Italian prisoners have been freed. They were so thankful for all the help I gave, and all the encouragement and prayers, that they sent me cheese, salami, and other treats when they left. In a little while, 43 prisoners will share some of this blessing with me.*

*I am sharing these details so as to encourage you, and not discourage you in any way. No matter the size of the struggle you are facing, know that Jesus is with you, going through the difficulty, until the hour of liberation. Seek Him, love Him, spend time with Him, get to know Him well, and your suffering will be nothing. He will be your safe anchor, your salvation, and He that works on behalf of His own. His Holy Name will be glorified!*

*The judge who was questioning me finally said: “You are not an association of criminals.... You are helping children in situations of risk.” When he saw the children, he was even more impressed with the changes we were bringing to the lives of each one of them. A lawyer said: “These children live better than most of us” and afterwards told me, “You, pastor, should receive a medal for what you are doing among us and for these children, not be in prison!” We truly hope that justice and truth will prevail!*

*This prison cannot hold me back, neither can it detain Christ and His Gospel. On the contrary, this awakens in me an even greater love and passion for this work and for the Master. My heart is grateful to all of you who have, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, been imprisoned with us. I thank you once again for all the affection, prayers, and even contributions. May our Lord bless you and also*

*remember your afflictions, relieving you of the suffering through which you may be passing, even if it be small. I well know that He will be pleased to help you. Receive a warm hug from us. May our good and wonderful Lord console you and let you feel His presence.*

*Pray for Friday (February 9) when a father who asked that his son might be benefitted by the project will be heard. Also for Monday, the 11th, when we finally will enter our plea for habeas corpus.*

*In the marks of Christ, your prisoner,  
Rev. José Dílon*