

Released!

God took this inmate from solitary confinement to a life of new freedom in Christ Jesus.

By Floyd Halcombe

I was in Mexico, driving a stolen car toward the United States border, running from the authorities. Wanted fliers with my name on them had been distributed to every state in the Union. As I crossed the border, I was arrested. They extradited me to Missouri and charged me with a long list of crimes. Facing years in prison, any hope of being a free man again seemed very remote. At the age of thirty-two, my life of crime had come to a screeching halt. All I had left was a wrecked life. My home, my self-respect, and my freedom were all gone.

It seems strange, being brought up in a good home as I was, that I should have been ensnared in a life of crime. But it had all started with my keeping the wrong company and going to the wrong places.

After I was married, I became interested in horse racing in Florida. Later I was introduced to the Purple Mob in Detroit, Michigan, and soon became one of them. This was one of the worst decisions of my life. I associated with some of the most noted gangsters in the country, covering territory between Michigan and Florida. With each passing day I became more deeply involved in crime.

The life of a fugitive

In one of the midwestern states I went to work for a car agency that was dealing in stolen cars. Soon I became a fugitive from justice. I was beginning to reap a little of what I had sown. There wasn't a place I could go that the law wasn't after me.

My life became a series of arrests and imprisonments. On one occasion when I was locked in solitary confinement, a man came to me and said, "If you will pray to Satan, he will get you out of here." That was a terrible thing, but in desperation I did it.

In thirty days I was out, but there was an awful catch to it—I could not call my soul my own. I was bound under the influence of Satan. I discovered that when you get under the power of Satan, he does everything he can to keep you in his bondage. I did things I never dreamed I would do.

It was after being in and out of jails and prisons for years that I fled to Mexico. When I returned across the border into the United States and the FBI picked me up, I was tried and sentenced to a term longer than I could possibly ever live. Doomed to spend the rest of my life in prison without any hope of pardon or parole, I became very bitter.

A ray of hope

It was during this time that a ray of hope came my way. Two ministers from the Apostolic Faith Church visited me. I also started to receive the Apostolic Faith paper from Portland, Oregon. A man who was in the prison for murder was converted, and he encouraged me to seek the Lord. I began to wonder, Was there hope for one who had wasted his life as I had? I knew that Jesus had saved the thief on the cross and others who had spent their lives in sin, but could He save me?

Before I could find out, I got mixed up in a prison riot. I almost lost my life, and once again I found myself in solitary confinement—an eight-by-ten-foot cell with a huge iron door. My bed was the concrete floor and I was



fed one meal every third day. Severe punishment was meted out for any infraction of the rules. At times, I was hung by my wrists.

The light from Heaven

It was in this condition that, like the prodigal son in the Bible, I came to myself. Kneeling in the dark, on the hard concrete floor of that prison dungeon, I called out to God. A light from Heaven came right through that steel cell and pierced my soul. Words fail me to tell of the radical and wonderful change the Lord made in my life. Surrounded by criminals and murderers, I proved it is possible, by God's grace, to live a Christian life in the penitentiary.

Later, an unusual thing happened. One of the ministers from the Apostolic Faith Church came to see me again. Normally a person can't get a pass when in solitary confinement, but I was given a pass to visit with him. I am thankful to God from the depths of my heart for bringing me into contact with him. I went back to my cell and thought about what he had told me. I prayed, "Lord, if this is the people You want me to follow, show it to me." Miraculously, before long I was released!

After leaving prison I went to a small city about fifty miles from St. Louis, Missouri, to be with some friends and near my mother. However, I soon felt the need to be among Christians. I moved to St. Louis, and there at the Apostolic Faith Church, I found a real home among God's people.

Restored to an honorable life

The Lord restored me to an honorable way of life, and He gave me the grace to straighten up my crooked past. I now have hundreds of Christian friends. It has been my privilege to travel the length and breadth of the United States, witnessing for the Lord in jails, penitentiaries, and churches.

I have had the opportunity, since coming into the Gospel, to witness to many of my relatives and see God come into their lives. They could not help but marvel at what God had done for me. Yet one relative said, "If you had gone to a psychiatrist or a priest, he could have done this for you." I responded, "There is no man who could have done this for me. It was only through the power of Jesus Christ."

If He could change my ruined life, He can do the same for anyone who will call upon Him.

Floyd Halcombe was a faithful member of the Apostolic Faith Church in St. Louis, Missouri, until his decease.

