

# Speaking to the soul



**Supporting others**



**Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies. Hebrews 13:3**

I am so grateful that when I was at university I was encouraged to visit the local prison once a week. We visited the young offenders' wing and so I was meeting people of my own age, which was such a valuable experience. I had never met prisoners before and so I assumed that they would be completely different from me. They weren't. They were intelligent, interesting and amusing and it was fascinating to hear the story of their lives.

Prisons, in the days of the early Church, would have been completely different from anything that I encountered. The Romans normally stripped prisoners naked and flogged them prior to their imprisonment. Their wounds would not have received medical attention and the prisoners were expected to sit in painful leg or wrist chains. Their filthy clothing was not replaced even in winter. Prisons were often underground and would have been stinking and despairing places. There was no possibility of prisoners being visited and as many Christians were imprisoned the writer knew it was vital that they be actively remembered and prayed for.

Rough justice was the order of the day and many Christians were physically mistreated by the authorities. The writer to the Hebrews suggests that the church members should try to imagine what they were going through. This reminds us of Paul's words to the church in Corinth when he spoke of the body of Christ. "If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honoured, all the parts are glad" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

These things might seem far removed from our own situation. But the principle holds good that we must continually remember our Christian brothers and sisters and stand with them whatever they are going through.

## **QUESTION**

In what ways have you been able to support other Christians as they go through difficult times?

## **PRAYER**

Loving Father, thank you for your Church and for the privilege of standing with my brothers and sisters as they face suffering and other difficulties. Amen

*Photograph - Spring hopefully*

