

Prayer for your day in court (when you're guilty)

Dear Father, I'm coming to You about my upcoming day in court. I realize I'm guilty, but my flesh wants out or with a minimum sentence, preferably without probation, if possible. I think I've learned my lesson and will be careful to avoid doing anything stupid from now on.

Of course I've said that many times before. I hate to say this, but maybe I'm not ready. Maybe I don't know what I really need. Maybe, as Jeremiah said, I don't know my own heart, and that issues are hidden deep inside me that will come up under certain pressures, temptations, and with some of my friends, that will overcome my good intentions and lead me back to the same stuff that got me here. (Jer 17:9)

Maybe it boils down to this: do I want freedom, or do I want to really change, no matter what? You know exactly what I need, and since I'm praying to You, I guess it's important that I pray according to Your will, because as the Bible says, if I pray according to Your will, You are listening and will answer. Which means that if I do not pray according to Your will, my praying is useless. (1 Jn 5:14-15)

But Your Word also says that if I abide or remain in You, and Your words abide in me, I can ask what I desire, and it will be done for me. And if I delight myself in You, You'll give me the desires of my heart. (Jn 15:7; Ps 37:4)

Putting it all together means, apparently, that when my heart and Your heart get together in agreement, I'll see answers to my prayers. Like James says about asking "amiss" according to what our flesh wants, that when we pray selfishly, we should not expect an answer. Because You jealously guard us, wanting us for Yourself, to be our God, our Father, our Savior, our Source, our Deliverer. (James 4:1-5)

Okay, deep inside I really want to change more than I want freedom, because I know I'll never be free until I'm free from my own selfish craving. So if it takes more jail time, I'm willing. If I'm not willing, then please make me willing. Because I'm tired of my sinful, me-centered lifestyle. If it's possible to really change by getting out of jail, then I gladly accept that.

But if not, then I submit to Your chastening, the discipline and correction You have allowed in order to get my attention, get me into Your Word, break my stubbornness, and teach me how to listen, not only to You, but to the needs of others, especially those I'm responsible for in any way.

I realize also that change begins right here in jail. Because I won't be any different outside than I am in here. If I don't take time in here to talk to You and listen quietly for Your voice and reading, studying, and meditating in Your Word, I realize I'm kidding myself if I think I'll do it when I get out.

And if I think I'll start going to church when I get out when I'm not faithful in jail services except when the speaker I like is there or when they're showing a movie, I'm also deceived about my own heart.

Your Word says a person who is *satisfied* with life and doesn't have any need, or who fills his needs with things other than You, doesn't care even for the best You have. But those who are hungry and thirsty spiritually and emotionally will be satisfied even with what tastes "bitter." (Pr 27:7; Is 4:17; 55:1-2; Mt 5:6)

So Lord, I confess I've been wasting a lot of time in jail with things that keep me occupied and satisfied, but not with You. I'm beginning to see now why I may not be ready for freedom. I'm not using the time I have responsibly, so what makes me think I'll change if I get my freedom? Maybe that's my whole problem: I haven't taken responsibility for my life, my time, my relationships, the opportunities I've had, the abilities You've given me, the resources I had at my disposal, and the grace You gave me when I was free to run with it for Your glory.

Well that settle it. I mean this with all my heart: please do *not* let me have what my flesh wants. Eternity is forever, and I can't afford to get my way for a few brief years that flit by in seconds on Your clock. So please, Father, You know what's best for me. Keep me here or any other correctional facility as long as You know I

need to stay. Be as hard on me as You know it will take to break me and truly hold my attention until it becomes my lifestyle.

I turn the judge, the state, and my legal help over to You. If the *king's* heart is in your hand and You turn it wherever You want, then the judge and anybody who can decide the outcome of my life is also in Your hands, and I hereby give You total permission to turn them any way You choose for one single purpose: whatever it takes to accomplish Your perfect will in my life! (Pr 21:1)

Not only that, but help me, *please help me*, to begin giving You thanks and praise for everything You allow—good and bad—as a result of Your chastening and correction. Because I truly don't want to waste any more time going around the same vicious circle, repeating the same unlearned lessons until everybody knows I'm hopeless and will never change. (1 Thes 5:18; Heb 13:15)

I refuse that verdict; by Your grace I *shall* change, and to prove it I'm *embracing* the cross and the yoke You have attempted to put on me as a training instrument. I thank you for correctional officers who don't treat me with the respect I think I deserve, for family members who may never understand me, for the people who have rejected or abused me, for police officers and anyone else in the legal system who've betrayed me, lied, or distorted the law and my legal rights. Because I *know* You allow all these things to test us, strengthen us, and conform us to Your Image, the way You created us. (Mt 11:29; Lu 9:23)

Help me to never again complain about the jail conditions, the food, my roomies, neglect by staff in any department, including medical, property, classification, programs, visitation, chapel, public defenders, and any and everything else You allow to help me bring my flesh under the rod of Your correction, Your shepherd's staff. (Ps 23; Pr 22:15; 23:13; Is 10:5)

Help me not only to not complain, but to actually get excited that You love me enough allow these things. Don't stop until I genuinely get in the habit of responding with *joy* and even *laughter* at absolutely *everything* that used to bother me or give me a bad attitude. Because even if Satan himself is involved in trying to destroy me, my greatest weapon against him and his demons is not anxiety but praise and worship. (Eph 5:20; Php 4:6; Col 3:17; Job 1:21; Ps 34:1; 149:1-9)

Please, my faithful Father, my loving, caring Shepherd, fill me with this vision and heart until it changes my whole outlook on life. Because that's my whole problem. Everything has revolved around me and what I want and what I think I deserve and my rights, so no wonder I keep getting in trouble and things go from bad to worse.

Wow! To think the cure could be so simple! I don't need a drug program or anger management, but if there's one that You know will truly help me, then I know You'll open the door to it. So until then, everything around me I'm going to see as *Your program* designed to deal with the *one thing* I've needed most: an attitude change! (Php 2:5-8)

You, my Lord and King, are my consuming passion, not my own will, but *Your* will! *I know that I know* that from now on, I'm moving and having my being in You, regardless of what happens and where You allow me to end up. I'm no longer the wimp, trying to prop up my ego with stupid masks of pride and things I say to impress others, hiding my fears and insecurity. (Acts 17:28)

I'm Your humble servant, Your child, heir of heavenly glory, not earthly "fools gold." I'm signing up for "Olympic training," confident You have the very best trainers lined up for me, with top-of-the-line "gym equipment." I know You'll give me the grace to endure the training and won't put on me more than I can handle. (Heb 12; 1 Cor 10:12-14; Jam 1:2-4; 1 Pet 4:1-2; 12-14)

Father, I love You; I feel closer to You more than ever, now that I've turned everything over to You. What a huge burden lifted! Yipee! It's a win-win for both of us—and for everybody around me! I can't wait to see what You're going to do next. You've got my attention!

Your disciple and eager student, _____
Inmate prayer when you're virtually innocent

Dear Father, it is so comforting to realize the One who holds the whole universe together, from the biggest galaxies to the tiniest part of an atom (no wonder they call it the *God Particle* because it causes everything to be what it is) is the One who knows the exact truth in my case. As long as You know, it's enough for me.

Lord, I'd rather be in the center of Your tender mercies and in the spotlight of Your grace even here in jail than out on the streets without You. I feel so honored that You would count me worthy of including me among the many millions who have suffered unjustly. (Acts 5:41; 1 Tim 1:4-5; 1 Pet 2:19-21; 4:12-13)

Thank You for what You did for Job when You allowed Satan to all but kill him. For his pain brought to the surface long buried attitudes he had no idea had been hidden there, and when they came to the Light, You enabled Him to deal with them, giving him—and us—the whole secret of Your ways (Job 1-2, 33, 38-42):

That hardship and suffering mellow us, dealing with self-righteousness, allowing us to feel the pain and human weakness of others instead of judging them wrongly. And through the dreaded total silence of Your voice in our lowest pit, we learn to trust You like we never would have otherwise. (Pr 3:5; Ps 40:1-2; Is 50:10)

I realize now that this is how You prepare us for our purpose and destiny, equipping us to share dominion with You in the ages to come. When You seem to abandon us to affliction, injustice, and abuse when we've walked in obedience, serving You faithfully, the darkness is never meant to destroy us, but to wean us from all the other things that keep us from knowing You intimately. (Php 3:10)

I think of the betrayal of Joseph by his brothers, then by his master's wife. If he'd turned bitter, he would have lost the greatest opportunity of his life. For he turned his thirteen years of slavery and prison into a "university degree" that qualified him as the head of Egypt under Pharaoh. (Gen 37-41; Ps 105:16-22)

It thrills me to know that through the betrayal, harshness, and injustice of what others put us through, You make us "more than conquerors," enabling us to handle any situation, not with fear, anger, or arrogance, but with wisdom, faith, patience, and love. Help me forgive as Joseph forgave his brothers, which enabled You to use him to transform them into real men of God. For there are so many around me in this jail who have the same potential but who are full of anger and bitterness. Some need encouragement, while others need to be broken, they are so hard. And here I am, tempted to be anxious about myself, but should be willing and ready to be Your agent here however You need to use me. (Gen 45:5; 50:20; Ps 119:71; Pr 11:30; Lu 12:42-44; Rom 8:28)

For through the horrible injustice You exposed Joseph to, You transformed the very brother who sold him into slavery—Judah—from a low-life who avoided responsibility and almost burned his own daughter-in-law to death for his own sin of lust, into exactly the man you intended from the beginning to fulfil Your highest purpose—a representative of Your mercy and grace, a "royal priest," an example, a prototype, of Your future heirs who will rule and reign with You. (Gen chaps 37, 42-44)

My flesh recoils at the thought that we're made perfect through suffering. I don't like the idea and wish there were some other way. Actually, I felt there was a better way: I had this inner hunch, somehow, that I should be in church. But church was a form of suffering I didn't want—boring sermons, hypocrites, asking for money, fashion show, and no love in a place where "God is love," supposedly. And since I was free to do what I wanted to do, I opted out and did other things in place of "wasting time" in church. (Eph 1:22-23; 2:21-22; 3:17-19; 4:11-16; 5:30-32; Heb 10:25)

Now I understand why suffering makes us perfect: the hardships bring these attitudes to the surface where we can see them for what they are instead of blaming everybody else for *their* attitude. But I realize affliction is not enough unless we take our issues to You, humble ourselves, see things and people from Your viewpoint through Your Word, and learn to trust the Holy Spirit for cleansing and a renewed mind. (Rom 5:3-5; Heb 2:10; 5:8-9)

But that takes *time*. I didn't take time on the outside, so now, even though I've done nothing to deserve being here, You in Your mercy, have given me plenty of it. Time to finally dig deeply into Your Word, time to meditate in it, to soak in Your presence, and to actually experience changes taking place deep inside. (Ps 1)

I see now what I could have gotten on the outside had I taken the opportunity and the time. But You said we should forget the

past and look ahead, so I'm doing just that. It is so awesome to have my understanding enlightened so I can see my situation not as a loss, but a priceless *gain*, something I would *never* have gotten for myself without this push. Truly, whom You love, You chasten in order to purify and make whole. (Php 3:7-15; Heb 12:5-17)

I hope I retain this knowledge deep in my heart and until it becomes my permanent lifestyle. Because I see from scripture, especially Paul's writings, that humans need a balance of good times and hard times in order to maintain our strength and focus on You. (Ecc 3:1-11; 9:11; 2 Cor 4:7-18; 12:7-10; 2 Tim 2:3)

From reading the Old Testament I notice that whenever things got too easy, your people seemed to forget You. So You'd release another enemy to afflict them and they'd turn to You. From even Moses to David and Solomon to all the kings, it seems no human has the ability to maintain a close walk with You without some kind of pressure to keep us there. (Dt 8:10-20; Judg 3-4, etc)

No wonder it becomes a way of life in the New Testament, with persecution, beatings, prison, and in the end, martyrdom! Yet in all these things they glorified You and *gloried* in their affliction. They fully understood the deep connection between suffering and purity. (Acts 14:22; 2 Cor 7:18; Heb ch 11; 1 Pet 4:1-4; 12-16)

Daniel is one of my favorites. He walked very close to You, even though he governed right under Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and then under Darius of Medo-Persia. And if he didn't handle things with Holy Spirit wisdom, he could easily end up in a fiery furnace, as his three friends did. They obviously were led by the Spirit, or they wouldn't have survived unharmed, and accompanied by their friend—Your Son! When Daniel also stood up for truth, he ended up in a lions' den. I can't wait to talk to him about this experience when I get there. (Dan chaps 1-5; 6; 1 Cor 13:5-6)

So Father, I thank You a thousand times for this rare privilege. How many people get to go to jail or prison for no legal reason and experience the loss of reputation and mental abuse that follows, toughening them up on the inside like steel? Nobody would dare choose this form of training, though it's worth far more than a Harvard Ph.D. Because they can train the mind, but not the heart and spirit. I would never have chosen this crazy "education," much less pay several hundred thousand for it, which is probably what a Harvard doctorate costs now. (Acts 5:41; 2 Tim 1:5)

To think, You have made me your true *friend* through this ordeal, like Abraham! It's more than I ever dreamed. My whole outlook toward people has changed from seeing them through the eyes of my insecurities, needs, e.g. and my attempt to control and manipulate them. It has taken this experience to understand how under bondage, how miserable and anxious I was, living under the illusion that everybody else needed to change, not I. (Rom 2:10-20)

Now I see people as no different than I am, and how we all need encouragement and support and prayer. And the meanest ones are actually the *most* insecure. This is now my greatest challenge: to allow You to use me to penetrate some of the stone-hearted shells around me who have deep needs inside, who may shed tears in the night or wish they could or do cry, and think—or *know*—nobody cares, or if they did, what could they do? Who wish they'd never been born, yet dread the thought of death, or even "long for death," as Job did. (Job 3; Ps 88; Lam 3:1-42; 2 Cor 1:4; Heb 5:2)

Here I am—immersed right inside the neediest mission field in America. All because of Your grace. I can't thank You enough. All I ask, my Dear Father, is that You keep training and breaking me until You can use me to see major breakthroughs spiritually among those around me. Because some of them have incredible potential to be giants in the Spirit—if only they can behold Your love as You've shown me. (Jn 17; Eph 3:17-19; Php 1:6; 1 Jn 4:7-8)

So how ever long You keep me here, my times are in *Your* hands: not mine, not the states, not the devil's. I'm Yours, Your property, Your temple, Your little missionary here in the Lions' Den with Jesus. Thank You, thank You, thank You! (Job 38; Ps 22:1-22; 31:15; Pr 16:7-9; Eph 1:1-23; Php 2:12-14)

Your boy (girl) _____