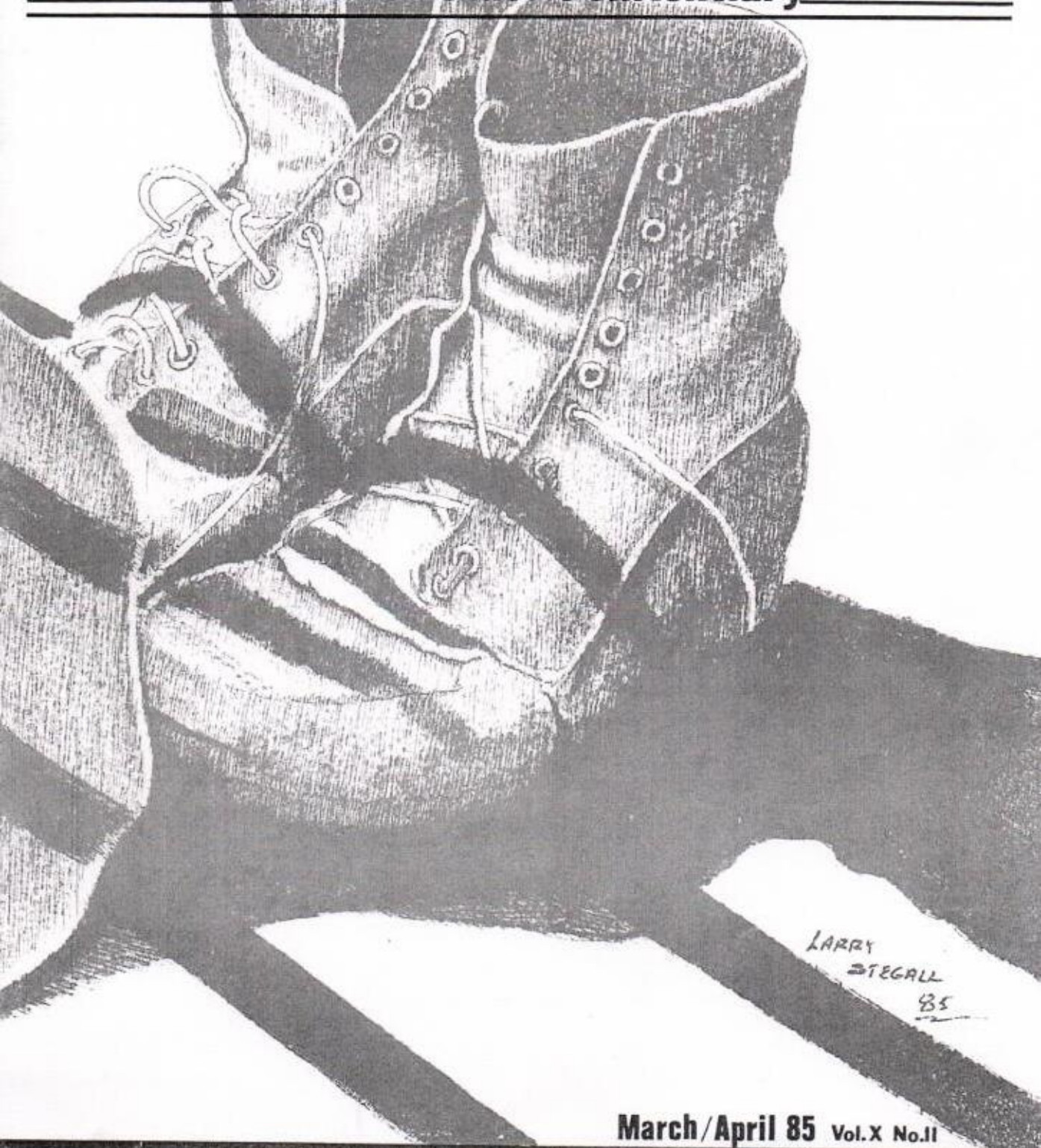


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religion in prison

BY: Tommy Mason

THE CARLIN REVIVAL

"First of all, I believe the Lord--I believe that God saved me by His grace. That's number one. Number two, I believe that God gave me a call to preach, that's the second thing. God called me to preach! My daddy didn't call me, my Momma didn't call me, my church didn't call me. God called me to preach a divine calling. And then, thirdly, I believe the Lord prepared me with schooling and education that I didn't even know I was going to need. Fourthly, I believe that God prepared me by sending me in the belly of the fish--when He sent me to prison. I ran from God, but I couldn't hide from God. A lot of people run from God. Everybody think they can hide from God. Well," the man breathed, "you can run but you can't hide. There's a difference. I ran from God, but I couldn't hide from God. So, the prison experience prepared me. Then, when I got right with God in prison see," he pointed out, "I said well, people can get right with God in prison. I mean just because they're in prison doesn't mean they can't get right with God. So, God put me in prison and I got right with God in prison to prove to me that men in prison can get right and then they can stay straight and stay out." He commented, "So that's how God began to prepare me and then God gave me, He's given me gifts of the spirit, like the gift of administration. I have the gift of administration and He's given me a gift of leadership. These men," he indicated those who had accompanied him, "these laymen recognize it."

Paul Carlin is a man with a mission.

He has faith and he has been blessed with the talent and the boldness to get his foot in doors which more often than not were previously closed to any others. In early 1985, Carlin got his foot in the door of the Louisiana State Penitentiary for the second time. He and his friends from Pearland, Texas brought Paul Carlin's Revival Services to the inmates of the prison.

The group arrived on a Friday. They were dispersed throughout the prison in teams of two. Undaunted by the newness of the area-- by being strangers, they went in the authority of God, with faith that they were doing the will of God. Among the nearly 200 men were a variety of personalities, experiences and lifestyles. All shared a common bond. Each accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour and each desired fruit that might abound to the glory of God.

At the hub of the group of men was an ex-prisoner: Paul Carlin. In an interview with THE ANGOLITE, he revealed some of the influences which caused him to be involved in this peculiar sort of ministry. "Let me tell you something that was a real burden to me, being an ex-convict and you being a convict, you will understand this." He explained, "I had a real burden about not only winning men to Christ, but helping them to become stabilized in prison--spiritually--to get both feet on the ground. So, God laid on my heart three years ago to start Prisoners' Bible Institute and to develop good sound Bible Correspondence Courses," Carlin

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said. "We have constantly four or five prisoners enrolled all the time. And, we not only go into prison to evangelize and win men to Christ, we try to disciple them, reach them, train them by providing them with good solid sound, Bible Courses."

Carlin has left most of the mistakes of his past behind him. He has not forgotten where he came from and why he had to experience what he has, but he does not live in the past. He has pieced his life back together by following the direction that he is led in by his faith in God. He has a wife and family. They support him in his ministry.

"First of all, my wife works with me everyday," Carlin told THE ANGOLITE. "She goes with me on every prison revival.

She's here this week end. She can't come into the prison, but she's at the motel." The minister explained, "She takes care of all the registration, all the meals for the men. She grades papers. She answers the phone. She writes letters. She is my partner in the ministry."

Not only does his wife help him in the ministry, but the children in the family are supportive of him as well. His son, Paul, Jr. is a christian who "loves the Lord." "He's in chiropractic college. I've got another son, Brad. He's a layman. He works in the bus ministry in the church. Another son, also who loves the Lord, and a daughter who loves the Lord, works in the local church and is a Dental Hygienist by profession."

One of Carlin's sons may have best sum-

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med up the family's feelings about him and the work that he is doing. "My son told me," Carlin proffered, "'Dad I know that you could make a lot of money in the business world and be rich, but' he said, 'I want you to know that I am behind you.'" The former high school and college basketball player is obviously humbled by the emotions the thoughts of his family stir within him.

Carlin explained that "we don't have any church that pays us. We don't have anybody that pays us. We have laymen." He points out The Bible Institute is allowed to receive contributions as a non-profit organization, but Carlin injects, "We don't have anyone that has pledged one penny to this ministry--no business, no church, no individual. We trust God every month to meet the needs of that month."

The National Bible Institute is the

home base of the Carlin Revival Services, and the ministry which is located in Pearland, Texas continues to grow in magnitude.

While the ministry increases, there are areas which sometimes are restricted because funds are not available. "One of the areas that is hurt the most when we don't have enough money," Carlin told THE ANGOLITE, "is our Bible Correspondence Courses. We provide the men with Business reply envelopes. They don't have to pay postage. When we don't have the money, we can't send them out." He explained, "It cost a lot of money to have those Bible courses printed and prepared."

As in almost all other areas, Carlin and his friends in the ministry have not allowed these obstacles to dampen the fervor and enthusiasm with which they pursue the spreading of the word of God.



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They were on hand at Angola for a three-day revival service. The men had been out exhorting, witnessing and talking with every person who desired to hear more about the word of God. Each day culminated with a service. Men, both free and incarcerated, came together to worship God in song, prayer and praise.

On hand with Carlin were an abundance of interesting and colorful characters. One such person was Mike Guidry, the Minister of Music for the National Bible Institute; Fred San Miguel, a lay worker and a prisoner currently on parole in the state of Texas; Leo Humphrey, a street corner preacher from the city of New Orleans. Bobby Joe Richenbacher, a prisoner of 13 years, who found God behind bars. Men such as Jimmy Snelling, Terry Gray, and scores of others came to tell men behind bars about Jesus.

On one night there was the New Orleans street preacher, Leo Humphrey preaching salvation through the blood of Jesus and witnessing of how the Lord had worked wonders in his life and there was a notorious criminal known as the "Bandanna Bandit" showing other prisoners what the goodness and grace of God had done in his life, and how Jesus had delivered Bobby Joe Richenbacher from prison a new man alive in Him.

On another day, in the prison's Interfaith Chapel were other friends of Paul Carlin, brothers in Christ, such as Larry Taylor, Billy Taylor preaching Christ, fellowshiping and praising the Lord. There were even men on hand to minister to deaf prisoners, like Jerry. "My friend Jerry is deaf," said the volunteer worker from Texas. "We came specifically to try to reach the deaf prisoners. We were only able to get to one man and we did talk to him for over two hours. He has no one to communicate with at all, no one can use sign language here." He pointed out, "It was good for him to have someone to talk to and we were able to share the gospel with him. He did pray to receive Christ

during our witnessing time."

The men of Angola who serve the Lord were equally delighted that the Lord had sent more labourers. Brady McDaniel, the Bible Instructor of the Church of God in Christ congregation had these comments. "It was definitely arranged and ordained by God, before we ever even thought about it, God said that at this point at Angola a revival is going to come and there is going to be new creations created in these three days. New people are going to be raised up that's going to be ministering and preaching the word of God to the world." McDaniel added, "I praise God that I am part of it."

Ameal Brown, a co-Pastor of the Pentecostal Fellowship commented: "I have enjoyed myself since I have been here and truly, I believe this is of God." He said, "I have witnessed that many men have come to the Lord and I just praise God for it. I pray that it continue and that more people will come and just go out throughout this place and fellowship bringing men to God."

The Church of God in Christ Pastor, Wilfred Cain, remarked, "I think it was a blessed service." His assistant, Carl Taylor expressed, "I feel and believe that this is an answer to prayer first of all. That it answers a vision that we all have probably seen." He continued, "It's a great inspiration. I just praise God for it."

The Assistant Pastor of St. John Baptist Brotherhood, and president of Full Gospel Businessmen, Otis Henry agreed with Taylor. "I praise God for these services. I see somewhat of a fulfillment of a lot of the prophecies and a lot of words of wisdom that have been coming through our other services." Henry added, "I also see something that is so desperately needed in these situations. That is to see men to come back that have been in these same positions saying that it was not just jailhouse religion, but that God

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is still in the saving business and is still working in our lives."

The Evangelist for the Methodist Men's Congregation, Warren Lewis, remarked, "All I got to say is that we're going to have a wonderful time in the Lord and that the people that come from so far to share their wonderful love with us and lift up the name of Jesus are a blessing. I just thank the Lord that we can assemble ourselves over here for to hear that wonderful Word of Jesus and His name lifted up."

Others such as Glenn Fisher praised the Lord for the joy the services had added to their lives. "I tell you from the first day of it all the way up to the day, I have had a spirit-filled time. I thank Jesus and I praise God for it."

Roosevelt Kaufmann, a brother in the faith expressed, "I'm just glad I had this opportunity to share with the Brothers what I know about the Lord and it's just been a blessing where brothers in Christ are there is love, and that it's just a big family of unity." He exclaimed, "I'm glad about it."

Andrew Joseph is the eldest of the Pastors at Angola's Main Prison. He is pastor of the St. John Baptist Brotherhood. Asked about the three-day revival, he commented, "The Lord is really blessing this revival. I see these brothers come in here and what thrills me the most is they came down to every dormitory. They worked every camp, cellblock, Magnolia, places that we couldn't normally go. They witnessed to men one-on-one. I am thankful to be here to witness the end of the



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beginning of this revival." Joseph said, "I tell you something there is a scripture that says some reap and others sow from the labors of men." He pointed out, "So we have been sowing here in Angola and we have got brothers here in Angola and we have got brothers to come in here and reap in the harvest. I'm just thankful for it."

The affair moved into its closing stages. After a moving song by Billy Taylor of Eunice, Texas, Carlin spoke to the congregation. "We've had a great week end." He said, "I'd like to thank the Chaplains. You know it has been my privilege to make a lot of acquaintances and to meet a lot of guys that God has changed their lives and I've seen God work in miracles in the lives of a lot of people where other people thought that nothing could help them."

The congregation responded with "Amen."

"I have a lot of friends," Carlin continued. "The guy that wrote the book 'Pulpit in the Shadows,' Freddie Gaine, Gene Neill (I'm Going to Bury You), Jack Murphy (Murf the Surf), Bob Irwin, Bandanna Bandit, Frank Constantino (Hit man for the Mafia), a friend of mine." He asked, "You know what all these guys had in common? Jesus!" Carlin proclaimed, "Every one of them got saved in prison. Don't tell me this ain't the place to get saved."

The final speaker of the service was to be Larry Taylor whom Carlin described. "I've got another friend that didn't get saved in prison, but he almost went to prison and," he injected, "would have, if he hadn't got saved." Carlin explained, "he got saved on the streets of San Antonio, Texas."

"Thank you, Paul," Taylor responded. "I tell you one thing fellows, I have got Good News--a bunch of this population has been added to the Kingdom of God." He smiled. "That's Good News. We praise God for that."



CARLIN - A GREAT WEEKEND

For the closing message of the service, Taylor chose the "New birth as a topic" and his devotional came from the Book of John, chapter 3, verses one through seven.

The sermon drew to a close, as did the most unique ministry to be held within the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Taylor in his closing said to the congregation, "The Bible says I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. Let me tell you something fellows, I tried living without Jesus. Now I am living with Jesus. I want to tell you it's a lot better living with Jesus." Taylor encouraged the men. "Let me tell you something. It is no secret what God can do, what He's done for others He will do for you."

The service came to a close with the men gathered about the chapel, hand in-

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terlocked and their heads bowed in prayer. In the background a song was sung softly. The song went, "There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit in this place, and I know it's the Spirit of the Lord."

One person who found the Carlin Crusade particularly fulfilling was the prison's Senior Chaplain Joseph Wilson.

Wilson talked about the services, his role and the impact they had on the institution with THE ANGOLITE.

"I spent a lot of my time coordinating the situation between all the camps and trying to get some speakers from one camp to another." The Chaplain said, "I was very pleased with it, because I think it served to heighten the spiritual awareness among the prison population." Wilson cautioned, however, "this does not mean that a great number of inmates have made any personal commitments to the Lord and are going to stand by them. We know that, although there might be a great number who have done that." He explained, "These people touch the lives of people that I couldn't get around to touch and that our Chaplaincy even at full staff could not get around to witness to--to minister to in any kind of way. These people were available. They could talk to them. They could take whatever time they needed." Wilson points out, "that to me is ministry. Ministry wherever you go -- ministry is whatever you are doing, put it in the Lord's hand, and He's going to bless it."

The Chaplain points out that while the Carlin Crusade was so unique because of its program, that another group, the Gideons have come to Angola with over 100 layman every year, except one, that he has been at Angola. Wilson is entering his sixteenth year as a Chaplain at the Louisiana State Prison.

As the institution's senior Chaplain,

much of the religious information and materials which enter the prison are of concern to him. The increase of interest in spiritual knowledge has led to an influx of an abundance of material. This concerns Wilson. He remarked about the various types of information, studies etc., "that if prisoners have questions about these Bible Studies, I would certainly be willing to discuss questions with them." He adds, "Bible Studies are good, and any who have a desire to get into them should do so. It sort of depends on who you are going to as to how much the Bible Study is going to mean."

The Chaplain's final comment about the Carlin Crusade was, "I have seen a lot of interest that has been generated because of it." He injected, "I'm not going to say that it was altogether because of Paul Carlin, but I believe it was partially because of Paul Carlin. They got interested and they got out and started working."

The services lasted for three days. Carlin and his layman volunteers left a lasting impression -- but even more important they left word of Jesus. Perhaps the final word can be gained in these remarks by Carlin in urging his friends to finish the work they had come to do. "Be sure and get all the names of all these guys, because all of these guys that came forward --we've had 500 over the week end--everyone of them will get a Bible Correspondence Course from our office."

"I want you to find out how to stay straight and stay out," Carlin said. "I believe with all my heart that Christ is the answer, but I'm going to tell you who He really is. He isn't a system. He isn't a plan. He is a person."

This was the message.
