

From my perspective, I disagree with this statement. The main reason behind having a prison in a community is a form of punishment for those who have committed a crime against the law of the state and often also against the law and the will of God. It gives the criminal a time to think through their actions and reform to a better Christian and deters others from offending also. If we repent and put our faith in God, God forgives us and we are reconciled with him.

“For if, when we were enemies, we became reconciled with to God through the death of his Son.” Romans 5:10

In the parable of the forgiving father, the parable shows that although the son makes his own decision to return home, it is because he has experienced what life was like before he was separated from his father. The mention of pigs in the parable shows how low the man had got. Jews do not eat meat and to be feeding and eating with such animal is a symbol that the man was at the lowest he could get. It is only at this point of suffering that he realizes he himself has sinned and wishes to reform and return to his father.

“...He came to his senses...I will rise and journey to my father and say to him: ‘ Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you...” Luke 15:17-18

Based on this same idea of punishment to gain the willingness of a criminal to reform, the concept of a prison serves ideally as this suffering.

Jesus often angered over his disciples for not understanding and searching deeply enough in their hearts to find the answer to his preaching. He showed forms of righteous anger, which pointed the children of God in the right direction. The punishment inflicted on an offender is also a way of helping the criminal to direct their minds towards God and away from evil attitudes.

On the other side of this argument, however, many people may argue that this is a true statement. They believe it would be more effective to show compassion than to punish offenders through prison sentences.

“...And you must forgive your people who had sinned against you and all their transgressions with which they transgressed against you...” 1 Kings 8:50

Jesus had taught that his followers must forgive their brothers from their hearts without any limit to this forgiveness. Jesus’ own attitude towards this is shown when a woman who has committed adultery is to be stoned by a crowd...

“If any of you is without sin...let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” John 8:7

It is clear that Jesus does not support the woman’s actions. He tells her not to sin anymore and makes it clear that his teaching completes the law of Moses and that this teaching requires all people who condemn to also look at their own life. In the light of this, they could not punish the woman, without punishing themselves after considering about their

own failings. Jesus is also trying to express that again, it is only God who can judge the faults of others.

Imprisonment deprives the criminal from freedom. Many would consider this form of punishment attached to the idea of revenge. It is as though society wants to retaliate for the crime, which has been committed. These punishments make the offenders “pay” with their freedom for what they have done in order to make sure that the society is satisfied. It is possible that the criminal will become bitter and be much worse as a result of such punishments.

“...If any one sues you and takes your coat, let him have your cloak as well...”Matthew 5:40

Jesus teaches that people should not retaliate at all, that they should not even resist evil. He makes it clear that the attitude is just as important as the action and having the correct attitude towards retaliation is vital. It is an easy option just to confine a criminal in a prison cell, out of people’s way, but many Christians think of this as no difference to taking the offender’s life because they are deprived of basic human rights.

“For why should it be that my freedom is judged by another person’s conscience?” 1 Corinthians 10:29

In conclusion to this argument, I disagree with this statement. It is only through punishment that humans can realize that they have sinned against God and against their community. Prisons allow offenders space and time to think through their actions and their problems in life. The society itself would also feel safer, in fear that the criminal would repeat their action if they were given freedom.