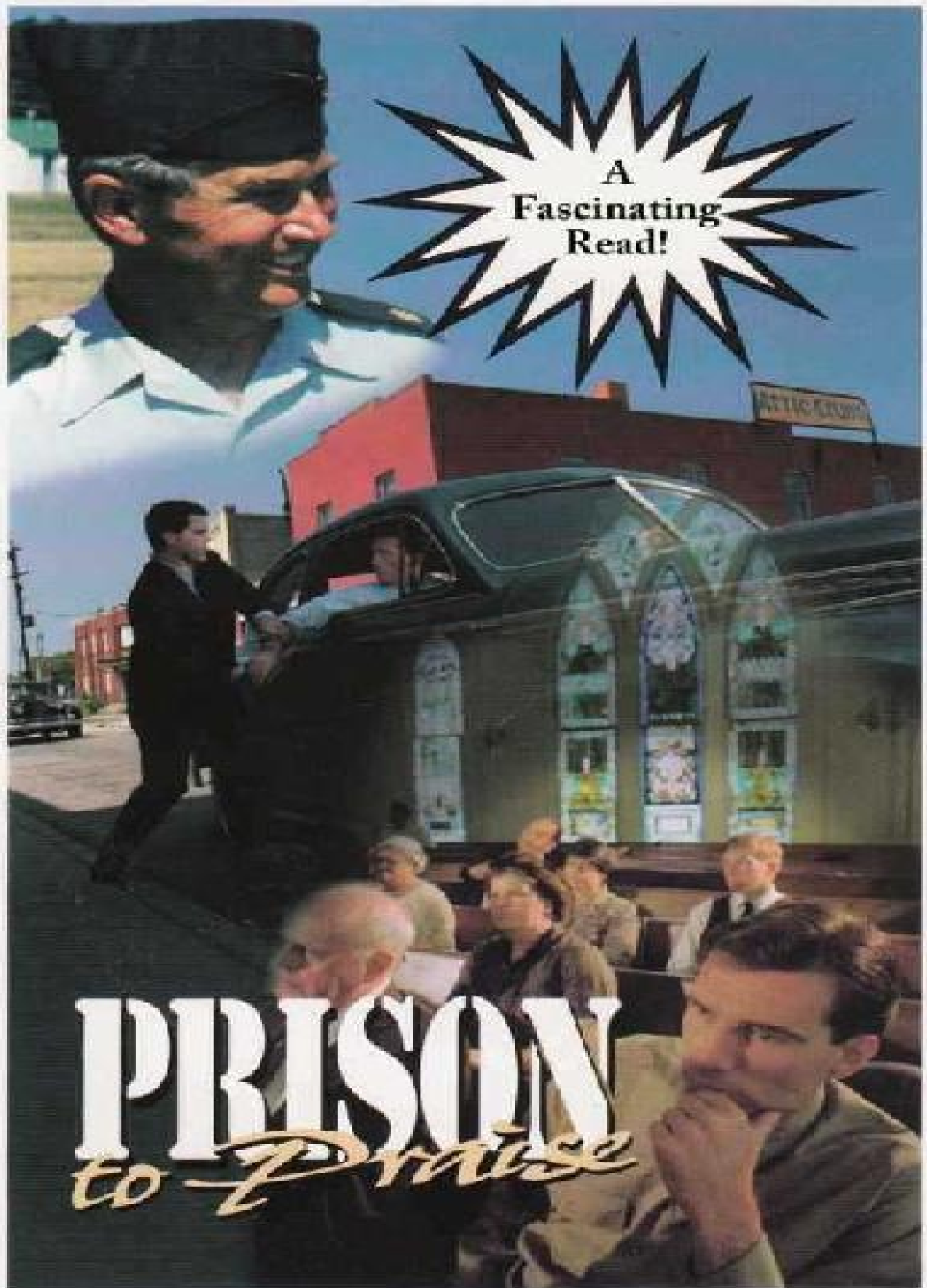


OVER 19 MILLION BOOKS IN PRINT



MERLIN CAROTHERS

PRISON TO PRAISE

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Merlin R. Carothers is well-known throughout the Christian community. His books have sold over 19 million copies. His unique concept of “praise in all things” brings results that can only be termed miraculous.

Merlin R. Carothers may be the only author to have served as a paratrooper in World War II, as a guard for General Dwight D. Eisenhower, and later as a Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Army Chaplaincy in Korea, the Dominican Republic conflict, and in Vietnam.

During these conflicts Merlin Carothers learned amazing things that changed his life. Many people who have read this book have come to enjoy a happiness they never expected to experience. Christians have been overwhelmed to learn that they can live in peace as they discover the secrets of a life of praise.

Read this book and you will understand how to be victorious over the circumstances of your life!

*“Be joyful always;
pray continually;
give thanks in all
circumstances for
this is God’s will
for you”!*

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

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Prisoner

There was the touch of cold metal against my left wrist and the harsh voice in my ear: “This is the FBI. You are under arrest.”

I’d been relaxing in the back seat of the car with my left arm hanging out the window. The car was stolen and I was AWOL from the Army.

Being AWOL didn’t bother me. It was the getting caught that hurt my pride. I’d always considered myself capable of doing my own thing and getting away with it. Now I had to suffer the humiliation of the jail cell, stand in line for lousy cold chow, go back to the lonely cell and the hard bunk with nothing to do but stare at the wall. How could I have been stupid enough to get into a mess like this?

I’d been a pretty independent fellow from the time I was twelve. That’s when my father died suddenly, leaving my mother alone with three boys to raise. My brothers were seven and one, and Mother started taking in washings and went on relief to keep us alive. She always talked about Dad being in heaven and how God would take care of us, but with the intensity of a twelve-year-old I turned in fury against a God who could treat us that way.

I delivered papers after school until long after dark each night, determined to make my way in life. I was going to make the most of it. Somehow I felt I had it coming. I had a right to grab for all I could get.

When Mother remarried, I went to live with some of Dad’s old friends. I went to high school, but never quit working. After school and all summer I worked. As a food packer, shipping clerk, linotype operator, and one summer as a lumberjack in Pennsylvania.

I started college, but ran out of money and had to go to work. This time I got a job with B&W Steel as a steel chipper and grinder. Not a very pleasant job, but it kept me in top physical condition. Part of staying ahead in the rat race of the world was being in top shape physically, and I didn’t intend to lose out on any count.

I never did want to join the Army. I wanted to go off to sea with the Merchant Marine. I couldn't think of a more glamorous way to get into action in World War II.

To join the Merchant Marine I had to get reclassified 1-A with the draft board that had given me a deferment to go to college. Before I could make it back to the Merchant Marine, the Army inducted me. They told me I could volunteer for the Navy, which I did, but a freak incident kept me out. I failed the eye test simply because I'd been reading the wrong line on the chart by mistake! So there, against all my efforts, I landed in basic training at Ft. McClellan, Alabama.

I was bored to death. The training was a breeze, and looking for excitement, I volunteered for airborne training at Fort Benning, Georgia.

A rebel at heart, my biggest problem always was in getting along with my superiors. Somehow they picked on me in spite of all my efforts to remain in the background. Once, during physical training in a sawdust pit, I spat on the ground without thinking. The Sergeant saw me, and descended like a storm cloud. "Pick that up in your mouth and carry it out of the area!" he screamed.

You've got to be kidding, I thought, but his red, glowering face indicated he was not. So, humiliated and seething with resentment carefully hidden, I picked up the spit - and a mouthful of sawdust - and carried it "out of the area."

The compensation came when we got our first chance to jump from an airplane in flight. This was living! The kind of excitement I was hungering for. Over the roar of the plane engines came the shouted command: "Get ready...stand up...hook up...stand in the door...GO!"

The blast of air makes you feel like a leaf in a gale - and then, as the rope attached to your parachute reaches its end, a bone-jarring jolt. You feel like you've been hit by a ten-ton truck.

Then, as your brain clears, you're in a beautiful silent world; billowing above is the parachute - a giant white arc of silk.

I was a paratrooper, and earned the honor of wearing the glistening jump boots.

Still, I wanted more excitement and volunteered for advanced training as a Demolition Expert. I wanted in on the war effort, and the hotter the

action the better, I thought.

After demolition school I returned to Fort Benning to wait for orders to go overseas. I pulled guard at the stockade, had KP, and waited some more. Patience was not my strong point. At the rate the Army was moving, I figured I might miss out on the fun altogether, scrubbing pots and pans till the war ended.

I wasn't going to sit around doing nothing, and with a friend, I decided to go over the hill.

We simply walked out of the camp one day, stole a car, and headed for anyplace. Just in case someone was looking for us, we dropped the first car and stole another and finally ended up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. There we ran out of spending money and decided to pull a stickup.

I had the gun and my friend waited in the car. We'd picked a store that looked like an easy job. My plan was to pull the telephone wiring so they couldn't call the police. Inside the store, I yanked on the telephone wire as hard as I could, but it wouldn't budge. I was frustrated. The gun was in my pocket, the cash register was full of money, but the line to the police was still there. I wasn't about to invite disaster.

So I went back to the car to tell my buddy, and we were just sitting there in the back seat, eating green apples and talking, when the long arm of the law finally caught up with us. We didn't know it, but a six-state alarm had gone out for us, and the FBI was hot on our heels.

Our search for adventure had ended in a pretty sad flop. I was back in the stockade at Fort Benning where I'd been a guard only a few months earlier. I was sentenced to six months' confinement and immediately started a campaign to get overseas. My fellow prisoners laughed and said, "You wouldn't have gone AWOL if you wanted to go overseas."

I kept insisting I'd gone AWOL because I got bored waiting to be sent overseas.

At last my pleas were heard. I was placed on overseas shipment and went "under guard" to Camp Kilmer, N.J., where I was placed in the stockade to wait for our ship to Europe.

At last, I was on my way. Almost, anyway. The night before our ship was due to sail I was called to the Commander's office where I learned that I wouldn't be sailing with the rest of the men.

"The FBI wants you held and returned to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania."

Once more I felt the cold steel of handcuffs, and under armed guard I returned to Pittsburgh where a stern judge read the charges and asked: “Guilty or not guilty; how do you plead?”

My mother was there and her tear-filled eyes made me cringe. Not that I was sorry for what I’d done. I wanted out of there and on with some fast living, the sooner the better.

“Guilty, Sir.” I had been caught red-handed and somehow I determined it would be the last time. I would learn the tricks and play it safe from now on.

The district attorney carefully explained my past life to the judge who asked the investigating officers for their recommendation.

“Your honor, we recommend leniency.”

“What do you want, soldier?” the judge asked me.

“I want to go back in the Army and get into the war,” was all I could say.

“I sentence you to five years in the Federal Penitentiary.”

His words hit me like a load of bricks from the skies. I was nineteen and would be twenty-four when I got out. I saw my whole life go down the drain.

“Your sentence is temporarily suspended and you will be returned to the Army.”

Saved, thank heaven! In less than an hour I was released. But first the district attorney gave me a stern lecture and explained that if I left the Army in less than five years I should report back to his office.

Free at last! I headed back to Fort Dix, New Jersey, only to get another load of bricks on my head. At Fort Dix they looked at my papers and sent me back to the stockade to serve out my six months’ sentence for AWOL!

At this point I had only one thought in my head. I wanted to get into the war or bust. Again I started my campaign to get on an overseas shipment. I pestered the command until finally, when four months of my time was completed, I was released. Soon I was on my way across the Atlantic aboard the *Mauretania*.

We were piled six high in the hold, and I was lucky enough to get the top berth. That way I missed the shower of vomit those on the lower berths often received.

Not that I really would have cared. I was thrilled to be on my way, and didn’t waste any time. I was out to get as much excitement and as much

profit as possible out of the war effort. I had developed one talent during my confinement that now came in handy. I had become quite adept at gambling, and the days and nights of our crossing were spent in this worthwhile endeavor. I accumulated a nice little pile of money, and the only thing that reminded me of the circumstances of our voyage was a brief encounter with a German sub that tried to hit us and missed.

In England we were put on trains that took us to the English Channel. There we boarded small boats and moved out into the choppy waters of the channel. It rained cats and dogs, and on the French side we had to jump into waist-high water and wade ashore.

On the beach we stood dripping wet in line waiting for cold C-rations. Then we rushed again for a train headed east. Without stopping, we crossed France and were transferred to trucks taking us into Belgium. We got there just in time for the Battle of the Bulge with the 82nd Airborne Division.

On my first day in combat, the Commanding Officer saw my record as a Demolition Expert and put me to work making small bombs out of a pile of plastic explosives. The pile was about three feet high, and I pulled up a log and went to work. Another soldier joined me, and I learned that he had been with the unit for many months. While he was telling me about his experiences with the 82nd Airborne, I looked across a field at incoming artillery exploding. The explosions came closer and closer to our position. Out of the corner of my eye I kept watching the other soldier, wondering when he'd give the signal to dive for cover. He had all the experience, and I was just a green replacement; I wasn't going to chicken out.

The explosions came nearer, and my fear mounted. If one of those rounds landed near us . . .the pile of bombs would make one giant crater.

The other fellow sat there paying no attention to the artillery. I wanted desperately to dive for cover, but I wasn't about to show myself a coward. At last the explosions were on the other side of us. They had missed!

Two days later I discovered why the other soldier had played it so cool. The two of us were walking through a forest known to be heavily mined. I carefully examined the trail for any signs of booby traps, but the other fellow was paying no attention to where he was walking. I finally said: "Why aren't you watching for mines?"

"I hope I step on one," he said. "I'm sick and tired of this rotten mess. I want to die."