

## THE MEANEST MAN IN TEXAS

**“This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst” (1 Tim. 1:15).**

Clyde Thompson was deemed the “meanest man in Texas”. The story of his life, based upon a book by Don Umphrey, was made into a movie in 2017. Paul considered himself the worst of sinners but was saved anyhow so that Christ could display his unlimited patience. Paul, therefore, became an example to all sinners who need to be saved. This even included the meanest man in Texas.

Clyde was involved in his first two murders at the tender age of 17. He was captured and convicted and at the time was the youngest man in Texas on death row. A brief six hours before his execution his sentence was commuted to life in prison.

Clyde was a troubled young man who dropped out of school at the age of 14. At the time he was only in the fourth grade. Even though his father was a preacher, Clyde in no way shared his father’s faith. Even after his close encounter with the electric chair he continued to rebel. During the next six years in prison he made four daring attempts to escape. On one attempt a man by his side was killed and another was wounded. Providentially Clyde ducked just as the guard fired at his head, and the buckshot only knocked his hat off. Clyde somehow survived these close encounters with death.

Later Clyde killed two prisoners in a knife fight and was given two more life sentences!

Next Clyde and three others plotted to storm the arsenal and pass out guns to the prisoners. They captured two guards with knives and got their pistols. Climbing the stairs to the arsenal they were ambushed. A couple of the prisoners were killed and Clyde took a 30 – 30 slug in the shoulder. He spent 40 days in the hospital and it was two years before he could use his arm normally.

On one occasion Clyde was stripped naked and beaten with leather bats to try and make him behave. He took the beating without making a sound and then got up and asked for a cigarette.

Finally they put Clyde in an old abandoned morgue behind death row. It was a concrete building with six slabs for caskets. They cut a 12 inch square hole in the steel door of the morgue to give him some light, but of course, covered it with bars. He was only permitted to wear shorts for fear he would hang himself with clothing. He had no light, and no running water. He was not even permitted to have a spoon for fear he would make it into a weapon. It was only three steps from one wall to the other and Clyde paced back and forth like an animal on bare feet for five and one half years.

In desperation he asked for a Bible. He was given the New Testament and Psalms but had difficulty understanding the Scriptures because of his limited education. Because the 12 inch hole in the door didn’t let in much light he could only read the Bible a few hours every day. Gradually, however, the truth of the Gospel brought him to Christ. With strong crying and tears he got down on his knees and repented. Repentance became part of his daily routine and for many months he dreamed of the day when he could do something good that would bring glory to God.

Clyde got to take a bath only once a week. He used the few minutes he had with others, however, to witness for Christ. It wasn’t long before three prisoners wanted to obey the Gospel. A preacher from Dallas came to the Huntsville Prison and baptized these three men in an old bath tub. This was the same tub Clyde used when he was on death row.

Clyde continued to study and was even permitted to take a two year correspondence course from Lee College in Tennessee. As a result of his improved behavior Clyde was removed from isolation and sent to the part of the prison known as the Ramsay Farm. There he continued to grow in Christ. He organized a Christmas play and even had a Bible class with 81 men (60 of whom were baptized into Christ).

Against all odds, after more than 28 years in prison, Clyde was given a conditional pardon on Nov. 1, 1955. He had recently married a Christian woman and she was waiting on the outside with a suit and necktie. It was he first suit he had ever worn. Clyde died of a heart attack July 1, 1979 but he was faithful unto death. PTL! Truly, Christ Jesus did come into the world to save sinners!

