

"Gleanings from Prison"
by Kevin J Marinelli

2/25/2016

NONFICTION/Poetry, essays

To Contact the Author:

Kevin J Marinelli CT9974
SCI-Greene
175 Progress Drive
Waynesburg, PA 15370

This collection of poems and essays are a variety of thoughts and reflections initiated by the prison environment. Some are a positive reflection of my mental state at the time and others are of the more grim sort. These are the extremes that one must endure in this prison surrounding. At times I leaned toward a christian theology and at others I feel more like an atheist. I imagine everyone will find something they like and something that they find offensive. Hopefully you can take some new realization from something I have written from my perspective.

Slave

I'm a slave, bought and sold
To a state of life untold
and a fate out of my control
owned by a system to fill a hole

My personality I mustn't show
they direct me where to go
what to wear and how
to their every whim I must bow

They give me the words to say
tell me when to come and when to stay
and stymie my personal expression
causing an interior isolation

I'm given a number, not a name
treated as an animal they must tame
for which, they say, I'm to blame
but it was from them this evil came

My individuality I'll never let go
My personality I'll let show
My expression is my own
My spirit they'll never own

Command my body, they may
but my heart will never sway
even if they do the worst they can
I'm not a number, I'm still a man.

UNDONE

Everything that the world has done
is like a cocked and loaded gun
each chamber has a different insult
another way for me to be hurt
My life is riddled with bullets
wounded from every side in torrents
This is all that the world has done

The Lord God has made it undone
He gave me hope when I had none
taking away all the pain
helping me to begin again
healing my wounds with forgiveness
Loving me when I was loveless
All the world has done God has undone

May God undo all I've done
everyone I hurt in my pain
may He help to begin again
healing them from within
forgiving me for every sin
knowing that all that's done
You, God, can make undone

EXILED

I have been cast upon the shore
exiled to a land without a before
living in the state of a moments time
without forgiveness for my crime

Here I've been abandoned
exiled from the world off handed
to rot in a living death
possessing no voice, only breath

Like a zombie driven by desire
moved about by an inner fire
with eyes sunken deep in my head
not fully alive, nor fully dead

Marooned in a land forgotten
feelings and emotions of a spirit rottin'
exiled from all that could possibly be
without an end or future to see

O sweet death, in her I can believe
with her embrace I'll be free
exiled to a far better shore
where suffering, pain & sorrow will be no more

BROKEN

In all those around me I see
there is something that astoud me
it is also there in the mirror
that thing which links us together
a genetic marker from earliest history
belonging to the whole human family
I mourn it in myself
I pity it in all else
for every malicious & unkind deed
for every evil & hatefully planted seed
for every hurtful & mean word spoke
is all because we are broken
shattered from deep within
inclined to every despicable sin
we are hurt and longing for love
yearning for healing from above
we direct our brokenness at each other
treated one another as enemy, not brother
while our love leaks from within
rooted in every manner of sin
give pity & patience to one another
loving them as sister and brother
remembering you are broken too
treating others as you'd have them treat you.

Love Upon The Wind

Let love blow on the wind
To flow from deep within
Fast and swift as a river to sea
For a cold world warmer to be
Hark to those Angels on high
And to those by your side
We are all spirits in disguise
Within us the eternal lies
Joining a friend to a friend
Sending love out upon the wind

Faith, Hope & Love (1 Cor.13)

Love, says St. Paul, is the greatest of all gifts. Certainly he'd know more than I. Love is the base and impetus of all else. If you don't have love then your faith is a slavish and fearful servitude; while faith out of love is a beautiful self-surrender and trust in the Beloved. It, love, purifies all else.

Love, by itself, without faith or hope is a dead and withered thing. Love is an action verb. Love requires faith of the lover in the Beloved. True loves "trusts all things" or believes all things" (depending on your translation). Every word that passes the lips of the Beloved is pure gold to the lover. They are valued and precious to the one who loves, with no taint of suspicion. Love trusts the Beloved. Without trust (i.e. faith) there is no love.

Love and faith produce hope. Hope may be futile, "pie in the sky," even delusional; but not when fueled by love. The lover hopes in the words of the Beloved. This hope is similar to and based on faith. If you have no faith, you have no hope. Your hope will be unjustified if not faithful to love. What is there to hope in if not love? The one in love braves all things for the Beloved, in hope of the Beloved's love.

"Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope and Love; and the greatest of these is love" (v.13) Yes, love is many things but it is foremost faithful and hopeful. God is our "Beloved", the soul is the "lover". Let your soul embrace God, without doubt (in faith) and without fear (in hope). He calls to our soul, saying, "Come let us love, for I AM LOVE."

Sin = Selfishness

In mankind's primitive days survival meant strength in numbers, which equals community. The individual was not exalted, as in our society today. Sports are a great teacher of teamwork, the group or whole over individual or part - The team's success is the individual's success. However, today we see the "stars" that sacrifice victory for the sake of their own stats. To work as an individual, a solitary unit, is to choose self instead of others. To choose the self over the other, the part in place of the whole, is to bring disunity, defeat and destruction upon the whole; whether that be society at large or one's team or family. Selfishness is the root of every sin.

Capitalism, with its consumerism mentality, is the model of selfishness; at least "American" capitalism. It is all about the bottom line. "Trim the fat" they say, not caring that that "fat" is people with families, hopes and dreams. Never do these bigshot CEOs say "let's take less profit so we can enrich the lives of our employees!" Instead they'll work you till you drop, for as little pay as possible; then sit you out on the curb with the trash while bringing in somebody else willing to do it for less.

People call it the "me" generation, with tongue in cheek. If this expression was fully understood it would be said with tear on cheek. This perpetual narcissism is fostered by a culture of death that throws away every human being that is inconvenient whether it be the unborn, elderly, criminals, or the handicapped or terminally ill.

This attitude is prevalent in our sexual encounters, too. People "hook up" until the relationship becomes complicated or difficult, then they are tossed away. "Marriage" is a joke since nobody means "til death do us part" but until you get old, ugly, fat, boring, etc. Then, it's time for a "no fault" divorce. There's plenty of fault with-in all of us. People are used solely as objects of sexual desire, an attitude which is encouraged by our culture - we can't even advertise shampoo without making a sexual innuendo.

"It's not my problem" or "it's none of my business" is just another way of saying "I'm too self-absorbed to care." The bum on the street, the drug addict, the dirty politician all hold a position in our society as a whole. They are parts of this community that we are a part of. Everything is business! The whole world is our business!

All seven of the deadly sins has its root in selfishness: Each one caused by an inordinate self-love, and greed is found in each and every sin. You are greedy for position, sex, control, possessions, what others have, sleep, food, respect, etc. Each one involves the Ego or "I" ("ego" is greek for the first person pronoun "I") I, me, my, mine are the unholy dieties of selfishness, which is modern day Idolatry.

The remedy for the disease of selfishness is also sevenfold: Humility, Chastity, Prudence, Justice, Love, Fortitude, Temperance. All of these require one to think about the other, about the whole and not the self. Serve others, please others, give preference to others, give to others, be happy for others, do for others, feed others; be a servant, modest, thoughtful, generous, complimentary, a volunteer, and a philanthropist.

Abiding For Love

Time goes bye / like a cloud on high
Where has it gone / beyond the horizon
I drift with the tide / and drifting I must abide
But not without joy / I am God's broken toy
It pleases Him I see / that I simply be
So, here I will reside / Here I will abide
Pleasing to my maker / a giver not a taker
A giver of life / even with some strife
Struggling you see / makes a stronger me
To help another / as helping a brother
Together riding the tide / riding side by side
In this we are free / choosing here to be
in this we give / in love to live
Living as my Creator / giving to another
All in this life / that eases from strife
Existing for the other / for brother, sister, mother
and for Father above / solely to give love

Who are we to say / what holds one more day
When it may be everything / to one suffering
Living on this earth / living since birth
To love is the reason / and apathy is treason
Wherever you are, abide / your love not to hide
Giving your all / loving before you fall
With your eyes on man / doing all you can
To better this life / living without strife
Spreading the love / given from above

Beauty

Beauty is not tangible
nor is it transitional
beauty is something ethereal
and exists eternal
residing in the soul
making you whole
outwardly it grows
until your being glows
with love and peace
that will never cease
beauty is God's reflection
lending the soul perfection
a smile from His face
reflected in the human race
beauty comes from within
by transformation we begin
to exude true beauty
acquiring virtuosity
virtue is true reality
truth is true beauty
an expression of diety
residing in you and me

Hoping

Here I sit in hope
As I feel my body slope
Can it really be true
When all seems blue?
Sometimes I feel like a dope
For what is there to hope?
Twenty years in this cell
Barely a change to tell
Like Sisyphus and his rock
Felling the clock's tick-tock
I hopefully push this boulder
My burden to shoulder
Not closer to being ended
From where I started
I hope for what I don't see
And for what could be
Desiring that which I need
Hoping to be freed
Not for what I deserved
But for time-served
Looking for an act of mercy
Hoping in what I don't see

TAKEN

With every strip search
they've teaken my dignity
With every cell search
they've taken my privacy
With every door locked
they've taken my liberty
With every count called
they've taken my individuality
With every tray served
they've taken my vitality
With every yard given
they've taken my mobility
With every holiday missed
they've taken my spirituality
With every year passed
they've taken my humanity
With every every shower given
they've taken my modesty
With every new restriction
they've taken my personality
With every humiliation
they've taken my pride
With every deprivation
they've taken my self-reliance

With every castigation
they've taken my obstinance
With every restriction
they've taken my unrulliness
With every disappointment
they've taken my wantonness
With every degradation
they've taken my vanity
With every prejudice
they've taken my hatred
With every trepidation
they've taken my fear
With every injustice
they've taken my weakness
With everything they've taken
it's only revealed a better me

FREEDOM

What is freedom?
is it only a name
or some ideal;
maybe just a game?

Some say it's movement
to wander about
others say it's heathenism
which I really doubt

It can't be sensual
something so temporal
but of the soul
something that's eternal

The mind can go anywhere
flights of a fanciful will
unleashing the imagination
nothing can hold it still

The spirit which flies to God
in prayer and meditation
experiencing all that's sublime
without incarceration

These are steered by the heart
which is worlds apart
from any time and place
that restriction can start

Nothing can imprison it
except for its owner
with lies and fears
which make it colder

So embrace all that warms
and all that's positive
rejecting all worldly lies
and all that's negative

That is what enslaves
the spirit, heart and mind
not bars, fences and walls
but everything unkind

Embrace hope, love and joy
liberating the real you
lighting up the dark
freeing all around you

Be a blessing to all
by releasing your soul
from all materialism
with love as your goal.

Purgatory

In purgatory I reside
deep down inside
purging me of my sin
cleansing me from within.
To what purpose,
to feel remorse?
I'll never know
for it doesn't show.
Rehabilitation to no end
to their will I must bend
resistance is futile
forced into exile.
There is not an "out"
without any such doubt.
They call it "corrections"
more like mortifications.
WHy tame this spirit,
just to kill it?
I see no meaning,
it's still murdering;
like a dog in a cage,
my soul sends rage.
It's salt in a cut,
treated like a mut;
worse than Michael Vick
who you thought was sick!
But you kill people
while shouting from your steeple,
bringing down death
with your every breath.
You cry for justice
but only for the "us",
for the rich and powerful,
to them you're merciful.

The weak and poor are forbidden
mercy to be given.
You murder by the military
and torture with poverty,
you enslave by incarceration
and demoralize with isolation.
Then you cry "eye for eye"
while others die.
In purgatory I may be
denied any mercy.
But God has said
not justice but mercy instead,
if you give mercy you'll recieve
what you plant you conceive.
Mercy is for the merciful
justice for the wrathful.
This purgatory I'll abide,
while compassion denied.
But in hell they'll reside
when God's justice they must abibe
So, do your evil with glee
for on this we agree
"an eye for an eye", indeed,
in reward for your greed.
For your love of power
doomed every hour
because of your lust
enduring flames you must
you lived in decadence
ignored all calls to repentance
Now you have your payment
Late you'll recieve torment.
Purgatory is better to me
rather than in hell to be
Evil never really pays
Only the soul it slays.

Where is God?

"Where O where has my God gone?" Jesus even asked that from the Cross. In times of darkness and despair, when depression has seeped into my already difficult experience, I say "my God my God why have you forsaken me?" But He hasn't left me. He is right by my side. It is only my sense of Him that is clouded; clouded by sin, doubt, worry, or selfishness/self-pity. Every dark moment is made by us. If God seems far away, it is because we moved not Him. He is always there, He is everywhere. As David said "where can I go but you are there?" and Paul said, "in Him we live and move and have our being." The Quran says, "God is closer to you than your own juggler vein." Yes, even in this place - God is here! Which make me want to say, as Daniel did, "woe is me, for I am an unclean man of unclean lips!"

"Why have You forsaken me?!" More like why have I forsaken Him? God says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." I am the one of unclean lips, not God. I lie, not Him. So, now in my hardship I attitude to God what is mine. I doubt because of who I am not because of who God is. If I were a faithful servant I'd never of doubted but because I am a wretch I say "where are you, O God?" He is within me if I only love Him - "If you love me you will obey My commandments and my father will love you and we will make our abode in you." However, if that "abode" is full of me or the material things of the world, full of stuff, there is no room for God. So, "my soul is caste down" as it should be. I have been made sad by my own sadness. God is waiting. He is saying "make room for Me." He will not be satisfied with some little spot. When Solomon built the temple he prayed "All of heaven and earth cannot contain you how much less this temple." God will fill all of your heart. He is all consuming - "our God is a consuming fire." Clear out everything for Him then He will bring some back in, "seek ye first the kingdom of God and all else will be added unto you." Give Him all and He will give you everything. It's a one for one trade. Then God will be "all in all". He will be everywhere in every situation, at every moment. Where is God? Waiting for you.

Be A Servant

One day I started to wonder why we call each other "mister" or "miss"/ "misses". Nobody seems to know why and are satisfied to just leave it at that. However, I am more inquisitive than that.

"Mister" is the Anglo-Saxon equivalent to the German "Meister", and the Italian "Maestro". They all mean "Master". Some take offense to that but that is what it means, so don't get mad at me. On the other hand, "Sir" is similar, but less offensive, being a derivative of "sire" from the Old French/Norman, meaning the male parent, i.e. father. Even though protestants have a problem calling a priest "father" because of the verse "call no man father, master or teacher" they have no problem with doing it in another language. (as a side note, doctor means "teacher", not just Rabbi.)

"Miss" and "Misses" (abbreviated Ms. and Mrs., respectively) are the female forms of Mister. "Madam" is the same as "Sir" but for a woman, derived from the Old French/Norman "ma dame", literally "my lady", as in Notre Dame (Our Lady).

In 1 Timothy 5:1-3, St. Paul tells Timothy to treat the older men as fathers and the older women as mothers, the young men as brothers and, by implication, the young women as sisters.

In Luke 22:24-30 Jesus tells the disciples that the greatest must be servants of all (Mk.9:35) and repeatedly says the first shall be last and the last shall be first. To better illustrate his meaning might be understood by saying "the greatest shall be the least and the least shall be the greatest." Jesus also tells us not to seek to elevate ourselves (Lk.14:7-11) or we will be humbled but to humble ourselves and He will elevate us.

Therefore, the tradition of calling others "Master" or "Sir" / "Mistress" or "Madam" reflects one's desire to be that person's servant. We put ourselves at their disposal. It is like saying "Here I am, your servant. What would you have me do?" Then, in response, the other says "Master"; as if to say "NO! NO! I am your servant", thus elevating you. First the one humbles himself then the other will elevate him.

Isn't this a more beautiful way to see our interactions? Most only use these titles as a form of politeness or formality. Others become prideful and indignant and say "I will not serve! I will always be Master!" Well, I feel sorry for you because that is what Satan said too, "I will not serve", at least not willingly. However all will serve, i.e. be humbled, whether willfully or not. It is best to serve now and then at the Great Feast of the Lamb, Jesus will get up to serve us - as He did to the disciples; or you'll be serving the sentence of eternal condemnation. Either way, service will be rendering, willingly or not. How much more pleasant to choose to do what we will have to do anyway?

When I accepted my imprisonment it became much more bearable. I said "I am where God wants me to be, and I want to be where God wants me to be." Where we are is where God wants us to be, or we'd be somewhere else; whether it's a state in life, our career, or relationship, etc. When we serve wherever we are, we fulfill God's purpose for us. The purpose of life is not to have "fun" but to obtain salvation and glorify God. Of course, He will bless us with many enjoyable things along the way, but "first seek ye the Kingdom of God and all else will be added unto you." Humble yourself and then, only then, God will elevate you.

God, help us to humble ourselves, just as you did. AMEN.

Love Dying

I kneel crying ; before love dying
Who paid the cost ; to redeem the lost
They murdered what's true ; saving both me and you
Who had no hope ; at the end of our rope
He bravely endure ; all that we deserved
Making us Sons of God ; a family quit odd
By the Spirit I'm led ; To Him I bow my head
Who died in my stead ; To Him no longer dead
From my knees I'll rise ; after the last good-byes
To a world so bold ; that allows love to go cold
To have peace at last ; and to God hold fast
Because of love dying ; to which this soul was crying

The Old Prodigal (LK 15:11-20)

As I get older, now middle aged, the story of the Prodigal Son is coming to have a new meaning. Those who have been in the Grace of the Lord for awhile have heard the typical interpretation of this parable. As wonderful as those interpretations are, especially for Catholics with every confession, I've never heard a word about the "inheritance" that the poor prodigal received and then spent up on lavish living.

Looking back over my 42 years of existence, though "young" to some (my mother says I'm still just a kid - but she's 70!), I have more regrets than those twice my age. Now that the arthritis has set in and the eyesight is diminishing, I mourn my past in a whole new way. For me, I see the "inheritance" not the grace and blessings given only to believers, but the health, vigor, stamina, mental agility and all else that comes with youth that is typically given to everyone at birth.

With new limitations to deal with and more awareness of my faults, combined with a realization of wasting my health (i.e. youth) and time by feeding the swine of my desires has created a new round of regrets. All that time could of been used in perfecting myself in spiritual discipline and performing works of mercy. However, "Godly sorrow worketh to repentance", instead of depression. It has become my fuel to not let another day go by to add to the regrets and sorrow, now that "at last [I] came to my senses" (v.17.) God willing, after the next 40 years I can look back and say with St. Paul, "all things work to good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose" (Rom.8:28.)

How Can I

How can I go on living
With this empty feeling
Of a faith I've lost
After paying such a cost
Now I float in darkness
preferable to ignorant bliss

How can I anchor the life
With a soul in such strife
Seeing the truth of a lie
In a faith gone bye
When trusting common sense
Seems to be so senseless

How can I believe a truth
That has no proof
Nothing but words on a page
Making life a big stage
Where we act out our part
I reject this deceptive art

How can I see a truth my own
When lies are all I've known
Undoing decades of damage
Starting with such a disadvantage
A clean slate I must be
To write the history of me

Not Perfect

Expectations so unreal
my soul they try to steal
wanting me to be
someone who isn't me

Then they're disappointed to see
all they don't want to be
painfully lashing out
causing personal doubt

Everyone wants me to change
to lock me in their cage
but all I want to be
is the reality that is "me"

Can't they accept me as I am
disgarding all the glam
maybe what they see and feel
is all in them that isn't real

I'm not perfect, it's true
and certainly neither are you
but let's accept one another
as a friend, sister and brother

Confused

Who should I believe
Imam, Rabbi or Priest?
To whom should I cleave,
and who is the least?

They all claim possession
to what I most need
of that which is my obsession
the truth to which I must heed

How to know the right and wrong
separate the false from true
weeding out the weak and strong
the goal I aspire to

Self-confidence is a must
to alleviate my ignorance
In myself can I trust,
fearing the plague of arrogance?

In this task I chase my tail
after years and years I tire
hoping some day to prevail
to embrace my soul's desire.

St.Elmo's Fire

The other day I rewatched the classic/iconic movie of the 80's "St.Elmo's Fire". It had a star studded cast,most of which also appeared in that other iconic,existentialistic film "The Breakfast Club". One of the main characters was "Kevin",who kept asking people "what is the meaning of life?" Talk about a loaded question! When he asks a prostitute,she just laughs (if I remember correctly). That was more honest than others,who answer with superficial,materialistic,and transitory pleasures. Kevin wasn't satisfied with that,nor am I;and if we're all honest,none of us are happy with that.

Spoiler alert!-at the end of the movie Rob Lowe's character, who is the degenerate of the bunch,has the greatest insight of all. Just like in Dostoyevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov",Dimtri has the biggest awakening and transformation,he is our modern day Dimtri. Anyway,his friend is in a suicidal crisis. She has bought into the lie of debauchery. Through sex,drugs,and spending herself into debt,she's made a mess of her life. Now that the lie has exposed itself she wants to die,having nothing to live for. The only person she'll open the metaphorical and literal door for is the degenerate. He is the only one who can possibly relate to her pain - the others don't recognize their brokenness as her and her fellow hedonist do. Even though he knows her pain and the solution he just hasn't yet attempted to apply the cure.

Lowe's character tells her the story of St.Elmo's Fire. The sailors would see lights in the sky,far from shore,with no obvious explanation,while being on long voyages. They were told that the lights were a sign of being close to home,which gave the sailors hope,something to live for. But,the lights aren't real,only a means of pacification so the journey could be completed. Somehow our Mary Magdelene makes the connection: Her fleeting desires let her down because the happiness they promised wasn't real,but the true fire (GOD) is real and doesn't disappoint. With this great novel insight she rises from the ashes like the Phoenix -from Cinderella (lit."she who sits in the ashes") to the princess - to live a new life. As in the Brothers Karamazov,our Dimtri goes away in order to fulfill his potential,to bigger and better things.

Kevin never really got his answer to the meaning of life,although the movie pretends he did. His article is printed in the newspaper to be read by all,but what the narrator says makes me think he never really got it. His issues revolved around a mistaken notion of "love" which was really only lust in disguise. He finally obtains the object of his desire only to see that it/she does return the feeling with the same intensity. Our love-affair with our own desires is a one way relationship. Everything temporal,physical,disappoints. When our pleasures don't fulfill us,it is strange how we think a greater quantity of the same thing will eventually do it. If one drink or woman,or whatever,doesn't do it for us then maybe 5 or 10 or 1,000 will do it.Right? Wrong!

When I was sentenced to death, I put my head in the sand until I was forced to confront reality. When all distractions were removed I realized (by God's grace) that my whole life was a "St. Elmo's Fire" (When I first saw the movie decades ago I never saw it's depth, probably distracted by Demi Moore's beauty.) The temporal things gave me a reason to live, up to that time. Once all that was taken from me I was forced to delve deeper into the ethereal things of the spiritual and eternal. I tell my fellow prisoners, when they are down, that the purpose of life is to attain salvation. Whether that is done here or on the outside or anywhere else makes no difference, the result is the same.

Yes, the "St. Elmo's Fires" light up the dark, they're pretty and some of them, in proper proportion, are useful, while others are only destructive. In the end they all disappoint and vanish into nothingness, serving only to lead us to the One Who is all Light and Truly fulfills our every longing. May we all use the fires when necessary but only as long as they direct us to the Light.

My Soul Is Heavy

MY SPIRIT CASTE DOWN
BROKEN IS THE LEVY
MY DESPAIR UNBOUN'
MY SOUL IS SO HEAVY

EVERY DAY A LIVING DEATH
TRUDGING THROUGH THIS MESS
STRUGGLING FOR ONE MORE BREATH
SOMETHING I DARE NOT CONFESS

UNTIL THIS MISERY IS CONSTRAINED
SOLITUDE IS NOT FRIENDLESS
DARKNESS WITHOUT RESTRAINT
THE PAIN IS ENDLESS

REGRET

IT COMES WITHOUT NOTICE
IT LEAVES THE SAME
IT HAS NO VOICE
BUT IT HAS A NAME

WHO AM I TO COMPLAIN
FOR ALL I'VE DONE
THAT I CAN'T EXPLAIN
HOW I'VE HURT EVERYONE

FILLED WITH SORROW
FOR A TOMORROW
THAT WILL NEVER BE
EXPERIENCED BY ME

MOURNING IS WITHOUT EFFECT
FOR THE LIVES I'VE WRECKED
WHILE I HOLD THE PAIN
OF A LIFE LIVED IN VAIN

The Broken Heart

A heart broken, battered, bleeding
In desperate need of healing
Too wounded to care
All love leaked from there

A broken vessel can't hold
Or venture to be so bold
As to love once again
Not knowing where to begin

Too scarred to trust
With a heart turned to dust
That withered long ago
Never recovered from the blow

When you let the sunshine through
There's nothing you can't do
Even mend that broken heart
That was brutally torn apart

Let the healing begin
Allowing light and water in
That it may grow anew
Into all you once knew

Then happiness will return
And love's fires again burn
Purifying that injured past
Believing this heart will last

My Scars

If I wore my scars you'd see them
If they were visible you'd know I feel them
My wounds are inside, hidden from sight
The cause of my pain hidden from the light
I may appear healthy to all I meet
But I suffer much from head to feet
The dead among the living wearing a fragile mask
As I suffer within, hiding it is my daily task
My past pain is evident, though the wound is healed
Everytime I see them the memories are revealed

Love from Above

Know love and show love
that special love from above

When there's no love and don't show love
Even normal love not from above

That's dead love, unexpressed love
Cold love not from above

But true love is active love
A divine love from above

A true love is a deep love
A giving love from high above

So give love and you'll know love
That perfect love, the God of love.

Universal Brotherhood

AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?
yeh and much, much deeper
he is i and i am he
no difference 'tween you and me

We are made of one blood
the tears of one create a flood
the blood of my brother is my own
my pain is his and his is my own

To wrong him is to wrong self
to bless another blesses one self
when I help another I help me
forgiving others I forgive me

All I give I receive in turn
you create the heat I feel the burn
when another's blood is spilt
this the whole world has felt

We wear masks of multiplicity
disguising our inner unity
defenses for our fragility
perpetuating lives of futility

Love yourself by loving another
love mother, sister, father and brother
God is love and God is a lover
See the image of God in each other

Tricked

You tricked me into believin'
lies without reason
into wasting my life
causing internal strife
Telling me I'm evil
no more than a devil
that I was made in sin
doomed before I begin

causing self hatred
the reason I self destructed
not loving my brother
nor any other
But all were made in love
by the creator up above
made to enjoy life
not for eternal strife

Your boogymen I despise
the reason for my demise
because of the lies spread
now your God is dead.

The Present

I WANT TO:

SEE THE AURORA BOREALIS
CROSS THE EQUATOR
HIKE THE APPILACHIAN TRAIL
LOVE WIHTOUT RESTRAINT

I HAVE:

MADE A FRIEND
BEEN A FRIEND
WROTE A BOOK
READ MANY BOOKS

I CAN'T EVER:

MARRY MY TRUE LOVE
SEE MY CHILDREN BORN
RECLAIM MY YOUTH
CHANGE THE PAST

I WISH TO :

KNOW THE TRUTH
EXPERIENCE TRUE PEACE
FEEL FULLY FREE
HUG MY MOTHER

I AM :

A WASTED LIFE
AN UNFORGIVEN SOUL
A TRAGIC EXAMPLE
A REFORMED MAN

What do you do?

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN:

YOU REALIZE YOUR COUNTRY HATES YOU
YOUR STATE WANTS TO KILL YOU
YOUR COMMUNITY REJECTS YOU
YOUR SOCIETY EXILES YOU?

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN:

YOU REALIZE YOU HAVEN'T A FUTURE
YOUR PAST WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU
YOUR PRESENT SEEMS FUTILE
YOUR EVERY MOMENT IS WITHOUT HOPE

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN:

YOU'RE DECLARED UNFORGIVABLE
YOU'RE CONDEMNED TO DEATH
YOU'RE AN ABSENTEE FAMILY MEMBER
YOU'RE IN PRISON FOREVER

YOU BECOME:

A CITIZEN WITH NO COUNTRY
AN INDIVIDUAL WITHOUT PURPOSE
A PERSON OF LONELY DESOLATION
A LIFE THAT ONLY EXISTS

YOU BECOME:

EXISTENCE WITHOUT LIFE
A YEARNING WITHOUT LOVE
AN EMPTINESS THAT CAN'T BE FILLED
A POTENTIAL UNTAPPED

YOU BECOME:

A LIVING DEATH
A WANDERER AMONG THE DEAD
AN AIMLESS SEEKER OF FULFILLMENT
A NEVER SATIATED HUNGER

HERE I EXIST
A DEADMAN IN A TOMB-
WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

"Unworthy of Complaining"

Sometimes I catch myself complaining and get upset. What right do I have to complain about anything? I know why I'm on death row, I know what kind of life I lived for 22 years I was not in prison. I've spent half my life in jail! That's a difficult time, when you pass that milemarker. However, it doesn't justify a callous attitude towards the "why" of my suffering and existence of all the I've caused others. Though I've experienced 22 years of holidays away from home, no visits and struggling to have and indulge in the privileges I'm permitted; that's also 22 years that the "victims" family and friends have suffered their loss, endured the heartrending reality of a loved one prematurely and violently taken from them. (I say "victim" (in quotes) because I never feel comfortable with the terminology, so cold and impersonal; but I doubt familiarity is anything desired by those effected by tragedy.) And I also think of those who have a worse lot than I. Those in Haiti who eat dirt mixed with a little sugar and call them "cookies", who are still drinking cholera infected water years after the great earthquake that destroyed an entire country. Or I recall the ISIS invaded lands where the freedom we take for granted are stripped away overnight. And in countries where "justice" is so swift the executions are all but carried out in the courtroom after sentencing. This causes me to appreciate what I have and be grateful for it. Then, I'm back at the start, of not only feeling, but knowing that I'm unworthy of all I do have. Innocent children starve to death every night in the thousands while a condemned murderer eats 3 meals a day. All I can do is pray before every meal, "Lord, I thank you for this meal; bless this food and me your child. Provide for all those who hunger throughout the world, heal the sick, comfort the lonely, protect the weak (especially the unborn) and establish Peace throughout the world."

One Thing Can Save

To live in darkness down below
In my subterraenian hole of woe
There's no way out, nowhere to go
Even if I shout, no one will know
One thing can save, to shed a light
Rescuing from the grave, giving hope so bright
An outstretched hand, with love and pity
It is God's love embracing me.

I see a Glimmer

I see a glimmer far from me
Way in the distance, a light I see
I start to wonder, "what can it be?"
Should I hope it's God's help for me?

I see a glimmering light a faint glow
Coming from above and from below
If I look ahead all is gloom
If I look behind all is doom

Where will I turn when all seems hopeless
What can I do when I feel helpless
But turn from darkness to what's bright
Flee from gloominess and embrace the light

The Ghost Of Me

Who I used to be
is only a remnant of me
As I look back
to my previous track
Looking for me
where I used to be

It's quite clear now
the where and the how
Of who I came to be
that is no longer me
All that has changed
very little has remained

As I dissect my soul
that is now whole
A haunting residue
left to review
All that remains to see
is the ghost of me

Vote for You

I find it inexplicable that year after year I see people who don't go to the voting booth and cast their vote for the candidate that will be best for them, but then they complain that their life is rough. Then there are those who vote for the politician that isn't trying to help them at all. Usually the candidate will appeal to the individual's sense of the common good. However when anyone else appeals to the common good in government assistance programs then it's labeled as "socialist" or "communist". Isn't it interesting that when it's convenient for the politician he calls it a derogatory name.

With the agenda of the right-wing conservative groups it's all about denying the poor everything to the benefit of the rich. So, why would the poor and lower middle class vote such people into office? It seems that they are fooled by the rhetoric, the fancy smooth talking salesman bit. All one has to do is ask themselves, "who really benefits from this?" and then they'll have their answer.

The Republicans have been yelling for decades that big corporations should get bigger tax cuts, that to do otherwise will hurt jobs and salaries. But for years the tax cuts that have been put into place haven't yielded any fruit for the working class who have to slave away for less than a living wage. Everytime talk of raising the minimum wage comes up it's always the same, it'll cause job loss. Why is that? Because the big fat cats don't want to take a cut in their profits to help their workers who are making them rich. However they want you to take what is in effect a cut as the cost of living goes up but not your wages.

The big fuss over health care was another case in point, as the well-off didn't want the poor to have medical treatment that would increase our life span and our numbers. It is the same scenario as with the Roman Empire, there was only two classes - the rich and the poor (i.e. slaves, those who work for the rich). When the Goths came knocking the poor refused to fight for their overlords and Rome fell. There was also the uprising of Spartacus and the other slaves. I don't see that happening in our country as the press keeps finding new people for us to blame for our poverty and we buy into it. We are constantly inundated with other people's thoughts and ideas with no time to think our own thoughts. It's now worse than ever! If the fall guy isn't based on race then it's based on religion, nationality, geography or criminal standing. Just give us another demonized class to blame so we don't look at the real culprits.

The ones you depend on have power over you. The culture we live in was created by the very companies that we must patronize in order to keep up with the "Jones". They control how we see each other and ourselves. The subsistence movement is a direct threat to this, as well as the religions that call for simplicity of life.

When we see the leaders of our faith communities failing to live up to their own principles it becomes a major news media event. But why should it be so? What does it matter, as we know that not even our pastors, priests, Imams or Rabbis are perfect. It is solely to destroy our contentment in a life not based on a dependance to some physical entitiy that wishes to exploit us for our money, or labor. Every commercial ever made was to convince you that you just can't live without the next big thing they are selling you. How many times have we tried to satisfy ourselves with the materials of this world only to end up dissatisfied once again? To repeat the same thing over and over again expecting a different result is the definition of insanity.

Meanwhile, as we chase after the next fad or start to hate on the next patsy, our children are destroying themselves. Crime is up, kids are having sex at a younger and younger age, communities are crumbling, morality is displaced, feeling of discontent abound, and there seems to be no end in sight. Admittedly, no one politican can fix it all. Most of the fixing needs to start with us, as we take back our lives, our thoughts and our children. In the meantime, though we need to look for the solution in leaders who have nothing to gain from our misery. Donald Trump cares not about the single Mom working two jobs, and still needs to collect food stamps to get by. But, then he had the security to bankrupt himself 4 times, while we aren't afforded that same security. He doesn't want a living wage for you but wouldn't stand any reduction in his profits. Everytime somebody wants you to endure a hardship, ask yourself if they would be willing to do the same for you. Almost always the answer, sadly, will be NO.

So, seeing how I must rely on others to create a world/country worth living in, I beg everyone to vote for that one which is going to help you, not themselves or the big business sector (they can help themselves!). Think about what is best for you and your kids. Remember that there is more of us than them, the one percent rich. When a few rule the many, as big corporations do, its no longer a democracy but an alogarcy. Let's make it what it was ment to be: A government by the people, for the people. If you don't vote for what's good for you nobodt else will. You can believe that the fat cats are voting for those who are going to make them more rich and powerful. There is only so much wealth and power. When one gets more then another must end up with less. The pie is only so big and no bigger. As is, the tope one percent have more of the pie than the rest. So vote for those who will give you your slice.

American Laziness ;stupidity and
materialism exposed

We are the most obese nation in the world and its no wonder. In prison I have been sheltered from the techno-craze that has engulfed society. I see that in many ways that the conveniences available can be very beneficial,I also see that our sinful nature has overrided any usefulness. As an obese nation,one of the main obvious sins in sloth or laziness. However, the laziness is not even done smartly. In trying to avoid a minute's effort we work for hours. It is really madness! Our sins do drive us mad,but this is outright stupidity. And it would not be so troublesome if we aren't getting deeper in debt and destroying our health,as well as neglesting the family and faith that is tantimont to true happiness.

Take for example the riding-mower. It's an ingenious invention and a great help - for those who have a couple acres to mower! We plop our fat butts on the riding mower but then go to the gym to walk on the treadmill. That's two expenditures that could be excluded and less time spent at work and more time spent with the family that loves you and the God that made you.

I saw one of the laziest things I've ever seen in my life. A patch of fake grass for your dog to pee on so you don't have to take him outside. No kidding! If you are so lazy you don't want to take your dog for a walk than get rid of the dog. We spend money on these pets while 17,000 children starve to death every night. Save the money and save the time and save the fake grass.

Cosmetic companies make all this "make up" for women after duping them into thinking they need it,meanwhile it gives you bad skin which requires different products and on and on. More money,more time,more work! -no real benefit. These companies just make you feel bad about yourself and you reward them with money. God did not make a mistake when he made you. If he wanted you with different color hair,lips,eyes,rosier cheeks or a different body shape,he would of made you that way. Men aren't much better with the constant obsession with their hair. If God doesn't like me bald then I wouldn't be bald. I am not paying some hack thousands of dollars to sew a rug to my skull. And every other commercial is either for food or a diet. Eat right and exercise (or don't be so darn lazy) and you'll be fine. It doesn't require any fancy equipment and no special foods. I don't want to live forever. I want to go to Gods,so I got to die of something. I'm just not going to try and speed it up,and I'm not going to let the culture dictate how I should feel about myself - nor should anyone else.

Even the Christian sector is not exempt from the get-rich-quick nonsense. After every protestant sermon on TV they start panhandling. Didn't Jesus clear out the money changers from the temple? These hucksters always have their hands out. Even Paul,the foremost apostle,worked for a living and didn't rely on donations to provide for him. After Jimmy Swaggert came back he started off with charging people 150 dollars for a Bible! "you have freely recieved so give freely" Jesus said. These people make a living from robbing grandmas. Every year around the new year preachers start their sermons on tithing. All year long they tell you that we are not under the "law" until its money-grubbing time,then the law applies agian. As they wear their Armani suits they cry about the poor and get into their BMWs. We build huge cathedral costing millions of dollars while the children starve to death every night in the sum of 17,000.

I remeber when I was a kid,we moved into my stepmother's house. She had a special room that nobody was allowed to sit in. It had the best furniture too. And there was no end to the waste of money in trinkets and furs,etc. Meanwhile I was wearing the same pants for three years in a row.Money was thrown at the wrong things. We invest in superficiality instead of that which is most essential.

Even our tastes are based upon impractical desires. A woman would rather have a man that looks good than treats her well and truly loves her. But when she is older and wants to settle down she wants the "nice guy",now that she has tons of emotional baggage and wasted her youth. So,when the nice guy would rather the younger girl then he's criticized. Why should he wait around for somebody who waited 40 years to get their head out their ass. No reason for women to be jaded about that,it's the result of their own bad choices. Pick the nice guy now and leave off all that acting up through your youth. The same goes for guys who like to womanize without thinking that that is somebody's sister/daughter or mother they are treating like an object. Things are to be used and people loved,not the other way around.

Plus the vacations I see folks going on....how ridiculous! Why travel thousands of miles to see the same landscape that is right here in our country. We don't smell the flowers in our own backyard but will fly around the world to smell the flowers there. The air,sky,ground,and water are the same everywhere. I don't need to travel to another country and say"oooh! houses and trees!"etc. Those thousands would be better spent on paying that morgage that is enslaving you.

Nothing gauls me more than when I see a UNICEF commercial. Here is either Susan Serandin or Allysa Milano telling me about how the poor children are starving and they need my 19 cents a day. Now,that is true,but coming from a millionaire to tell me to feel bad about it. I really don't know how they can sleep at night with millions of dollars in the bank while these same kids are dying. Here they sleep soundly in their mansions and some homeless person is freezing their ass off,and they have all these empty rooms in their castles. What hypocrazy! The nerve of some people!

This country has been dumbed down by technology,by the over-indulgence in desires and the apthy that feeds it. America needs to open their eyes and see things for what they are. Be fruggle, thrifty and responsible in the use of your property,possessions, and time. Then their will be plenty to go around for everyone. That time needed to pay for all these unnecessary expenditures can now be used to nurture your children and create a better future for all of us by having a more well adjusted and equipt generation

Death Penalty in the Torah

In Exodus 20:13 God commands us with "you shall not kill". This generally refers to murder but also to manslaughter. When it comes to murder Genesis 9:5-6 prescribes the death penalty, "Blood for Blood," for taking a human life. Most advocates for the death penalty stop there. However, there is much more to be said. Don't get me wrong, I'm not against the death penalty; I'm just against how it is arbitrarily handed out and cruelly administered. The fact that it is so difficult to find a "humane" way to execute somebody speaks volumes in itself. God's law requires that we not be cruel in the slaughter of animals, then how much more so in the execution of a human being made in God's image.

The way we arrive at a conviction must be in accord with God's Law before we advocate for His penalty. When death is handed out as a punishment, certain safeguards were put in place to ensure an accurate verdict before the penalty could be administered. In Deut. 17:6; 19:15; num. 35:30; Lev. 24:17, sets forth the requirement of two eye witnesses who saw the accused commit the crime in question. No circumstantial evidence will do for a death penalty, as most people on death row are there by circumstantial evidence only. Also, the witnesses are subject to death if found to be lying (which is also established by two witnesses), nor can the witnesses be guilty of the same crime (such as when co-defendants rat on each other.) Finally, the witnesses are to be the executioners. They are first and foremost to initiate the punishment and then the rest of the people join in, (Deut. 17:17.) It is less likely that one will lie to get somebody killed when they will have to do the killing, unlike in our system when the "witnesses" hide from the consequences of their testimony behind the justice system.

In our country this standard of proof is not adhered to therefore the death penalty in these cases is not appropriate. Knowing this, it appears that we are only seeking revenge. We just want somebody to "pay". However, revenge is forbidden in Lev. 19:18. We take the "Law" into our own hands and, ironically, become murderers ourselves. The drive to punish is so great that we'll do anything to feel better. But, when you personalize it, imagining that it is you at the other end, the thinking becomes different. Then we talk about "love your neighbor", which is appropriately in the same verse as "you shall not take revenge and shall not hold a grudge."

As folks evoke scripture to justify their stance on Capital Punishment, they simultaneously overlook the many other violations of the Law that call for death, e.g. blasphemy, Adultery, Abortion, Idolatry, etc. Despite that our country has legalized these things God has not and His wrath is upon those who do such things. You may have escaped a court's judgment but not the Almighty's.

Fittingly enough, in Ex. 20:13 "thou shall not kill" corresponds to faith in God, the first commandment. A murderer shows he

has in God, or even disdain for His image. "The Sages extend this prohibition to include such moral crimes as publicly embarrassing someone or causing someone to lose his livelihood" (Arts Scroll Tanach footnote). That's a regular occurrence in our tabloid driven culture. Yet, we yell for justice to come upon others while expecting mercy for ourselves. We should seek mercy for all.

Taking a human life is a horrible thing, in murder or execution. So much potential lost and opportunity squandered! Yes, we must "remove the evil from your midst" (Dt. 19:19), that's why prisons are built, to protect society. However, that is not its only purpose. Prison also gives the person time to repent and attempt to make amends. Even from behind walls and fences a sincere person can have a positive effect upon the world, through writing, artwork, or works of charity. This kind of repentance is what heals the world of the evil done by the sinner. Admittedly not everyone uses this time for that, but the chance to do so is a blessing in itself and such a society will be blessed for not going beyond the limits of God's requirements of punishment and believing in the goodness inherent in all of God's creatures made in His Image. This is something most of us can get behind since Christians and Buddhists are against the death penalty (or should be...) and Islam has similar standards for witnesses. Throwing away life is not teaching others to treat it as sacred. It is only the example of the sanctity of life our society has that will convince others to hold life as sacred too.

Love Yourself...Then Love Others

The Practicality of the second greatest commandment is evident upon reflection. The Prophet Moses relayed the law in Leviticus to "Love your neighbor as you love yourself". However, the standard is "as yourself". How many of us really love ourselves, at all. I find it easier to forgive others than to forgive myself. It may appear strange but it is a fact. We find kindness in our hearts more readily for others than for ourselves. Why is that? I can hardly proclaim that I know why, just that it is usually that way. This self-love must be cultivated though. How can we have an accurate standard by which to judge our actions when we treat ourselves horribly. The great Rabbi Hillel stated it this way "Do not do to another what you find hateful when done to you." It was a deep revelation when I realized that I don't do that. I wish for others better than I have, and do to myself that which I'd resent if done to me by another. To Love yourself is to know your worth, value who you are, and show appreciation for the uniqueness that is you. In a society that is a pop-culture, cookie cutter of mass produced character traits, it's hard to not look at our idol as the most worthy of emulation. If God wanted everyone to be the same, he'd have created us as exact copies of each other. However, He did not. Each one of us has come into this world as a "one of a kind" and shouldn't leave it a cheap copy. If you don't respect who you are how can you respect who I am? "Charity starts at Home", as the saying goes. And it is no coincidence that "charity" is from the Latin "caritas", meaning "love".

I can't tell you how many hours I spent playing the "what if" or "if only" game, tormenting myself with possible scenarios that could have ended up in me avoiding a lot of pain and heartache. The passes I give to others I don't give to myself. The judgmentalness is pointed at me, while I overlook the faults of my fellow man. It's not as magnanimous as it sounds. I think of excuses, possibilities of why a person may act a certain way or do a certain thing. I try to understand and not condemn them. I know too much about me and see my excuses as flimsy & thinly veiled reasons not to do the hard work of changing. At times I catch myself being as critical of others as I am of myself, which isn't good.

There is peace in it, this self-love reflected outward. Life is so much less stressful when we take it easy on everyone, even the man in the mirror. Appreciating oneself makes it easier to do so for others. Seeing my own flaws doesn't discourage me as much as tell me "welcome to the human race." Our flaws bring us and help us realize that no one is better than the other. We are in it together, this living of life. We might as well make it easy on each other. Be kind to you and everyone else, as everyone should do for you. In the end, a good deed is rewarding in itself. Do it for you.

Table of Contents

Slave	1
Undone	1
Exiled	2
Broken	3
Faith, hope and love	4
Sin=Selfishness	4
Abiding for Love	5
Beauty	6
Hoping	7
Taken	7
Freedom	8
Purgatory	9
Where is God?	10
Be A Servant	11
Love Dying	12
The Old Prodigal	12
How Can I?	13
Not Perfect	13
Confused	14
St.Elmo's Fire	15
My Soul is Heavy	16
Regret	16
The Broken Heart	17
My Scar	18
Love From Above	18
Universal Brotherhood	19
Tricked	19
The Present	20
What Do You Do?	20
Unworthy of Complaining	21
One Thing Can Save	22
The Ghost of Me	22
Vote for You	23
American Laziness, Stupidity & Materialism Exposed	25
Death Penalty in the Torah	27
Love Yourself...Then Love Others	29
ARTWORK	30