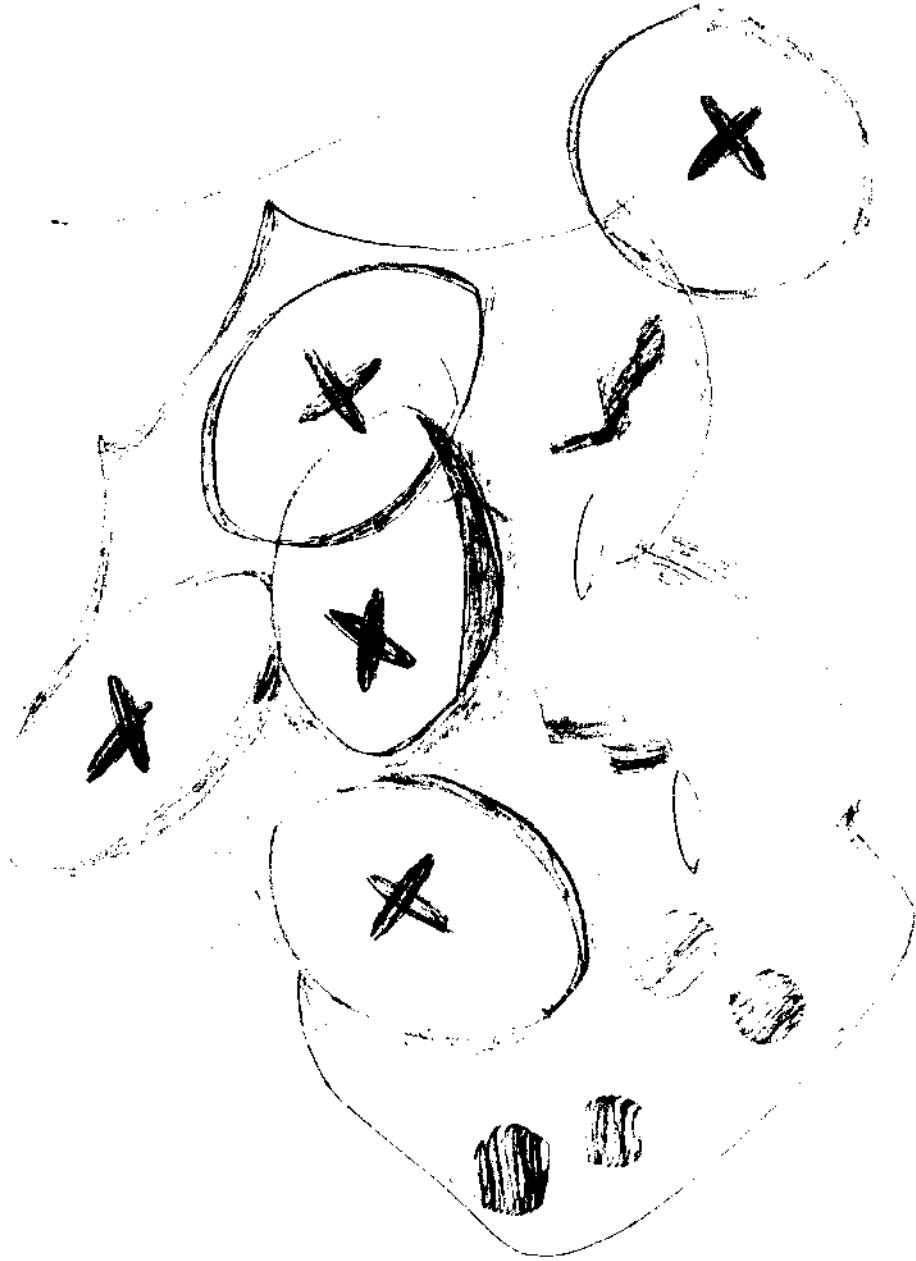


THROUGH GOD'S OWN GATE

(An Epic Saga of one man's life)



Elmer J. Lockett, SR.

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&

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OF

GROW MINISTRY

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Elmer J. Lockett, Sr.

This book is a true story. Many names have been left out to protect the identity of those who are written about in this book. All places and incidents are factual and are not just the author's imagination.

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**Elmer J. Lockett, Sr.**

## INDEX

	PAGE
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b><i>POEM: THE ROBBER</i> .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAP. 1...WITHOUT THE POWER OF SIGHT .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CHAP. 2...ISLAM AND TDC .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CHAP. 3...BACK IN BRYAN .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b><i>POEM: TO WATCH A MAN DIE</i> .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b><i>POEM: FRIENDS</i> .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>CHAP. 4...PHYSICAL PROWESS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>CHAP. 5...A CHANGING OF THE GUARD .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>CHAP. 6...A MINISTRATIVE SEGREGATION .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>CHAP. 7...DENYING GOD'S PLAN .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>CHAP. 8...A CALL TO CHRIST .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b><i>POEM: THROUGH GOD'S OWN GATE</i> .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>CHAP. 9...A NEW BEGINNING .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>CHAP. 10...LOVE THE INTENTIONAL PLAN OF GOD ....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>CHAP. 11...FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>CHAP. 12...CLEARING THINGS UP .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>CHAP. 13...PUNISHMENT FOR FORSAKING THE WAY...57</b>	
<b>CHAP. 14...ACKNOWLEDGING GOD'S GREATNESS .....</b>	<b>61</b>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Almighty God first and foremost for sending His Son; Christ Jesus to die on the Cross for me while I was yet in my transgressions. I would like to give thanks to my loving mother for always believing in me even when I was hopelessly lost in my various additions and debauchery. Special thanks goes to my wife; Jacqueline Lockett for putting up with me and all my foolishness. Special thanks also goes to my Uncle Bill Lockett, Pastor Doris Sandle and a host of other people that played a part of my life and these pages won't allow me to name them all, but each of you know the part you played in my growth and development. Thanks to all of you for helping me to make this booklet possible.

POEM

THE ROBBER

The night shone bright in the neon lights  
As the robber strapped on his gun,  
You could tell he was glad as he stepped from his pad  
Thinking of the job to be done.

He moved to his ride with an easy glide  
And eased the car door shut,  
He was one of the men that wore an evil grin  
As big as Bertha's butt.

He cruised to the set where the players all met  
Looking for an easy score,  
But the ladies of the night had the tricks uptight  
So he knew he'd have to ride some more.

Then further up the way he spotted his prey  
As the storekeeper turned out his lights,  
He moved from his ride with that same easy glide  
And melted into the night.

(1)

**Elmer J. Lockett, Sr.**

He pulled out his gun as he'd always done  
As he stepped inside the door,  
He was the best you see better than you or me  
Cause he'd done this kind of thing before.

He called to the man told him to raise his hands  
And not a sound to make,  
Said give up the cash and be real fast  
Or I'll deem your slowness a mistake.

With cash in hand away he ran  
Back to his car outside,  
He opened the door as he did before  
And with a sigh he slid inside.

So under neon lights in the dead of night  
He made his get away,  
He thought of the stang as someone sang  
About tomorrow and a brand new day

Then along about ten three weeks from then  
As the robber was making his move,  
Suddenly out of the night came some flashing lights  
And the robber knew this time he'd lose.

The cops were all out none just standing about  
And a few had eased up to the door,  
They said hey you inside don't commit suicide  
Just lay face down on the floor.

Now here he lays in jail in a six by nine cell  
Trying to come from under this rap,  
He has a court appointed lawyer that resembles Tom Sawyer  
Who seems also down with the trap!

"I talked to the D.A" cried this lawyer in dismay  
"About you and your history of crime",  
He said if you don't cuss and raise a lot of fuss  
He'll let you cop for a dime.



Well he took the ten and came to the pen  
Knowing that one day he'd be free,  
But he'll remain one of the men that wears and evil grin  
And that will probably be his death you see.

(4)

**Elmer J. Lockett, Sr.**

## CHAPTER 1

### WITHOUT THE POWER OF SIGHT

On to the penitentiary, after processing and screening and the required physical examination at the Diagnostic and Reception Center I was assigned to the Wynne Unit in Huntsville, Texas. Now this is in 1978 and the Texas Penal System is so overcrowded that the administration has three inmates living in a cell designed to house two. That being said, one of the inmates has to sleep on the floor. The building tenders and turn keys who are also inmates are the ones that are actually running the prison system at this time.

Once I see the Unit Classification Committee here at the Wynne Unit I get assigned to the License Plate Plant (Tag Plant). It was rumored in the community that the prison system was making license plates, but I thought it was just another rumor and for certain I never envisioned myself inside of prison being license plate pressing motha.....

Even though the cell I was assigned to already had two inmates assigned to it which meant I was to sleep on the floor I wasn't complaining. It wasn't like I was the only one sleeping on the floor. And if truth be told complaints back in those days about living conditions only served to bring about repercussions and consequences from the building tenders and turn keys.

(5)

**Elmer J. Lockett, Sr.**

So, here I am at the Wynne Unit located in Huntsville, Texas which is approximately fifty-miles from Bryan and though this is my first time in prison I feel that I am lucky to be so close to home. This closeness will not only allow my mother and my very best girl, Rose Ann to visit me on a regular basis but any one else that I put on my visitation list would not have too far to drive. I knew that if my mother was unable to visit then surely my very best girl would make an appearance each and every visitation weekend; which was one visit every two weeks.

Now I am on the Wynne Unit with a non-aggravated ten-year sentence assigned to the Tag Plant. I need or rather I feel the need to involve myself in some type of constructive activity that will help me pass the time until I am released back into the world to resume the lifestyle I was living before my incarceration. I thought to myself, why not religion! I mean everyone who comes to prison finds religion, don't they?

The first Wednesday night I am on the Wynne Unit I here church services' being called and so I follow the other inmates that were in the dayroom to the Rockwell Chapel, Not only do I get away from the crowed cell but away from the even more crowded dayroom. I have to tell you about the Rockwell Chapel its construction and design would be able to compete with most of the churches in the free world. Then as of now, it is the most beautiful chapel inside the whole TDC prison system.

I had attended church on many occasions as I was growing up. I can remember as a teenager I played the part of Joseph in the Christmas pageant, but that was because my girlfriend at that time was playing the part of Mary. Yet, I never committed myself to the church. Most of the times that I would go, would be because my parents insisted or that there was some young girl that I was interested in that I knew would be there. As I grew older I strayed away from the church and became involved with the Nation of Islam or the Black Muslims as they were referred to in those days. Even in a small town like Bryan you could see the Muslims on the street corners in their suits selling newspapers and bean pies and encouraging all to leave the 'white man's religion of Christianity' and come and join the Muslims. It wasn't until I had moved to Houston after my tour of duty in the United States Army that I gave the Muslims any serious thought and started to attend their temple located on Polk Street in Houston, Texas. There I received my "X" and so for all intended purposes I was a Muslim.

However I wasn't aware that the Muslims were active inside the Texas Penal System. As I found out later if you had some property that you didn't want anyone to mess with all you had to do was put a few Muslim words on it and the building tenders and turn keys would leave it alone. Not that they were afraid of the Muslims but even though the administration tolerated the Muslims they did everything they could to discourage anyone from becoming a Muslim.

(7)

**Elmer J. Lockett, Sr.**

TDC had even went so far as to hire a Muslim as a TDC Chaplain. And his office was here on the Wynne Unit inside of the Rockwell Chapel. Nevertheless, when 'church services' were called on this Wednesday night in the Spring of 1978 I leave the cell block with the other inmates and go to the Rockwell Chapel.

(8)

**Elmer J. Lockett, Sr.**

## CHAPTER 2

### ISLAM AND TDC

Once inside the chapel we are required to sit in the pews and a volunteer (free would guest) starts to conduct a Bible Study Class. I can't remember what the study was about, but the memory that is still sketched in my mind is that I noticed a group of Black inmates upon the stage that did not seem to be a part of the Bible Study. I have only been in prison a few days and I had not witnessed such gathering. So now my interest is aroused.

As I continued to observe this group I saw one of them stand, raise his hands to his ears and call the Adan (Muslim Call To Prayer). The other Black inmates then got up from where they were sitting and after arranging themselves in ranks began to perform salat (Prayer). I got up out of my seat to go and join them but was told that since I didn't go there upon entering the chapel I could not do so now. I then made a careful mental note of the inmates that were on the stage and I was surprised to see that several of them lived on the same cell block as I did.

After church services were over and we all went back to the cell blocks I cautiously approached the inmates whom I had observed in the chapel. I'll never forget, this huge brother, whose name I no longer remember, quickly jumped up, spread his arms out to impede my progress and asked me 'what did I want?'

I informed him that I too was a Muslim and that I was new in prison and on the Wynne Unit. I then asked what did I have to do in order to be able to join them in prayer The brothers; and there were four of them asked me to sit with them and to tell them something about myself.

I told the brothers I had attended the Temple in Houston on Polk Street where I had received my "X" and that I had also attended the Temple in Dallas on Forest Avenue. I informed them that I had a ten-year sentence for robbery and although I was familiar with the precepts of Islam as practiced in the streets I didn't know if the same rules applied here inside of prison.

After this statement each of the brothers introduced themselves and then informed me that on Wednesday nights and Saturdays after noon the Muslims were allowed to meet for the purpose of prayer and teaching. I was told that on these two days that I should be listing for 'church to be called and then just come on to the chapel with them or the other inmates that were leaving the cell block. The brothers made me feel very welcome and after my initial encounter they each left a favorable impression upon me as Muslims dedicated to the Faith of Islam. I was happy to be accepted.

Since I was new on the unit I was then informed that I would be required to take the Shahada or proclaim my declaration of Faith in front of the Muslims brotherhood. Personally, I believe this was to see if I was indeed sincere.

The following Saturday I proclaimed my faith in Islam and then I was issued a book from the Islamic library entitled 'Islam In Focus' From that point on I truly became a Muslim. I ordered a "Qur'an" met the TDC Islamic Chaplain and much to my surprise he was from Dallas and knew many of the same people that I knew who attended the Temple in Dallas, Texas of Forest Avenue. Thus begin my journey as a Muslim and though I felt fulfilled as far as any spiritual needs were concerned there still remained an empty void inside of me.



## CHAPTER 3

### BACK IN BRYAN

After thirty-months inside of TDC I was granted a much welcomed and sought after parole. I was ready to return to Bryan and regardless of what my so-called friends were doing I was going to remain steadfast and practice the faith of Islam. I remember when I told my mother of my decision her reaction was to tell me “yall don’t believe in God! I figured she had been brainwashed by the so-called white-man’s religion and though I tried to explain to her about Islam she remain steadfast a Christian. But she felt if being a Muslim would keep me out of prison then that was alright with her. I had already contacted the Islamic Community in the Bryan/College Station area and I knew that Friday Prayer was held on the campus of Texas A&M at the All Faith Chapel.

The Muslims who attended Friday Prayers there were made mostly of students and faculty from the Middle Eastern Countries; Saudia Arabia, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran just to name a few. There were also a small group from the African continent and much to my surprise there were even some students from parts of Europe attending practicing Islam. I imagine how Brother Malcolm must have felt when he went to Saudia Arabia and saw the many Muslims from the world over converging during the pilgrimage. The Imam; Muhammad Ragab an Egyptian welcomed me to the Islamic Community.

I had moved in with my brother upon my release from TDC and in no time I had landed a job as a dishwasher at 3-C Barbeque. The pay was minimum wage, but at least I wasn't in the streets hustling. This-seemed to satisfy my parole officer. After a couple months I was able to purchase a used car; a station wagon but it allowed me to have my own transportation to and from work and I was able to get around town without having to depend on someone to give me a ride.

I then landed a second job working part-time at a Pizza Inn. I became a workaholic. Between the two jobs and attending Friday Prayers I didn't have time to do much else.

The position of Manager came opened at the Pizza Inn and I applied. The owner impressed with my work ethics and promptness deiced to give me the position. I was making better pay from this one job than I had when I was working two jobs. By this time I had found a new best girl, Irma. I knew her from years past and I thought she and I would get along great.

With the new job and a new best girl I moved out from my brother into my own apartment. My ex-wife had given me my two sons so I now had the added responsibility of raising two growing young boys, a new best girl, , a job that demanded quite a bit of my time and to top it all off I had once again started to shoot dope. I had to come up with a strategy to be able to provide for everyone.

I began to steal from the job and then I would frequently make a quick trip to Houston and purchase drugs at a wholesale price and then come and sell them in Bryan. That is, all that I did and my new best girl didn't use. That worked out pretty good for a while, but shooting dope, trying to pay bills and raising two young boys just don't mix. So I quit my job began to rob and steal and shoot dope fulltime. Needless to say that run didn't last very long and once again I found myself in the Brazos Count Jail with a First Degree Felony charge of Aggravated Robbery with a Deadly Weapon. Well, I knew this time the D.A. would throw the book at me, so to speak seeing as how I had gotten off lucky the first time. The fact that I had been caught in the act of robbing the establishment where the owner has entrusted me by making me the manager didn't look very well in my behalf.

The first offer my court-appointed attorney brought to me was of sixty-years aggravated. Sixty-years! I asked him if he was crazy? I flat out refused and told him to go back and talk to the D.A. and see if they could come up with something less than sixty years. Days later he returned and told me that the D.A. was willing to allow me to plea bargain for thirty-five years aggravated. That offer didn't please me either, but since I had been caught in the act of committing the robbery and there was no doubt of my guilt in made sense. So though I informed my attorney I was willing to accept the plea on the day of court I announced to the judge that I had changed my mind and I would like to have a jury trial. The judge looked me in the eye and told me that the court would gladly accommodate me.

That frightened me some but I was committed to the course of going to a jury trial. See, I reasoned within myself that if I was going to come back to prison then the jury was going to have to convict me. In that manner at least I stood a chance of just maybe making something happen on an appeal. I was aware that the crime carried a possible of five to ninety years or life in prison.

So, on April 28, 1982 a jury found me guilty of Aggravated Robbery and assessed my punishment at twenty-eight years inside TDC. Ironically, that was the same year that I would turn twenty-eight years old on the twenty-eight of August. I am not into Numerology but it seemed to me there were just too many twenty-eights! In any event the prevailing system of laws that existed in 1982 I was required to do 1/3 of my sentence or nine years and four months before I would become eligible for parole. That is almost a decade. How was I going to do that much time locked up was the question that I asked myself.

With no money and almost a decade to do before I would become eligible for parole I came on back to TDC for the second time. This time the State Classification Committee decided to send me to the Eastham (The Ham) Unit located in Lovelady, Texas.

POEM  
TO WATCH A MAN DIE

It was early one Spring if I recall  
When he first showed up behind these prison walls,  
An ambitious your man just in his prime  
That finally got caught in his circle of crime.

A humiliating search was the first order of the day  
When he questioned why he was told it's always been this way,  
Then came the issue of clothes, boots, a toothbrush and a comb  
And let me tell you none of this was what he had left at home.

A shower and a haircut was next in line  
Then a long march down a hall to be confined,  
There strange faces peered from every cell  
And he thought to himself this must surely be hell.

Night came quickly and the noise died down  
As he lay on his bunk he thought of his hometown,  
Thought of his mother, father, sisters and brothers  
Thought of his sons, all his kin and his girl like no other.

Thought of the time that he had been sentenced to do  
Of the life he lived and the dragons he slew,  
Thought of love, peace his time in the war  
Thought of the sun, the moon and the stars.

Well, he caught on quickly as the years went by  
With his number and time he was viewed as just another guy,  
Some of his hair turned grey and his moments slowed  
These many years of confinement were taking a toll.

Now late at night sometimes I hear him silently cry  
I tell you it's a terrible feeling to watch a man die.

POEM  
FRIENDS

Now that I am down and out  
None of my friends are about,  
But when I was doing well  
They'd call me friend now I can't tell.

They seem to have forgotten while playing their games  
That things won't always be the same  
You can't keep a good man down  
Cause sooner or later he'll come around

So all my friends that read these words  
You'd best take heed to words you've read,  
While you sit and smile and grin  
I know you'll need my help again.

CHAPTER 4  
PHISICAL PROWESS

I had heard about the Eastham (The Ham) Unit and how the building tenders and the keys would beat people up, but I didn't care. I mean I had an aggravated thirty-five years and so I came into the system with an' I don't give a damn attitude. My very best girl had left me while I was in jail so what more could a building tender or turn key do to me than kill me!

Got to the Eastham Unit and went before the Unit Classification Committee and what to do you know they assign me to the Field Force (Hoe Squad). I was still relatively young and in pretty good health and physical condition so that didn't bother me either. I had picked cotton when I was growing up but I got to tell you that turn rows on the Eastham Unit seemed to stretch for miles and miles. Then, there was the guy that was designated as the 'lead row' and if you were unable to keep up with the rest of the squad then he would come and beat you up with the permission of the guard that was sitting on the horse with a gun. Didn't make sense to me, but there it was. Now when we was picking cotton we were chopping down weeds and trees so that when we finished the area that we had been in looked as if a professional landscaping company had come and cleared the field.



As for spiritual guidance I again joined the Islamic Community. Soon I was the unit Imam in charge of delivering the Friday Kutbah (sermon). I would read the Bible look for inconsistencies and there were several publications that were available that would point out these supposedly inconsistencies in the Bible. I began to look forward to the opportunity when I could talk to a Christian and point out these allegedly inconsistencies and then ask how could one believe in a Book that was supposedly inspired by God but was not consistent in its wording. I became very good at defending the Islamic Faith and denouncing Christianity. To add to this, it seemed to me that the majority of those who called themselves Christians here in prison were weaklings and were hiding in the religion to keep the predators away. Let me point this fact out: At the Walls Unit where inmates are released on parole or mandatory supervision, there is a box that many inmates toss their Bible into as they have no more use for them. Now, the Muslims on the other hand, not only kept their Qur'ans but would welcome any physical confrontation.

After about six months in the hoe squad I got a job change to the kitchen. Now this was more to my liking. I could eat all I wanted and I didn't have to worry about a lead row assaulting me. Along this same time the Eastham Power-lifting Team was looking for some new members. I was encouraged to sign up for the try-outs. Those months in the hoe squad had firmed my body and I was always working out so I signed up for the try-outs. Much to my surprise I made the team and I would be lifting in the 165lb class.

Now this appealed to me because on The Ham if you were a Power-lifter then you were afforded certain privileges that the general population didn't have. So, there I was a power-lifter and a Muslim.

In the 80's it was a good time to be involved in sports such baseball, basketball and of course power lifting. We got to travel from unit to unit competing in each of these sports. For the inmates it was all about bragging rights. For the administration one can only assume. Yet, the power lifting squad on every unit was the elite sport that everyone acknowledged. As an insider there was one guy that actually broke the worlds' record in dead lift while in prison. That in itself was an accomplishment that couldn't be denied or duplicated by anyone else living under the harsh condition of prison life.

## CHAPTER 5

### A CHANGING OF THE GUARD

In late 1982 or early 1983 TDC was on the verge of experiencing a radical make over that would not only affect the inmates but the guards as well. Most will remember this as the "RUIZ DECISION" implemented by Judge William Wayne Justice. What this ultimately turned out to be was the discontinuing of the building tender turn key system and the replacing of them with TDC guards. Such a drastic change created a vacuum in the hierarchy among the inmates as to who would control the illicit activities that are prevalent inside of the prison system.

On one side were the Whites with their gangs, the Mexicans with their gangs and finally the Black inmates had organized and become a viable force to be recognized inside the TDC Penal System. About this time I am recruited by one of the founding members of the V.M.W. (Mandingo Warriors). V.M.W. commitment to study of African American history, the raising of the consciousness of the Black inmates inside of TDC appealed to me. So I became a member. Being a member of the V.M.W. was also another weapon I would employ in my denunciation of Christianity as I sought to sway young and old Black inmates into the fold of Islam.

Much like Saul in the New Testament I thought that what I was doing was correct, not only for the Blacks inside of TDC but for Islam as well.

Not long afterwards I signed up to take a welding course which was offered on the Ramsey III Unit in Rosharon, Texas. Much to my surprise the Mandingo Warrior who had recruited me was also on the Ramsey III Unit. He and I reconnected and I was happy to see him.

My priorities at this point were Islam, Mandingo Warriors and power lifting in that order.

I finished the welding course in 1985 and as I reflect back on that year it was the bloodiest year in history of the Texas Prison System. I believe there were fifty-six murders attributed to gang violence system wide. That is more murders than most medium size cities in the United States in one year. In any event, the violence prompted the TDC administration to implement a system wide lock down and shake down. Anyone who was identified as a gang member or affiliated with any gang which came to be known as Security Threat Groups were immediately placed in Administrative Segregation. TDC was to implement this plan on September 12, 1985. However, being forewarned, the one who had recruited me into the Mandingo Warriors had also devised a plan of escape so on the night of September 11, 1985 (9/11) he and I escaped out of the building.

After a chase by the Farm Manager and others we were subsequently caught and locked up in solitary confinement.

The warden of the Ramsey III Unit angered that the security of the unit had been compromised promptly took the two of us to the Brazoria County Courthouse where a magistrate charged us with "Escape from Penal Institution." Ultimately I was taken to court and was able to plea-bargain for a seven-year sentence which was stacked onto my original sentence of twenty-eight years. Receiving the seven-year sentence and having it 'stacked' onto the original or existing twenty-eight year sentence gave me a thirty-five year sentence which was what the D.A. had offered me back in 1981.

## CHAPTER 6

### ADMINISTRATIVE SEGREGATION

The concept of housing numerous inmates in a lock-down situation was new to the Texas Penal System. TDC Struggled to figure out what to do with all of the people they had identified as STG members. In several instances at the beginning members of rival gangs were put into the same cells with one another which created even more violence.

I have to tell you a little about Ad/Seg in the early days. The goal of the administration was to house each respective gang on a cell block with only members of that gang. That did not work out very well mainly because some of the White gang members were at war with one another as well as some of the Mexican gang members were at war with one another. That put Blacks inmates in the middle and we became a target for any gang member looking to make a name for himself.

Yet, the Mandingo Warriors fought back and many received more time 'stacked' onto their original sentence for staff assaults, the possession of a shank or in some instances for assaulting the gang members of the Whites and Mexicans. It may be just a coincidence but it was commonly believed and even talked about that many of the White and Mexican TDC Officers were secretly allied with the gang members of their respective race.

For instance, one may ask how did 'Buck Knives' and drugs end up in the hands of the White and Mexican gang members when everyone in Ad/Seg were locked down in their cells over twenty-three hours a day seven days a week with the exception of visitation then everyone in Ad/Seg was put in a cage for visitation. It was common and almost a daily occurrence that a cell door would 'mysteriously' open while an inmate was going to shower or recreation and TDC guards in fear of their life would run and leave the handcuffed inmate there to be stabbed repeatedly, in all fairness, I will admit that there were TDC guards stabbed as well.

The stabbings I personally witnessed as well as a couple of brutal murders left an indelible upon my mind that will remain with me for all times.

Then, in 1987, the Michael Unit in Tennessee Colony, Texas was opened up which would become the prototype of all of the new prisons being built and there was a separate building that was used to house Ad/Seg inmates. This building was set apart from the main buildings and had their own staff.

There were still some assaults, but the ratio of assaults in regards to the number of inmates locked up in Ad/Seg dropped tremendously. After a couple of years in Ad/Seg on the Michael Unit I was released to General Population (Close Custody). I was still a Mandingo Warrior and a Muslim. I was able to join the Islamic Community and still propagate the fait of Islam.

In February 1992 I was released from prison and returned to Bryan. Since I had been gone during my last incarceration several of my immediate family members had come to Christ while others had come to crack cocaine.

My brother, Marvin was at that time studying to be a Minister of the Gospel and he and I had some lively discussions as I sought to persuade him to become a Muslim and he sought to tell me about Christ. He was licensed in 1992 and became a Pastor of a church in Calvert, Texas.

Now, this time I was surely determined not to ever turn to prison again. I was able to get a job by being persistent in an aluminum factory making windows and doors. Yet, instead of 'catching-in' I sought to catch up and the money I was getting from my job just wasn't enough to provide for the lifestyle that I wanted to live. So, I connected with the family members who had found crack cocaine. I became a mid-level drug dealer and enjoyed success for a while. I had legally change my name while in prison and though I did not attend Islamic Services the name I now went by identified me as a Muslim.



CHAPTER 7  
DENYING GOD'S PLAN

The dope game was good to me in that I made a few dollars until I became my own best customer. Being the 'Man' brought scores of women into my life and after having spent almost eleven years in prison I tried to sleep with them all. Life was so good that I was able to move four women into the mobile home that I was living in and that in itself gave me some status among the people of the streets. As I was shooting dope (cocaine and heroin) it wasn't long before I had a habit and so I checked myself into the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Waco, Texas. I figured that all I needed to do was kick my dope habit and I would be able to resume my lifestyle and making money. Kicking the dope habit proved to be easy, but I was faced with a more debilitating illness that would change my whole life.

After being admitted to the V.A. Hospital the admittance doctor asked me would I consent to take an HIV test after listening to me speak of the drugs I has used and the promiscuous lifestyle I had lived. Naturally I said yes. I mean my name was Shakir and I had only been out of prison a little over a year so surely there was nothing wrong with me. There was no way I could have and HIV Virus even though there had been warnings from several people that some of the women I was sleeping with were 'Sick'. I ignored those warnings and continued to have unprotected sex with them all. I reasoned that I was invincible and nothing could happen to me. "WRONG."

After about a week in the hospital when I was no longer craving drugs, the hospital administrator called me to his office in early April 1993. Without preamble or even offering me a seat he told me that the results from my HIV test were back and that I was going 'to die'. Now I recall that day as if it was just yesterday. The sun was shining through the windows of the office but upon the administrators statement that I was going to die it seemed as if a dark cloud descended and was hovering over my head. "I'm going to die; I'm going to die" seem to reverberate through my head as I walked out of the administrator's office. How could this have happened to me I asked myself as I walked around the hospital grounds trying to digest the information that death was imminent.

Eventually my rational mind prevailed and I decided upon a course of action. I went back to the office of the hospital administrator and informed him that I needed a leave of absence so that I could go to Bryan and inform the women that were living with me that they all needed to be tested for the HIV Virus. I was granted the leave of absence and I went to Bryan.

Arriving in Bryan I went to my trailer and called a family meeting of the four women and myself. I began the conversation by asking each of them if either of them was aware that they could possibly be infected with the HIV Virus.

Of course all four vehemently denied such an accusation. Even when I pointed out that I had been warned that a couple of them were indeed "sick." Still no one was willing to admit they were infected even though they slept with many other men. We were a family and I knew we could talk to one another.

My next course of action was to take all four to the County Health Department to be tested. All four readily agreed for each thought that they were free of the virus. The next morning we loaded up in the Cadillac and went to the Health Department and within a week when the results came back it was revealed that three of the four were indeed HIV+. The one that I was certain to be positive her results came back "non reactive." She was the one that everyone had told me was "sick." I truly wanted to blame someone for the condition that I now found myself in, but I couldn't point the finger at either of the women because I had slept with scores of other women besides them, plus as an IV drug user on a few occasions I had used someone else's works.

I don't have any idea to this day how the news spread around town so quickly but the dynasty I was trying to build of Shakir and his girls crumbled. That didn't stop me from shooting dope and though the dynasty I was building had failed still women by the scores came to be with me.

Eventually I began to smoke crack cocaine. That was something I said I would never do. That just proves the old adage of "never saying never."

Then fate stepped in the form of a Blue Warrant and I was sent back to TDC for failure to report and for failing the mandatory drug tests when I did report. These were just technical violations, but to be honest with you I didn't really care. After all I had been told that I was going to die and I believed it. All I knew about the HIV Virus was that those who were diagnosed with the disease only lived a few years and that was with the cocktail medication that was available at the time. To me, I figured it didn't really matter if I died on the streets or in prison,

I tell you fate or rather God was watching over me as I only had to do a year on the technical violations and then I was released. Many of the people that I had associated with had gotten caught up in a sweep of secret indictments of the Feds and I know that had I still been in the free world then I too would have been doing Fed time. Anyway I came back to Bryan and resumed by lifestyle of smoking crack cocaine.

## CHAPTER 8

### A CALL TO CHRIST

As I resumed smoking crack upon my return to Bryan I became friends with one of the young men that I would score from frequently. Actually I became his driver and through him I met his mother a nice church-going woman who despite my addiction to crack began to like me. She and I subsequently started to date and it wasn't long before we were married. Now, this marriage didn't particularly set well with her children but there was nothing they could do to prevent it. She was a good woman but I was a crack addict and couldn't see further than my next hit on the pipe. I continued to smoke crack, stay away from home and sleep with other women. Yet, when I got tired and needed some rest I would go home to my wife. About this time I has also began to attend church intermittently to please my wife.

In May of 1997 my youngest son was released from prison. I had visited him on several occasions and he and I had made plans to be a family when he got out. I was looking forward to him coming home. Now what should have been a joyous reunion turned into a disaster. He found out that I was smoking crack and really didn't want anything to do with me even though he had begun to sell crack after being out only a few days.

I thought that if I went to church more often with my wife then I would be able to turn my life around. I had yet to make a commitment to accept the Lord Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior.

Then fate stepped in again. I got arrested for:” Possession of a Control Substance less than one Ounce Penalty Group 1.” This was a State Jail Felony. What had happened is that my son and one of my cousins had been stopped by the police and when I went to see about him I automatically hugged him because I saw that he was alright. As I hugged him he threw some crack on the ground and the police officer charge me with possession and they came over and picked it up. I won’t lie, had the police waited another fifteen minutes they would have had me right because I actually was on my way to buy some crack.

I went to jail and once there I decided to fight the case by going to a jury trial. My son had been arrested about twenty days afterwards and I knew he would not let me go to prison for a crime I didn’t commit. Surely, since he was now in jail he would come forth and claim the crack. “WRONG AGAIN”

My son refused to testify and it took the jury all of ten- minutes to return a verdict of guilty. I had beforehand elected to have the judge sentence me to a ten-year probation, \$10,000.00 fine and nine months in a Substance Abuse Felony Treatment Center.

Just looking at it on paper it doesn't seem; like such a bad deal, but there was one catch; I was still on parole for the thirty-five year sentence. I didn't even have a parole hearing but the parole board violated me due to the new conviction and I was sent back to TDC.

Now watch this! In 2003 I graduated from Lee College and three days later the Mandingo Warriors system wide where placed in Ad/Seg. Not for something they as a whole had done but for the activities of the ones that were on the Alred Unit. I was furious, but what could I do? That comes with the territory.

While on the Ellis Unit I was having to make frequent trips to John Sealy Hospital in Galveston (UTMB). On one such trip I had to spend the night at the Estelle Unit and the events that happened changed my whole life. As I lay in my cell I heard my name being called. I went to the bars and said: "yeah." No one answered. I lay back down and then I heard my name called on two more occasions. Each time I went to the bars and said: "yeah." The third time my heart started to palpitate and sweat began to pour off me like rain. I could clearly here these words being spoken in my head: "Come home, Come." No one was in the cell with me and to tell you the truth I became frightened.

I immediately thought of Saul when he was on the road to Damascus and had the encounter with Jesus.

Out of everything that was going on in my life I fell to my knees and cried out: Jesus PLEASE, PLEASE HELP ME! As tears rolled down my face; some how a serene peace seemed to envelop me and I was able to lay back on my bunk and go to sleep. I slept until it was time for me to go on the chain bus to UTMB.

All that day I continued to replay the scene that had happen to me over and over in my head and I was convinced that it was time to make a change. After seeing the doctor at UTMB and getting back to the Ellis Unit, I informed the Mandingo warriors and the brothers that were Muslims that I could no longer be with them. I explained to them that I had an epiphany and Jesus had called me. Now my brothers knew that I was sincere in making such a statement and told me they understood.

The following poem expresses the events of that night.



POEM  
THROUGH GOD'S OWN GATE

For many years I thought I walked alone  
Accepting every situation as part of being grown,  
Never wanting to admit defeat  
Or acknowledge a power higher than me.

Living a life that went against the grain  
For every comfort and worldly gain,  
For things I knew would turn to rust  
Before I in my grave had turned to dust

Using love as just one more tool  
Against any all I considered a fool,  
Young or old it didn't matter to me  
For I thought I was the master, you see

Then it happened one night in a prison cell  
A voice rang out clear as a bell,  
The words "come home" rang through my head  
Come home, come home are the words I heard

(36)

**Elmer J. Lockett, Sr.**

Tears immediately ran down my face  
And my heart hammered as if I'd been in a race,  
Yet I resisted this pull with all my might  
But it was predestined that I'd lose this fight

See God had come to take control  
And lead me back into the fold,  
To forgive my sins and ease my mind  
And let me know He's always on time

Now I start each day with a song in my heart  
Giving praise and glory to Almighty God,  
Being Thankful for the hands of fate  
That finally led me home Through God's own gate.

## CHAPTER 9

### A NEW BEGINNING

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

Having had an experience with Christ and called out to Him asking Him to be my Lord and Savior, I embarked on a new journey. On fire I was more than ready to tell everyone I came in contact with how Christ had brought me out of utter darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9 (NKJV)

In September 2004 I thought that I about to be released from prison. I was taken from the Unit I was assign to; the Mark Stiles Unit and transferred to the Walls Unit in preparation for being let out. As I set in the holding area seeing everyone else leave I was wondering when my name would be called. When I was the only one left I asked one of the TDC guards why I had not been released. He told me that he would go and find out. When he returned he had another officer with him, with what looked like a mandatory supervision papers and some other paperwork. I thought to myself, it is my time. The TDC officer informed me that while I was being released from TDC I had a “detainer” which stated that I had to go to the Substance Abuse Felony Treatment Program. I was crushed. I hadn’t forgotten that I had been sentenced to SAFTP, but I was hoping that somehow I would be able to go home and then go to SAFTP.

No such luck. Instead I was shipped to the Byrd Unit where I stayed for three days and then reclassified and shipped off to the SAFTP in Richmond, Texas at the Jester III Unit. My stay at the SAFTP wasn't bad I was able to come to grips with a lot of issues that I had inside of me that I didn't even realize existed.

Finally my day to be released from SAFTP came. It was August 5, 2005. I was sent to a half-way house in Temple, Texas to begin what is termed "after care." My stay the half-way house was productive in the sense that I got a job as a welder's helper and was able to save some money. Even more than that there were several churches that would come to the half-way house on Sundays and pick up those who wanted to attend Sunday services. I was always ready to go for I had come to believe that the only way for a successful and productive and peaceful life would be through Christ.

At this time I had not been baptized with the Holy Spirit. I had accepted Christ and underwent "water baptism", but as of yet the Holy Spirit had not come upon me. I had witnessed others go through the transformation of not only water baptism but baptism of the Holy Spirit when they began to speak in tongues. The Bible tells us; "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance Acts 2:4 (NKJV)

To me and my carnal way of thinking at that time it seemed as if many of those who were speaking in tongues were doing no more than repeating what they had heard someone else say...it actually sounded like to me that most of them were saying “: I shoulda bought a Cadillac, I shoulda bought a Cadillac” at a fast rate of speech so it would seem as if the Holy Spirit had come upon them. That is just the way I viewed things at that time. Probably all if not the majority actually did receive the Holy Spirit.

My stay at the half-way house ended October 2005 a few days before Halloween and I returned to Bryan. The majority of the people that I associated with and the ones that I called friends were either dead, in the Federal Prison System, in TDC or had moved out of Bryan. A few had even come to Christ.

I had saved some money from the job I had while in Temple, so I thought first things first. I would purchase me a car so I would not have to depend on anyone to get me to the places I needed or wanted to go. I would find me a job so I would have my own money and not have to ask anyone for anything. And last, I would find me a church home so I could continue my spiritual growth. As you read this you are probably saying that I did not have my priorities in the correct order. And you would be right.

## CHAPTER 10

### LOVE THE INTENTIONAL PLAN OF GOD

I was able to purchase a car after being back in Bryan for only four-days. My doing gave credence to the rumors that I had buried a lot of money during the time when I was a drug dealer. The truth is I used the money I had earned while working at the half-way house and then Toyota had a special going on for first time buyers. I was able to find a job as a manager in yet another Pizza establishment and a new best girl. Some how, I seem to have forgotten about Christ and the church.

Wasn't long before I had established a new set of friends who were either smoking drugs or selling drugs. Needless to say within a couple of months I was hooked on drugs again. I had heard the V.A in Houston had established a "Domiciliary" and they were eager to assist any veteran that had a drug problem and needed counseling. So in May of 2006 I headed to Houston to the V.A. and applied for the program, I was accepted. I gave up my car as I was not able to make the payments and became involved in the church where my uncle was the senior pastor.

With the V.A. taking care of my health issues and the church providing me with spiritual guidance I was well on my way to recovery. I didn't have a problem with parole as I had volunteered and committed my self to a drug program.

Plus I was not using. So the mandatory UA's didn't' bother me. Yet, there was still something that I felt was missing in my life. I mean I had accepted Christ and I believed Him to be my Lord and Savior.

I didn't have a best girl or even a girl I spent time with. For once that was a part of my life that I wasn't concerned about. But something was missing in my life. On the surface it seemed to everyone that I had it going on. The counselors at the V.A. spoke well of me and the progress I was making; the church I was attending members spoke well of me; I was making a few dollars in the V.A. program so what more could I ask for. The scripture in Luke 6:26 (NKJV) reminds us to "woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

Because of my medical condition the V.A. had decided to award me with a non-service connected pension. That meant I no longer had to work. Ironically, the V.A. also offered me a job in the Food Service Department. So I was faced with the choice of accepting the pension and waiting on the mailman each month or accepting the job which meant I would have to not only go work on days when I would rather sleep or was feeling bad but that I would have a supervisor telling me what I had to do. I chose the pension. In retrospect, had I taken the job then perhaps things would have turned out differently. This is a question that has haunted me all these years. But the past is the past and so we accept what we have and move on or become mired in depression always thinking: if I coulda woulda shoulda.

Since I had a guaranteed income that was sure to arrive on the first day of every month I moved out the “Domiciliary” and into an apartment on the Southeast side of Houston. The apartment manager and I became friends and she would give me jobs to do around the complex such as painting, digging up flower beds, laying tile and just general make ready for apartments that were about to be rented. This was tax free money and I was able to supplement my pension check. About this time I started to date a woman from the church where I attended. I knew I had it going on in my life.

I did extremely well for a few months and so I thought since I have been so good that I could “treat” myself to a little drugs. You know, just to see if they made me feel the same way that they once did. A little drugs became a lot of drugs and like most addicts the more the better. I found a new best girl who also liked the things that I liked; the drugs and the hustle and bustle of the street life. I am reminded of Solomon how the Lord had blessed him until he turned away from the Lord. As the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon so He did to me in the form of the parole board. During this phase of my life I am reminded of the scripture which gives an accurate description of me and the life I was living. In Matthew 23:28 it reads (NKV) “Even so you outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” Yes, that was me but even so I thought that I could keep my deeds hidden from the members of the church and those who respected me and not be exposed.



Again the scriptures reminds us in John 3:20 (NKJV) "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed." I would always wait until night most instances before I went out to the streets to do my drugs and dirty work. But like all who are eventually exposed I fled from Houston back to Bryan. I didn't even inform the parole board, my uncle, my apartment manager or anyone. I just packed up a few items in a bag and left town. But let me go to the scripture again. In Psalms 139:7 (NKJV) it reads: "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? "Let us look at yet another scripture that is very familiar which relates to me leaving Houston and going to Bryan. In Proverbs 28:1(NKJV) it reads" The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion." Well my running away proved that I was no bold as a lion and therefore I was not righteous.

## CHAPTER 11

### FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST

Back in Bryan once again. What am I going to do now? I am sure the parole board has a blue warrant out for me so whatever I do I must be circumspect. Oh, I know, I will go to the church. Isn't the church the place to go when one is having problems and seemed to have lost their way? So what if some of the people there are doing the same thing that you are doing? It just shows that they too are trying to find their way.

I start to attend a small church that was within walking distance from my mother's house. I knew the Pastor and his wife and I believed they were truly trying to edify the kingdom of God with their ministry and to let the sinner know; of which I was the chief; that it is only through the blood of Jesus Christ one can be saved. For we read in John 3:17 (NKJV "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but the world through Him might be saved")

My stay at the church wasn't long as I soon fall back into my old lifestyle of drugs and women. Then by chance I met an old friend who had to me seemingly changed her life around and become a woman of God. So I started to attend church with her. The Pastor whom I also knew mostly preached on prosperity, yet he did deliver the word of God. My friend would pick me up on Wednesday night for Bible Study; on Saturday morning for intercessory prayer and then on Sunday for Sunday School Services.

In the meantime when my check would come on the first of the month or I made a hustle I could be found in one of the numerous crack dens located in the neighborhood. Yet, I still wanted God to be in my life and so I would always, for the most part try and be available on those days when my friend came to get me to attend whatever service was going on at the church. Fortunately for me or not so fortunate my friend turned out to be a not-so woman of God. But that is her story. Needless to say that all that glitters is definitely not gold. You know we often times exalt or esteem those who disappoint us the most.

My most enjoyable time at this church was during Sunday school. I have always liked to read and so I would study the Sunday school lesson and be prepared to teach if ever called upon. I never was but during the discussion of the Sunday School lesson I always made the teachers a little nervous when I got up to speak because they never knew what I was going to say. They did know that I had studied.

Then one Sunday on the way to church the not-so-woman of God went totally ballistic on me. Started to curse, shout and generally act like the women who were in the crack dens. She even put me out of her van and so I was forced to walk all the way to the west side of town where the church we attended was located. I made it there in time for Sunday school and stayed and then I decided to leave and walk home before it got too hot. As I was leaving I met this woman who would become my wife.

I didn't realize it at that time because physically she was the type of woman I always stayed away from. But love is indeed blind. As I was leaving she was at the entrance and as I hugged her on my way out of the door she asked me "which one of the women in the church was I married to." I replied that I didn't have a wife and I left and walked home.

The following Wednesday, I left home early and walked to church so I could be there in time for Bible Study. As I always do I took my customary seat next to the aisle closest to the wall. When this woman walked in trailed by three children I was tugged from my seat by a force invisible and I stood up and opened my arms wide and she walked into my arms as if this is where she longed to be. I didn't even know her name at the time. During the Bible Study I would sneak glances over at her and would always find her watching me. What really had intrigued me is that when she walked into my arms she had whispered in my ear that God was going to send me a wife. Well, I wasn't looking for a wife or even a new best girl at that time. Yet, there was something about this woman that pulled my spirit.

After Bible Study I approached her and asked her if it would be alright if I called her. Then I thought about it and asked her what was her name. She told me her name was Evangelist Jackie Woods and gave me a business card with her name, address, phone number, fax number, e-mail address and the name of her company; Phenomenal Consultants.

I was impressed and told her that I would call her later after I had returned home if she was okay with that. She said it was okay and then asked me my name.

After Bible Study I went out to eat with a friend and when I returned home a little after 10: pm I gave Evangelist Woods a telephone call. She answered on the second ring and I apologized for calling so late but she assured me that it was alright as a matter of fact she informed me that she had been awaiting my call. We talked about some of every thing and I asked her if the three children she had with her was her children. She laughed and told me that they were her grandchildren who were staying with her for a while. At almost 5:am I told her that I had to lay down and get a few hours of sleep as I had a job to go and do that day. As stimulating as the conversation was I could have continued talking to her until the sun came up. Evangelist Woods asked me to give her a call when I finished work that day.

That evening after I had finished work I went home and cleaned up and gave Evangelist Woods a call. She invited me to come over to her house. I went over and again she and I engaged in some stimulating conversation about the Bible and about life in general. At around 2: am I told her that I had to leave and I had another job to do that day. Before I left we got on our knees and prayed together. Actually I did the praying and she listened. In my prayer I asked God to heal me from my debilitating illness and that was something I had never asked before.

I prayed that I would stand on His word in 1 Peter 2:24 (NKJV) “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.” As I was walking out the door to go home Evangelist Woods asked that I call her when I made it home to let her know I had gotten home safely.

I made it home and I called Evangelist Woods and let her know I was home. She then asked me what was my debilitating illness that I had prayed and asked God to heal me from. I was tempted to tell a lie because I reasoned if I told her that I was HIV+ that she would not want to see or talk to me again. Well, I didn't lie and Evangelist Woods asked me to give her a call that day when I finished work. I told her alright.

All that day I thought about Evangelist Woods and reasoned within myself that the only reason she could want me to call her was so that she could tell me that she did not want to talk to me anymore. Why I let that bother me I will never know. It was not like we were dating or anything, but I did feel in my spirit a strong yearning to get with her. After work I called Evangelist Woods and she invited me over to her house once again. When I got to her house she invited me in. We sit down in the living room and talked about the Bible and then we talked about my illness.

We touched and agreed that when I returned to the doctor at the V.A. that they would find no trace of the disease.

Standing on the promise in the scripture in Matthew 18:19 (NKJV) which reads: "Again I say to you if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven." I was desperate to believe the word of God and after praying with Evangelist Woods I left and went home and prepared for another day of work.

During this time though I was having some money for once my old nemesis (drugs) did not enter into my life. The relationship with Jackie progressed and she and I began to spend a lot of time together. She would even go with me to a couple of job sites and sit in the truck while I did my work. She asked me about the issue of parole, but I told her that I would deal with that situation whenever it came about. Jackie encouraged me to turn myself in and rely on the Lord, but I wasn't ready to go to jail

## CHAPTER 12

### CLEARING THINGS UP

November 2008, a few days before Thanksgiving, a young man and I whom I had hired to assist me in my work had finished one job and as there was only one other job we had to do which was in the same area we decided that we would start on it and thereby be able to finish early the next day and be ready for the Thanksgiving holiday. My younger brother had contracted with a local builder to do the clean up and hauling away of the debris left by the contractors and he in turn had allowed me to take over the business and just give him a percentage of the profits. He was making out pretty good, after all I did all the work and though I used his truck he did not have to come out on the job site and he got paid. Night fell as the young man and I went to the house and proceeded to sweep up and load the debris into the trailer that was attached to the truck.

As I came out of the house and went to the trailer I noticed a light coming from the back of the house. I started to go and investigate as I knew there was not suppose to be anyone at the house but my friend and I. As I came to the side of the house another light came on from the front of the house and there was a policeman standing there holding the light. He told me to stand still. I complied. When he got closer he asked me what I was doing at the house. I explained that I was cleaning up the debris at the house for the builder and I gave the policeman the name of the builder as well as his home telephone number.

(51)

**Elmer J. Lockett, Sr.**



The policeman called the builder to confirm the veracity of my statement. The policeman had also asked me my name and the name of my friend and did I have any identification to verify I was who I said I was. I produced the requested identification and then the policeman called the builder and asked him about me. The builder informed the policeman that I was known to him and that my brother and I had permission to be at the house doing the clean up that we had contracted with him to do. Then the policeman called in to see if I had any outstanding warrants. He also did the same with the friend that was assisting me on the job. Of course I knew that the Blue Warrant would come up and sure enough it did. So there I was on my way back to jail for a Blue Warrant.

I admit that the police officer was courteous in that he even apologized for having to arrest me. He told me that they had received a call that some suspicious activity was going on at the house and that several new homes had been broken into and the appliances stolen which is why they came out to investigate. He also told me that with all the crime that was going on in the city he was being forced to arrest someone out trying to make an honest living. Mentally that made me feel good but there I was on my way back to jail yet again. Then too, I was really ready to see what the parole board would do and get that over with. I knew that all I had was a technical violation so it wouldn't be too bad.

Much to my surprise when I finally had my parole hearing the parole panel and hearing officer voted to reinstate me. Praise God.

I went back to doing the work I had been doing, stayed away from drugs and seriously began to look for a church home I had written the Pastor of the church I was attending to come and be a character witness at my parole hearing. Instead he had told Jackie that she would be dead within a year if she continued to mess with me. Jackie and I were not sleeping together and so this had angered Jackie and she had left and went to another church. In all fairness I will say that the Pastor was only looking out for those who had been entrusted to his care and I did have a reputation around town of sleeping with a lot of different women. But as far as him knowing the true status of my illness he didn't know me like that. He was just going on the rumors that had circulated that I had AIDS when in fact I was only HIV+ and I had prayed and asked God to heal me from that.

Now the church Jackie has started to attend, the Pastor was a woman. I was very familiar with the Epistle of Paul to Timothy where the scripture reads: "And I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, but to be in silence." 1 Timothy 2:12 (NKJV). Call it prejudice or just plain ignorance, but I believed the scripture and wanted to adhere to what the scripture had to say about women preaching or teaching. I wasn't prepared to sit up under the pastoral-ship of a woman.

Along about this time another good friend of mines who had once been a drug dealer and on the streets and had given his life to Christ and was now a minister of the Gospel invited me to go to church with him.

He and I attended Sunday school at the church he went to and then he told me that he had promised Pastor Garret that he would come and attend the Sunday Worship Services at the church they belonged to.

I knew both of the Garret's and I knew where their church was located. In fact the building that they were using for a church had once been a club owned by my brother and he had sold the building to them. I wrongly assumed that the husband was the pastor of the church. However, after we got to the church and the wife took the podium I was somewhat surprised as it was announced that now Pastor Garret would be delivering the Sunday message. Yet, as I listened to her preach and expound on the word of God which truly enlighten me as well as the congregation I began to think that I may have been wrong in my prejudices in not believing in women preachers.

I now started to attend the church with Jackie and instead of concentrating on the messenger (the woman pastor) I began to listen to the message. This little woman seemed filled with the Holy Spirit and when I left the church that day I left knowing that I had indeed been fed with the word of God. I didn't immediately join although I knew many of the members of the church.

As I continued to come to this church and listen to the preaching my spirit was moved to ask if I could become a member of this church.

The members and the pastor gladly accepted me and this became my church home.

Then in February 2009 Jackie asked “me” to marry her. Now it is not that I am a chauvinist but no woman had ever asked me to marry them. I said yes and on February 22, 2009 Jackie and I were married at the little church we both attended. Wasn’t a big wedding but it was one that we both will remember for all times.

In retrospect we probably should have waited a little longer and got to know each other better but we were in love. At least I thought that we were. See, Jackie was use to the men in her life putting her upon a pedestal and worshipping her and I on the other hand had never been in love, plus being in love frightened me as I did not know how to treat a wife. Then to add to that this was the first time that I was committed to just one woman. Truthfully, looking back at things neither of us were marriage material as the both of us brought a lot of baggage into the marriage.

We did however put up with one another even though our marriage was a farce.

I had gone to the doctor at the V.A. and he was amazed that there was no evidence of the HIV in my blood.

I remember he asked me how this could have happened and I told him that I had prayed about the situation. I explained to him that Jackie and I in 2008 had prayed asking God to heal me and standing on His word in 1 Peter 2:24 (NKJV) which reads: “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed”

I believe this is important because as I write this here in 2013 it has been over twenty years since I was first diagnosed with the HIV Virus and yet, I am still here in relatively good health and without any signs of the HIV Virus showing in my blood work. I am reminded of yet another scripture in 2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV) which reads: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering towards us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” So, here it is twenty-years after being diagnosed with HIV Virus and I am still alive. Another very important note is that Jackie and I believed so strongly in the word and promise of the Lord that even though we did not use any protection she is still “non-reactive” to the HIV virus to this day.

## CHAPTER 13

### PUNISHMENT FOR FORSAKING THE WAY

In 2010 things started to get out of hand in the marriage and I accept the blame. See, once again I had allowed my old nemesis (drugs) to not only creep back into my life but to start to control my life. I was worse off now doing drugs than ever before. The scripture tells us in Luke 11:24-26 (NKJV) “When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places seek rest, and finding none, he says”, I will return to my house from which I came! And when he comes and finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the state of that man is worse than the first.”

I began to stay away from the house, come home at wee hours of the morning until Jackie being fed up with my foolishness divorced me in August of 2010. Yet, because we were in love by October 2010 she and I were once again living together. We had not remarried we just “shacked-up”.

In December 2011 my mother offered to rent us a house where the rent was cheaper in the hopes that Jackie and I would do the right thing. Jackie and I moved in the house and we claimed that we were going to be “roommates”. She had a bedroom, I had a bedroom and we split the bills. Roommates is what we called each other though in fact we live together as husband and wife.

By this time Jackie and I both had left the church and were doing our own thing. We had forgotten that the scripture tells us in Proverbs 15:10 (NKJV) “Harsh is the punishment for him who forsake the way and he who hates correction will die.”

I began to bring other women to the house and those women and I would sit in my room and get high. I mean Jackie and I were only roommates even if we did live as husband and wife. I thought that I would be able to recapture the lifestyle I had lived back in 1992 when I had the four women living with me. By this time I also met a young man who was a mid-level drug dealer and he needed a place to cook his dope and serve his customers. I told him he could do that at my house. Didn't consult Jackie didn't feel a need to after all I was the man. In allowing this to happen I fell almost to the depths of hell.

Jackie couldn't take it any more. The many women, the drugs as well as the traffic all times of night so she moved out and to Houston with her daughter. That didn't bother me; I mean after all we were just roommates anyway. Now my house became a crack den and any and everyone was welcome as long as you could pay the price of admission. I allowed a package of drugs to be stolen from me so the young man moved on. But I kept my lifestyle going on as I had built up a large clientele and I was still able to buy wholesale and serve my customers.

Then came July 5, 2012. I was on my way home when a group of teenagers attacked me and hit me in the head with a bat. With blood streaming down my face from the gash in my head I managed to break away and run to my house. Once I got home I grabbed two knives thinking that if the teenagers follow me home and came into my yard then I would be well within my rights to defend myself and my property.

As I sit on the porch with the two knives and blood all over my face a police cruiser came down my street. I laid the knives on the porch and stepped into the yard and flagged the police officer down. The police car stopped and I'll never forget the words that the officer spoke into her microphone she said; "I got him." She stepped out of her car and told me to sit on the ground with my hands on top of my head. I complied. As she came over and began to search me I tried to explain to her that I had been assaulted by a group of teenagers. What I didn't know at that time was the she had previously stopped the teenagers and they had told her that a man had pulled a knife on them and in defending themselves they had thrown a rock and hit me in the head which caused me to run off. They had also given the police officer my description and the direction I had went.

I vehemently denied these allegations, but before long another police cruiser came down my street and the detaining officer had me stand up. A spotlight from the police cruiser was directed towards me and after a hushed conversation on her microphone the detaining officer put me in handcuffs and told me



I was being charged with "Aggravated Assault With A Deadly Weapon." I protested my innocence but I was still put into the police car and taken to jail.

Since I was on parole a Blue Warrant was issued early the next morning which prevented me from making bond. I could not believe it. There I was with blood streaming down my face from a lacerated scalp and I was the one being arrested.

(60)

**Elmer J. Lockett, Sr.**

## CHAPTER 14

### ACKNOWLEDGING GOD'S GREATNESS

After I was indicted for the charge of "Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon" my court-appointed attorney came to see me. He advised me that the D.A. was willing to accept a plea agreement of ten to twenty-five years aggravated. I protested and claimed that I was innocent of the charge being brought against me. I knew that there was no way I would go to a jury trial with my prior record. Though it had been over fifteen-years since my last jury trial it was still fresh in my mind and I didn't want to take that chance. I told my attorney if he could get the D.A. to come down to seven-years I would accept the plea.

In November 2012 I went to court and accepted the plea of seven-years aggravated. Once again, for the second time I would be coming to TDC for a crime that I did not commit. To be honest, though I didn't want to come to TDC I really didn't care. The woman I loved was gone, I had abandoned the church so whatever happened to me didn't really matter.

Now watch this. As soon as I got back to the jail cell from court and accepting the plea agreement, mail was called and I received three letters from Jackie. She apologized for leaving me, though I couldn't blame her, but as a paralegal she was willing to help me fight my case.

Well it was too late for that. She also asked me could she come to visit me. Of course I wrote and told her I would be more than happy to have her visit with me. I then told her in my letter that it was too late to try and fight my case as I had already accepted the plea agreement. However before Jackie could get to Bryan to visit with me I was shipped off to TDC.

Arriving at TDC I was sent to the Holliday Unit and then to the Byrd Unit. Once there I started to pray and read the Bible that I had brought with me from the County jail. I made a vow that I would read the Bible from Genesis to Revelations. I also prayed that God would keep me in Huntsville area and preferably send me to the Wynne Unit where I could reconcile with my son whom I had not seen or spoken to in sixteen-years. Now this is the same son that had thrown the crack cocaine on the ground and allowed me to be arrested and convicted for his crime.

I read the Bible from Genesis to Revelations and God answered my prayers about keeping me in the Huntsville area. I was sent to the Wynne Unit where my son was and the irony of the whole thing is that thirty-five prior I had been assigned to the Wynne Unit and proclaimed Islam as my religion. I was able to reconcile with my son. I was able to tell him that I was proud of him. Not because of any academic achievements or physical; prowess but because he had given his life to Christ and was now walking and talking about the Lord and Savior Christ Jesus. I was even put on the same cell block as my son and the same row.

Now get this; both of these men were born in 1954; the same year that I was born in; now it may not seem all that strange to others with all of the people inside of TDC, but to have three men who somehow become friends and all three are actively seeking to spread the Gospel and all three of us live on the same cell block and the three of us were born in the same year. This had to be God orchestrated. The three of us spend a lot of time together. We try and meet for prayer every morning. Evangelist Traylor conducts a Bible Study on Saturday mornings and I conduct a Bible Study on Thursday nights. We all support and encourage one another. Pastor Traylor who is the third of our trio assists both of us in areas where we need help. My wife says we are like the three Hebrews boys and here on the cell block the men have dubbed us as the three wise men.

This does not mean that we are perfect in our walk and do not sin, but we are striving for perfection. The scriptures tell us in James 3:2 (NKJV) "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word he is a perfect man able to bridle the whole body." So as we walk and strive towards perfection I am praying that this booklet will touch someone's heart so that they will see that regardless of what they have done Christ paid the penalty on the Cross at Calvary and redemption is now possible. May God bless and reward each and every one that reads this booklet.

**Pastor Elmer J. Lockett, Sr.**

**G.R.O.W. MINISTRY**

(64)

**Elmer J. Lockett, Sr.**