Dealing with the Loneliness of Prison.

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It is my hope that by sharing my soul and exploring the pain that loneliness has caused me and the ways that I have managed to deal with it—perhaps, through my writing and reflections, one day others may be guided through the emotional minefield that loneliness can become.

I pray that these words "...may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherein we ourselves are comforted by God." 1 Cor. 1:14

Loneliness can strip our hearts of song, quench the spirit, and cripple our ability to praise God—loneliness can bring you to your knees... but as it turns out, that's a great place to start.

"It is on our knees that we can find... the oil of gladness instead of mourning, a garment of praise instead of despair." Isa. 61:1-3

Loneliness can't be denied, brushed aside or 'wished' away— I know, because I've tried those things... of course there is no 'quick fix' and there are no clever solutions— rather, it is a process.
The pain of loneliness can run so deep, that finding any solutions outside of the Word of God is like putting a Band-Aid on a broken bone... just not very effective.

Do - I invite you to take a journey with me. A journey through the darkness, and into the Light of God's love.

The issue of loneliness is discussed throughout Scripture - beginning way back in Gen. 2:18. "And the Lord said, it is not good for man to be alone."

However, there are many, many different kinds of loneliness (and causes). It's possible to be in a room full of people and still feel terribly alone.

Albert Einstein once said "Oh to be so universally known and still be lonely."

Here's the loneliness of Jacob as experienced in Genesis 32:24; 1:6; Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:1-4, 10 and 12; Enoch in Jude 14-15; Jonah in 2:3-6 - here's the loneliness of leadership as experienced by Moses in Exodus 18:14-18; John the Baptist in Mt. 11:1-11; Paul in 2 Cor 1:8-9, 11:23-28; 2 Tim 1:13; and David in Ziklag.
I could, of course, go on — but my only point is that, as stated in 1 Cor 10:13, "There is no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it."

(I don't want to get a head of myself, but I call loneliness a "temptation", because — what is it, if not the temptation to, like Elijah, sit beneath the juniper tree and request for himself that he might die? 1 Kings 19:4)

Just long ago I read about a famous 'rock star' who, though it appeared he had everything to live for (I.e., fame and fortune), committed suicide. — In a note left behind, he wrote in French, 'J'ai une âme solitaire' (I am a lonely soul) How sad is that?

Loneliness has been described as a feeling of restlessness, or being incomplete; the feeling that something is missing — an excema of the spirit that is impossible to scratch.
Since man was created in the image of God, we will experience a restlessness of the spirit until we find that rest in Him!

In exploring the causes and possible solutions, (in my case) I'd like to begin with a little story — 

There was a man running through the forest when, suddenly, he went over a cliff... at the last moment he managed to grab onto a branch before plummeting to the valley floor below.

After yelling himself hoarse calling for help — he began to cry out to God.

"Oh God... please help me! I know that I've let you down in the past... but, please God — just get me out of this one, and I promise, I'll do the right thing." On and on he went, until he heard a voice.

"My child.

"God," said the man, "I see that you.

"Yes, my child.

"Oh please — get me out of this, I promise I'll..."
"We can discuss that later," said God. "First, let's get you down from there."
"Oh, thank you God," said the grateful man. "O.K., my child, I've got you..."
"Ready?"
"Oh, yes God."
"O.K. - Let Go."

After a few moments of silence, the man began to yell out. "Help! Help! Is there anyone else up there?"

I love that story... And though it may seem to be humorous, it has a serious point - the right doing to do, of course, would be to "Let go." To "Let go and let God." However, while in so many ways and for so many reasons it may seem like the logical thing to do - too often, in leaning upon our own understanding we may "cling" to things as tightly as some man clung to that branch. "Is there anybody else up there?" "Is there another way?" - Faith sounds great in a sermon, but how readily do we apply it to our own lives? To our own situations?
Now, of course, The Loneliness of Imprisonment is a unique situation — but self is the only prison that can hold the soul!!

In my case, I found that the only way I could be able to move forward toward the peace of mind that I so desperately needed — I had to "let go" of a few things to which I, stubbornly, tried to cling — people, places, things, the past, and most importantly, self.

I say "people" for what may seem, in most cases, obvious reasons. Often, putting one’s faith in people is like trying to carry red hot coal in a brown paper bag. Nor, I have learned, is it fair to the people themselves when our faith is dependent upon their actions. With very few exceptions, it turns out that the very people upon whom I’d grown most "attached" were the ones who caused me the most pain.

Once again, I have to be clear, it never should have been their responsibility in the first place to live up to my expectations.
There's no point in getting into a "name game: suffice it to say, "... that mine own familiar friend, in whom I did trust, which did eat of my bread, has lifted his heel against me." Ps 41:9

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother was born for adversity." Prov 17:17 — Now that’s a beautiful sentiment... but it hasn’t necessarily been my experience. I could much more realistically say that "success has many fathers, and failure is an orphan." is

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." Ps 18:8

Many times it can be said that loneliness is not so much a matter of being alone, as much as it is a feeling that no one really seems to care what happens to you — think God, "I have a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

Once, when I’d just begun serving time, I got a few lines on a post card from a church sister — it was just a few lines on a post card, but it touched my heart and lifted my spirit — it was like a gift from God.
I often say to myself, "Self, I say to myself..." If people only realized what a simple word of encouragement can accomplish in the heart of someone going through some kind of trial or tribulation... it's like a cool glass of water to a thirsty man. And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it... (1 Cor. 12:26) As Christians are we not all members of the same family? The same body? For one Christian to say that his fate is not somehow tied to the fate of his brother is like saying, "Your end of the boat is sinking." Although I still pray that the Holy Spirit reaches out to touch the hearts of those who I had loved and missed so much—and that in touching, might plant a seed from which might grow the fruit of compassion— I have learned to "let go... to let go of the expectations, and hold on to the memories."

When I say "places" are one of the pillars that I must "let go" of, it might seem odd— but the reality is, it (last in my case) is a big part of "dealing" with loneliness.
begins with "accepting" the fact that, for the time being, those "places" that I once considered my "comfort zones" have been blown away by the winds of adversity that hit my life like a violent storm — I guess that kind of loneliness can be compared to a feeling of 'homelessness.' From a 3/4acre ranch to a 2-man cell — like a leaf in a windstorm, those places have been blown away.

Since peace of mind comes through acceptance. I have to accept the fact that, although I didn't choose to be here... as the commentator says, I might as well have a Snickers bar, because I won't be going anywhere for awhile."

It should be pretty easy to see how "letting go" of things is important — the same way that I missed "who I was in relation to other people, and where I was in terms of places... what I had" also seemed to play a big part or what I once considered my reality. Designer suits have been replaced with "prison blue" — A Gold Mont Blanc with a \text{\$100}, and Bally's with Bobo's.
But... A man's life consists not in the abundance of things that he possesses - I had to learn, like Paul, that "... everywhere and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

In a very real sense, I have learned that in many ways - it was those very "things" that I had in such abundance that had separated me from the kind of relationship with God that I now treasure.

(Don't get me wrong - part of the blessing of God is that a person may enjoy the comfort of a godly home, and the prosperity with which God himself may have blessed them.)

It's just that (once again, I speak to my own situation) when the "friends" are gone, and the "fences" and "things" are gone - trying to "hold on" to them is like one who "beats the wind." As Paul would say, "" (Ref. 1 Cor 9:26)

I have found that a much greater frustration comes from emotional and spiritual deprivation rather than any financial lack - economic issues can be remedied, but a bankrupt soul can be catastrophic.
Another thing I discovered was that, in order for me to get to a place where I would no longer be 'tossed to and fro' upon the waves of loneliness, I needed to "let go & let the past be the past."

There's a very good reason that we have such a large front windshield and a small rearview mirror. Not only can we not face the future when we "cling" to the past, but we can't even begin to appreciate the present.

To hug our sorrows is to fuel our grief, and so past disappointments, yesterday's failures as well as its accomplishments belonging in the past, let them be reviewed periodically, but let us not be blinded by their reflection!

I've had an incredible life, those are - I've reached heights that many men only dream of... yet I also have memories of desperate times spent lumbering along on the waves of grief.

I've done some things of which I'm proud, and things that I choose to remember.

For example, the tragic chain of events that led to my arrest may represent a series of snapshots in
In the photo album of my life—
but what does not define me
or what I am, nor does it
limit who I still may become...
God is not finished with me yet.
And when this "sentence" comes
to an end, a new chapter will begin.

"For Godly sorrow works
repentance to salvation that is
not to be repented of."...
II Cor. 7:10 — God doesn't say
that He will "forget" our sins,
whatever they may be—because,
He simply "forgot them" perhaps
one day He might "remember" them.
But no His Word says "... For
I will remember their sin no more."
Jer. 31:34 Hallelujah!

Thank God that, my redemption
comes from the Blood of Christ
and not through the opinion of men.
And so—"... forgetting those things
which are behind", and "... running
unto those things which are before,
I press toward the mark for the
PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN
CHRIST JESUS" Phil 3:14

Adversity is like a strong wind,
it doesn't just hold you back from
places you might otherwise go—It also
Fears away from us all but the things that cannot be torn away - so that, after, we see ourselves as we really are, and not as we might like to be.

Once stripped of the "things" not used to define us... what's left is what we have to work with - which leads me to the last thing that I realized I had to "let go of" - self. Self-will, self-doubt, self-centeredness, self-absorption... self.

"He must increase and I must decrease..." The simplicity of the Gospel is that Christ died, was buried and rose again on the 3rd day... and paid for our salvation. To die to self is to gain Christ. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17)

As long as I tried holding on to the old me, it would have been impossible to please God. - impossible to say, "Not my will, but your will be done." - for too many Christians, and I once counted myself chief among them, say, "Our Father" on Sunday, and then spend the rest of the week acting like orphans.

We must "die to self," that we may live for Christ. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death..."

"Oh, Oh! I feel a 'story' coming on..."

Once upon a time there was a farmer who needed to clear some trees from his property to extend his crops. Needing a new saw, he headed into town to buy one. When he got to a hardware store, he was convinced by a salesman to try the latest in power chain saws.

"With this beauty here," said the salesman, "you can cut down 10 to 15 trees in the time it would normally take to cut down only one with your old-hand saw." Convincing the old farmer bought the chain saw and headed back to the farm.

A few days later he was back at the store and he was hot. "You lied to me!" he said to the salesman. "You said I'd be able to cut down 10 to 15 trees with this thing—why, it took me all day just to cut down one!"
Puzzled, the salesman took the saw - looked it over - then pulled the cord... BZ-BZ-BZZZ. The chainsaw roared to life.

“What’s that noise?” said the farmer. — L.O.L.

Now, of course, that tool is meant to be a humorous story — but isn’t that also how we, as Christians, can limit the power of God in our lives by trying to do things “our way”? So I’ve learned, through Scripture, that I must “let go” of self, if I would risk making the “wielded power of God of no effect.” Mark 7:18

I can only “tap into that power source (pull the cord)” byfirst putting off the “old man” and “letting go of self.” — John 15:9-10

“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” — It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to... WALK in His nearness of life.

A New Path

“...A New Path - NOT A CROSSROAD, for in truth there is no other way... Just a reasonable with could go A New Path - NOT A DESTINATION - for there is no stopping...”
A NEW PATH - NOT A DEEPER, FOR THE PATH I WAS ON HAD TAKEN ME AS FAR AS I WOULD GO.
A NEW PATH - NOT A DEAD END - FOR THERE CAN BE NO TURNING BACK!"

I came across that bit of writing, "A NEW PATH," during a particularly difficult period in my journey through the "Adverse of Reflection" known as the Florida Dept. of Corrections - during a time when I realized that the path I had been on had led to a Boulevard of Broken Dreams.

But -- praise God for His grace and mercies towards me ... I may not be where I want to be, but at least I'm not where I was. And isn't that one of His most beautiful things about God's grace? It always takes us as we are, but never leaves us as we were.

If it had not been for the strength and guidance that I have been able to find within the Word of God, trying to deal with the pain and loneliness that prison can produce would have been unbearable.
It would have been like trying to fight the lightning with a sling shot. Each flash would have only revealed how hopeless the battle — and in the darkness between the flashes, doubts would have echoed like rolling thunder, and the tears fallen down like rain.

Do I still struggle with loneliness? Yes! Do I still fight to overcome these emotions? Yes! — The difference is, when all you have in your toolbox is a hammer, every problem seems like a nail. However, by studying the Word of God it provides me with the "tools" to deal with whatever trials may come my way. His Word has become as a lamp unto my feet (showing me where I stand) and a light unto my path. (This is the way, walk ye in it.)

Earlier, I mentioned that adversity is like a mighty wind — but it is the tree that has to withstand the fiercest winds that has roots which go down the deepest. — The Word of God is the soil in which I have planted my roots, and I continue to look to Christ who strengthens me — I tap into that power source by "pulling The Cord" and calling upon the name of Jesus.
Over the years I have earned over 40 certificates from various Bible correspondence courses. I have been blessed to have earned a Graduate Certificate in Theology and a Bachelor’s in Bible Studies. By the grace of God, I have finished the course work and (if it may be God’s will) will soon complete my thesis for a Masters in Biblical Studies from Gulf Coast Bible College. I am also working on a Masters in Theology from Covenant Bible College and Seminary in Nashville, TN.

If I were to spread those certificates and diplomas out on a table, each one would represent a leaf from a mighty oak tree. In the garden of adversity, the winds of adversity blow, and deeper I bury myself within the Word of God.

At one point, between Bible college, prayer, and those correspondence courses, there were days when I would spend 8 hours or more absorbed in the study of God’s Word. Paul tells us in 2 Tim 2:15, “Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” I would pray constantly, not to become “puffed up” by the knowledge, but rather, humbled by the word.
It continues to occur to me to no end to realize that in spending time in the Word, I'm spending time with Jesus! "...and the Word was God." John 1.

When I examined loneliness through the lens of Scripture, I found comfort and inspiration. For example, Jesus says in John 16:32, "...every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: And yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I know He will never leave nor forsake me.

Trials will come and rainclouds will form; and lightning will strike 'round the eye of the storm.

But as surely as dawn will follow the night— we will persevere if we keep Him in sight.

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Glory be to God.

A few points before closing— a man can earn more degrees than a thermometer, but it is the degree to which he applies the word of God to his life that makes the difference.
It is vital that we learn to use the Word of God effectively in the spiritual battles that we will face—loneliness is just one of these battles. What greater example can we find than our Savior Himself, who, when confronted by the wicked one in the wilderness quoted directly from Scripture. It is written... Deut 6:13, Deut 8:3, Deut 6:16.

Here are just a few examples of how we can use the Word of God to combat Satan's "lies" (his fiery darts).

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God's Word

God has left me I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
Heb. 13:5

I'll never make it! I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me
Phil. 4:13

"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." Luke 21:33

Hallelujah! Let God be true and every man a liar.

Sometimes we cry out to God when our foundations are being shaken, only to find that it is God who is shaking them.

"Better is the end of a way than the beginning thereof." Ecc. 7:8

After Elijah had thrown himself a little "pit party" beneath the juniper tree and requested for himself that he may die. (1st Kings 19:4) Verse 11 of 1st Kings is... And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great strong wind rent the mountains (He was shaking the foundations) and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but
The Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind, an earthquake:
and after the earthquake, a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire:
and after the fire, a still small voice.”

My voice of God—After the foundations had been shaken,
came in a whisper… If we spend our time dwelling on the results of the storms in our lives, we run the risk of missing that “still small voice.”—“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Mt. 11:28

My brothers and sisters in Christ—I’ve been written on,
by some friends and friends it’s if a ship that went down in a storm

But that’s not the way that my story ends—
cause I’ve been praying here in that storm

During those days of “so-called” success—I had friends galore—but with my “I am from Greece” those friends (with few exceptions) turned out to be like “wells without water.”
or clouds without rain.

One of the things that I am most grateful to God for is that He has not allowed this experience to harden my heart. The word of God has enabled me to cultivate a garden within my soul. Part of that cultivation process has been to remain vigilant and no seed of bitterness as allowed to take root—only then will I be able to hear the still small voice of God walking in that garden in the cool of the day.

Before learning to “let go”—

I approached the word of God while holding on to my little cup of “worldly knowledge.” As I approached the ocean of God’s Word, I was awed by its majesty—my hand trembled and my little cup fell... with a shout of Hallelujah! I ran and plunged into the ocean of God’s love. I bathed my soul in the healing waters... into the depths of His mercy I went only to be lifted up by His grace and carried along upon the waves of glory.
Whatever may be the causes for our loneliness—God "was an apple for Paul." Unfortunately, life does not come with a rewind button—we can't go back and change things while hoping for different results. Nor can we hit a "Fast Forward" button and bury past whatever might be the negative consequences of poor choices or past mistakes. But we can pause—we can pause and drink deeply from that fountain of living water.

As we struggle through difficult situations, or try to rise above personal problems, we may feel alone...we may look back and see a single track of footsteps, left more in the sand—perhaps unaware. Or we look back and see the Master had been holding our hand.

In closing, I pray that whoever you are, wherever you are, and whatever you may be going through, you take comfort from the fact He will never leave nor forsake you—and you will never walk alone when you call upon the name of Jesus...not just our Savior, but a friend who sticks closer than a brother!

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In His Custody, Cindy Field