



Prison  
Contemplative  
Fellowship

## ***A Prisoner's Reflection on The Prodigal Son***

By Josh Gilmore

At some point, it all becomes very old. The superficial nature of everything. The mental, emotional, and physical burdens placed upon you by those supposedly closest to you. And so, you just check out.

Is it really all that big a mystery why the Prodigal son cashed out his inheritance? He couldn't take it anymore! I bet it went something like this:

My dad is a slave owner, and my brother mindlessly obeys him.

He'll tell you it's out of a loving devotion to our father,

but I've seen the truth. I know the truth:

He is obedient because he's scared of the consequences of disobedience.

Is this what love is: fear of the consequence of not following the rules? None of it adds up. Is this why people 'love God'? So as not to go to hell? Anybody ever see this place? This hell? Something's not quite right here. I can't put my finger on it but it's not right. And so we go it alone.

Friends come, friends go. Were they ever really friends? Was I? Questions we don't ask. If they don't like it, they can leave it. I couldn't care less. I don't care.

Somewhere, beneath all this, is a voice. And it's terrifying. And so I drank, drugged, hurt, wounded, maimed, scarred, and on and on and on. Yet that damn voice won't leave me.

I don't know why it happens, maybe it's a law of physics, but you eventually hit bottom. And it hurt. It hits you: "I'm all alone and I'm scared!" You find yourself longing for what you once walked out on and rejected as "old". "Yes, my brother followed the rules out of fear, but the reality is *I'm scared too! Terrified.*

And so I terrorized, brutalized, and did things to make others come face to face with the world "they" had created for me. But there really is no "they", just us. I've come to realize the pervasiveness of fear. It is inextricably woven into the very fabric of human DNA, my DNA. So much time passing judgment, heaping condemnation, brutalizing

others in an attempt to shatter the "false idols" of "their" world. Never realizing their world is my world too, and I'm destroying it. Destroying my own world. Destroying our world.

To look back on those who placed those mental, emotional, and physical burdens upon you and to realize they did it not because you are worthless, inferior, sinful, etc., none of that is the reason. They did it because they, like me, were and are afraid. They, like me, just didn't know how to ask for help. Humility is this: the recognition of all the power and influence you have the ability to exert in your own sphere of the world and the realization that you chose to use this power and influence tyrannically and abusively.

The voice that terrifies you is the one that won't give up on you even when you want it to. The voice that reminds you that you are better than you feel yourself to be. It is the voice of the newborn baby in the picture, your picture, smiling from ear to ear at the wonderful gift of life. Some might say it's the voice of God. Are the two mutually exclusive?

And so it's time for me to start my voyage back home. I wonder if they'll receive me after all these years?