

But it was while I was in prison that I felt the Holy Spirit upon me. Within the darkest moments inside of a prison cell I have literally felt the presence of the Lord come upon me. While in prison God revealed Himself to me in supernatural ways. In 2014 I was released from prison and was being mentored by the well-known Reverend Leon Kelly. Reverend Leon Kelly is a well-known activist and gang interventionist who has worked together with highly successful people. He has worked with celebrities and NFL athletes and NBA stars. He is a prolific figure in Denver, Colorado. He, too, did time in prison years ago, but was pardoned by the governor and turned his life around completely. I got together with him seeking to grasp onto a high level of success after doing a few years in prison because of a drug conviction, and after climbing up the ladder in a drug organization to reach higher rank. I started to realize back then that the process of realizing your life task comes in many different stages. First, a person must connect or reconnect with their inclinations, and look inward to search the past for signs of the inner voice or force. A person must look for an underlying pattern, a core of their character to understand who they are and what they are called to do. So then I had a deep desire to reconnect with my godmother, to follow in her footsteps and pursue professional dancing and the music industry.

But then I took another fall and caught a fresh non-violent case on parole. I thought back then in 2014 that I knew everything I needed to know about Christ. But God showed me I knew nothing at all. Truly, if we do not cultivate a divine intimacy with our Lord, no matter how well-intentioned our lives are, they will fall apart. You cannot hope to maintain a state of sanity, much less tranquility, without

preserving personal rest in His redemption.

Now, not only have I made the decision to work together with The Cell Church and their administration, I am seeking to inspire at-risk kids by working with Open Door Youth Gang Alternatives to help stop at-risk kids from joining gangs. Kids do anything to feel they belong, and for all of us a sense of identity must come from belonging and connectedness to an acceptable community. For the Christian, the fellowship of believers should be one of these reference groups. Many people face significant obstacles to developing an adequate identity. They feel lost, unacceptable, and bewildered by their many internal conflicts. Like Joseph in Genesis 37, I had to overcome a lot of obstacles to understand why I received spiritual insight through visions and dreams at a young age. But now I am working on my interstate compact seeking to transfer my parole to Las Vegas, Nevada where my godmother lives, to go “from prison to the palace” and to work to use my talents to inspire at-risk children who could possibly go down the wrong path like I did. I want to show them that they can go from having a high, significant amount of street status to humbling yourself and following Christ, becoming educated, and having a heart of deep humility. If you are interested in hearing more about my testimony please contact me through email:

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“The word of God is not imprisoned.” – 2 Timothy 2:9

FROM THE PRISON TO THE PALACE



Hello, my name is Brendon Smith (I go by the name Calhoun), and I'm 27 years old. This is my testimony about how my life has been changed since I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I have decided to name my testimony “From the Prison to the Palace” because I seek to explain to you how the story of Joseph in Genesis 35 – 50 in the Bible has relevance in my life. I seek only to inspire all of you that have the chance to read my testimony to really consider putting your faith in Jesus Christ if

you are not a believer, because truly nothing will satisfy a person more than seeking to pursue a relationship with Christ.

Throughout my life I have been back and forth from prison, and each time I was released I went on the mission to pursue high levels of success. But time and time again I would end up back in the same situation. One of my favorite Bible scriptures is Isaiah 40:28-31, which says: "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

The reason that is one of my favorite scriptures is because as a young man I continued to utterly fail, ending up in a prison cell, praying to God on my knees asking God why things had to be the way they were. At a very young age God started to use me in ways that I didn't fully understand. From age 16 until I was 21 God used me as a vessel within my grandmother's life. In the Bible in Galatians 2:20 it says, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." The reason why I mention Galatians 2:20 is because at a young age God was manifesting Himself through me, though I had no idea that God was using me in such a powerful way at a young age. Before my

grandmother passed away, before she was ever diagnosed with lung cancer, God sent me revelations and visions through dreams when I would fall asleep about my grandmother, and I would tell her. Little did I know then that not only was He confirming that she had little time on earth left through me, He was also comforting her through me in her darkest hours when death was near.

Because I was only a teenager I did not have such profound knowledge of Christ, because my brain was still undeveloped and I was still uneducated. But as I grew spiritually and started studying the knowledge of Christ in the Bible, my eyes began to open and I began to see the light. My grandmother's name was Margret C. Smith, and her sister's granddaughter Karin Lawson is my godmother. At a young age my godmother was a positive influence on me. She had the privilege of becoming an NFL Kansas City cheerleader, and while growing up I can remember watching her on TV as she danced back up, as a back up dancer for the world-known singer Beyonce Knowles. I can also remember being inspired by her as she toured around the world with a company called "Legends in Concert," where she impersonated Janet Jackson as a dance impersonator. At a young age all I ever wanted to do was dance; my grandmother enrolled me in dance classes and music classes at a young age. I can remember going into Cleo's Parker Robinson Dance Institution, bringing my stereo in, and dancing in front of the mirrors on the dance floor rehearsal rooms when nobody was there. I was really passionate about performing arts.

But then, as I grew older I started losing my

way, and got myself involved with gangs. I became so deeply lost in the gang culture that I had completely gone down the path of self-destruction. It was God who had to open my eyes and show me my true identity in Christ. I didn't realize that when your reference group you look to for your identity constitutes a social problem, then no matter how clear your sense of personal identity you are a problem too. Such a dilemma is sadly the case with those who join gangs. The gangs that dominate our inner cities are the only reference groups available to many young people, particularly those from impoverished neighborhoods. Gang activities act primarily as identity factories. Unless and until we can find alternative reference groups for inner city kids we will never eliminate gang warfare, because kids are only doing what their psyches were created to do, which is to find an identity. The problem is clearly a social one.

God had to open my eyes and show me that the young men who were an influence on me in my neighborhood were only seeking to find an identity in labelling themselves as a "Crip" or a "Blood" or a "Vicelord" or "Gangster Disciple." God allowed life-threatening situations to arise in my life, to reveal to me that my true identity can only be realized, because who I truly am is a child of a King. As I started to realize that God had a deep purpose and calling upon my life I had to go through many things and overcome many obstacles to trust completely in God. Just like Joseph, whose story is in Genesis 35 – 50, I had to deal with much betrayal from loved ones and deal with a deep, profound level of rejection from my own family.