



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
January—February 2015

And a Hope

By Bob Van Domelen

¹¹ For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. (Jeremiah 29.11-12)

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Nearing the end of a recent visit with an inmate, we closed our time together in prayer and got up to check out. While pushing in my chair, a woman sitting at a nearby table asked "Are you Broken Yoke?" I said that I was and she offered her first name. And then, noticing the blank look on my face, she added her last name.

Within a brief moment I remembered her son, a young man I had the privilege of encouraging several years ago. "Is he back in prison?" She need not have answered as her shoulders dropped a little, a sign of perhaps frustration, despair, and sadness all mixed together. My thought as I left the visiting area was that no mother should face her last years wondering about her son in the way this woman worried about hers.

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The email message was only one sentence: *He said you will be thrown in the deepest sea for what you did—Matt 18 6, Mark 9 42, Luke 17 2*

I considered just hitting the delete key but there was a problem with what he shared. He supported his comment with verses that I have read many times shared by those venting righteous anger at those of us with sex-related offenses. If there was no Christ, no death on the cross redeeming *all* sinners, then the "you will be" part made sense. But I *do* believe in the reality of John 3.16: "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*"

I answered his email with this belief, wondering what, if any, response he would have. His answer came the following day: *think of how many nightmares you caused children.* His point was simple and I could not argue it.

The two situations might look unrelated but over the past months I have been struggling with a simple question: Is there hope? I know the answer already because I live in the center of hope each and every day.

Without hope, despair must certainly follow, and the ripples created by despair have the power to destroy not only self but seriously harm those undeserving of such an aftermath. In other words, my life, your lives, impact both

people who know and love us and even those who have never met us.

For I know the plans that I have for you

Some years ago, someone tried to make the point that God had designed his life to include prison so that he could witness God's love to those who need it. The witnessing part I understand but if God designed prison as a means to an end, then the offense committed to insure a prison sentence would also have had to come from God. That is not possible. God would never call any of us to sin.

The choices I made, heinous as some of them were, put me on a collision course with prison. God knew this about me and I doubt seriously it was His will. But God also knew that my soul cried for freedom from these choices. He knew that once I surrendered, I would eventually be able to speak of His love from first-hand experience.

The young man in the first example desired healing in his life. As the years passed and our support connection disappeared, his resolve may also have disappeared—or at least I am presuming it did in some way, even if there was no new charge. At this point, I don't know his heart but I trust in God to continue touching it, healing it.

The email message, on the other hand, was not from anyone I knew and bore the imprint of a personal connection with the issue of child sexual assault—either abuse he suffered or that of abuse suffered by a loved one. Either way, his comments were deeply felt and believed. They were not meant for me to ignore.

Plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope

But because his email also came almost 30 years after my arrest, my gut reaction was to become defensive, to argue the changes in my life with him. The ministry website is not 30 years old, and those who visit the site do so for a variety of reasons. But if this was a first-time visit, he might have seen it as a slap in the face. My prayer is that the website is a service, a tool of healing, change, and support—not a slap in anyone's face.

But as I gave these two situations more thought, I began to see that what has been 30 years of transition and transformation for me might be little more than days for someone else. I believe that I have seen evidence of God's hand working in my life, so His gift has been "a future and a hope."

Confronted as I have been recently, however, I have come to understand that this future and hope given me might look different to a stranger.

***Then you will call upon Me
and come and pray to Me***

Maybe the lesson for me and possibly for you is that our journey must be free of complacency, of taking things for granted in such a way as to say "I have what I need for now, God. I'll get back to you if situations change." The journey of change and healing can and should be anything but that kind of thinking. As a matter of fact, every day is opportunity to call on God, to pray intensely, and to be open to the next change God's design has for me. Anything other than that is to presume that all my ills and weaknesses have been dealt with or fixed and that, my friends, is to be arrogant beyond acceptability.

In some ways, God brings about change in my life as I am able to confront those parts of me still wallowing in wrong thinking. So when I begin to think "Well, that's done" God replies "Okay, are you ready for the next issue." I confess that occasionally I want to say "Argh" through clenched teeth, but in my heart I know God doesn't stretch me beyond my capacity to stretch.

and I will listen to you

It's all too easy to believe God is too busy with everyone else's issues to have any time at all for me. There might be some of you who, like me, raised a hand or loudly cleared our throat for attention only to be ignored or left feeling unimportant. The God I serve loves me beyond anything I could ever explain on a piece of paper. I happen to believe that when I call on Him, He *will* listen. And He will do the same for you because He knows the sound of your voice and only waits to hear it!

Bits & Pieces

The following are taken from letters I have received since the last issue of this newsletter. Some are meant to offer hope and encouragement while others call out for us to be in prayer.

Hiding weakness from myself is not the way. I want to be so that I'll think of myself as a person with a sexual behavior problem, keeping in my mind to prevent ill-conceived relationships.

One day the self-righteous of the world who see that it is their duty to label us pariahs will see that, in truth, no one is above anyone under God.

It takes time to love our neighbor by listening, being compassionate, or giving Jesus' words to them. I've looked at my days as opportunities to spread Christ's love to all I meet. And I've often found myself exactly where God intends me to be. How He works in our lives!

It's always good to read "Into the Light." I learn a lot from reading it. I also want to mention that I use "Bits & Pieces" column in my prayers, praying one quote a day.

I pray to God to allow me to understand, to trust in Him, to turn my sins over to Him, to be able to truly love and obey Him, to give my body and my sexual desires to Him, and to truly forgive.

It's been 1 ½ years since my release. Every day the world, the enemy, and my flesh work to bring complacency. I can get so busy I feel as though I have let the Lord down. Just a single word, a moment set aside, brings everything in my heart back to the Center.

God accepts me as I am and for who I am. I don't have to do anything sexually in secret to be accepted by God. How many people allow others to use them sexually just to try to "fit in" or to be/feel accepted?

I hurt a lot of people along the way. People who loved me, I shunned. People who trusted me, I betrayed. People who needed me, I abandoned. I thought only of myself and what pleased me—nothing else!

The Lord really blessed me when I was in the music room singing the song, "Redeemed." I almost started crying with the chorus which says "I am redeemed, You've set me free. So I shake off these heavy chains and wipe away every stain. Now I am not who I used to be. I am redeemed."

Within the Christ-centered process of change, we learn to never let our guilt or shame keep us from the Lord. He seeks those who have made a mess of their lives and speaks to them through His word, His Spirit, and His people.

I've had the opportunity to acquaint myself with some fellow offenders and some, like myself, are hoping and praying for future reconciliation with family. I understand that the odds are against but they are not zero, so that means hope *does* exist, especially if the Lord is part of the effort.

20 Seconds

By Scott

It is an Almighty God-promised fact that whenever I choose to plant a good seed in my life, it will yield good fruit! In my walk of recovery/healing, I have found this principal critical. If I believe and act on this promise of God, I am guaranteed good fruit.

How this has worked and is working in my life is as I choose to obey Jesus by taking a non-Godly thought captive by giving it to Jesus (2 Cor. 10.3-5), I know I just planted a good seed. If I do not grow weary while doing good, then I know that in due season I will reap if I do not lose heart.

I was reminded recently of a movie I saw where a statement was made that has impacted my life: *All you need is 20 seconds of courage.*

Our spiritual walk is just a series of choices. Our thoughts determine our choices and those determine the kind of seed we plant. For 20 seconds, be a mighty warrior of courage. Fight the good fight. Choose to take captive the ungodly thought and give it to Jesus. Congratulations! You just planted one Godly seed that *will* grow and *will* yield Godly fruit in your life!

When we first begin this warfare in earnest, our struggle is not against our flesh and mind. It is spiritual warfare.

Satan knows our past habit of occasionally resisting. He knows that all he must do is keep pushing our personal buttons and we *will* give in. Defeat.

I want to encourage you. It only takes 20 seconds of faith and Godly courage to win and gain freedom. Trust Jesus for 20 seconds to take captive the evil thought and thank Him for his strength to plant a seed of victory.

Satan will not appreciate that. He will come back again and again. But you *can* be a Godly warrior and choose to take every thought captive. Begin now to renew your mind—in 20 second bites (Rom. 12.2).

Those of us with addictions expect instant gratification, even in our spiritual warfare. We might resist two, three, or even a dozen times, but Satan is also a warrior and he is intelligent. He believes that if he keeps pressing, we will give in.

For me, the secret for victory was two-fold. First, deciding that I was done with my cycle of fantasy and masturbation. I had my Jacob moment when I decided that those behaviors didn't define me. So I decided I would wrestle with God and not let go until He blessed me and changed me. I was not going to give in to lust again or I was going to die trying.

Second, I realized that Satan and his power is severely limited and he does not have unlimited resources. He is not all-powerful and all-knowing. Like any smart general, he makes strategic choices where to use his limited resources. When he realizes he can't win in one area or at one time in a person's life, he will "depart for a more opportune time." (Luke 4.13)."

The night I decided I would not give in to lust was probably the toughest spiritual battle I ever remember facing. I went to bed and the battle began. I was courageous for 20 seconds and took captive the tempting thought or image. "Jesus, I take that thought captive and give it to you in obedience. Thank you for victory over it. It is your victory."

That night was a long one and I didn't get much sleep. Sometimes there would be five minutes of no temptation, but other times there would be back-to-back temptation. I had 20 seconds of courage each time I battled. By God's grace and power, I was victorious.

Sometime in the early hours of the morning I fell asleep exhausted.

The next evening was almost as bad. I purposely worked physically hard all day so I could sleep, but the battles came one after another. The following three nights saw fewer and fewer battles. I was exhausted but in Christ I was 100% victorious. Night No 6 hit. It was as bad or worse than the first night.

Then something truly miraculous happened. There were no temptations or battles on Night No 7. I slept straight through that night, the next night, and the night after that. This continued for two weeks before another night of battles hit. Then they stopped and four years have passed.

Please understand that it was not within my power to break a nearly 40-year habit of lust. It was only when I trusted in God's word and acted on that faith that victory came. On occasion Satan brings a temptation to see if it is a "more opportune time," but his temptations have lost their power. My habits are now habits of victory. The "battle" is now more like flicking away a mosquito. I take the thought or image captive, give it to Jesus, and go on with life.

Note: *Scott shared more in his letter to me but his basic ideas have been shared here. To quote the final sentence of his letter, Fight the good fight 20 seconds at a time—one second at a time!*

Please consider financially supporting this ministry. *Into the Light*, a newsletter unlike any other, is made possible solely by your donations. Send contributions to Broken Yoke Ministries, PO Box 5824, De Pere, WI, 54115-5824. All donations are tax deductible and will be acknowledged. If you are unable to support this effort financially, please support it with your prayers.

Our Prayer Corner

Prayer is an incredible gift we can give one another, for there is no better thing than to lift our lives, hopes, and dreams to the altar of the Lord.

Let us pray . . .

- First and always foremost, for our victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.
- For each of us, that each day finds us closer in our walk with the Lord.
- For those who feel only despair, that the presence of Lord reminds them of His grace and mercy.
- For those are nearing a time of release, that they find the strength to concentrate on things in their control and courage to trust God for the rest.
- For those who support this ministry, that their gifts help bring about change and healing. Thank you!
- For those who face walls of negative attitude and distrust, that they see beyond, around, and over the walls.
- For family members, that they see their love as the best gift of support.
- For those who facilitate treatment, that they focus on what can be done toward a positive goal.
- For chaplains, that they continue to serve in love all who come seeking their help.
- For this ministry, that Broken Yoke Ministries continues to be blessed with the financial support needed to meet basic expenses like this newsletter.
- Finally, for those who are still abusing and are reading this newsletter because God made that possible, that they will do whatever it takes to stop the cycle of abuse and harm caused to their victims.

All things are possible with God!

Happy New Year!

"Never Lose Hope"

Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.

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A Little Humor . . .

A proud and confident genius makes a bet with his not-so-smart friend. The genius says, "Hey, every question I ask you that you don't know the answer, you have to give me \$5. And if you ask me a question and I can't answer yours I will give you \$5,000." The friend says, "Okay." The genius then asks, "How many continents are there in the world?" The friend doesn't know and hands over the \$5.

The friend says, "Now I ask: what animal stands with two legs but sleeps with three?" The genius tries and searches very hard for the answer but gives up and hands over the \$5000. The genius says, "Dang it, I lost. By the way, what was the answer to your question?" The friend hands over \$5.

