



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
May—June 2016

Change My Heart, O Lord

By Bob Van Domelen

⁴⁷ and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors and say, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly'; ⁴⁸ and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive. . . ⁴⁹ then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. ⁵⁰ And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you (1 Kings 8.47-50)

Years ago, I dabbled in writing simple computer programs with my Commodore 64 – a real relic compared to the computers we use today. Though I no longer try to write programs, I remember a command that was pretty simple. It was called the "If – Then" statement. *If* the user of my program chose a specific option I had included, *then* the program would jump to that part of the coding that matched the user's response and produce the desired result.

When Solomon dedicated the temple, he offered a lengthy prayer as part of the dedication that included "If – Then" statements, choices the Jewish nation could make in terms of their relationship with the Lord. Past history had proven that this stubborn people had frequently turned their backs on God – pretty much like we all do today.

If they have a change of heart

Being arrested, especially for a crime against a child, is a frightening experience because for many of us, a traffic violation was about as serious as crime got. This time, however, the crime meant public exposure, angry and distraught families, neighbors, and church families. There was also a personal desire to erase all those sinful choices as though they had never happened. But they did.

I share this because in my case I think my sorrow at the time of my arrest was not so much because of what happened to all those I had harmed as it was that I wanted my life back. I sometimes thought "If enough people believed my words of contrition, maybe someone would say 'We believe you. Just don't do that again.'"

God knew I needed to have a change of heart. For my part, I knew that something deep inside me was broken and nothing I had tried before had fixed that brokenness.

In the land where they are held captive

While in the county jail, it seemed everyone knew my charges. I slept for short periods, usually no more than an hour or two, fearful of what might happen. Eventually I was transferred to the state's prison receiving center and temporarily assigned to a cell in the segregation unit as

other units were full. But it was in that small cell surrounded by yelling and cursing that I felt both God's presence and peace. My heart would be changed and though I could not see it at the time, my life would be forever different.

We have sinned, done wrong, acted wickedly

While in prison and separated from the world I had fashioned, the realization of what I had done stopped being about me, about my losses, and my shame. Listening to others in our treatment group, I understood that our stories were very alike – not always in our own backgrounds but in the thinking that brought us to be members of the group. We had all sinned, done serious harm to those who did not deserve it, and lived in the center of wickedness.

Occasionally we each tried to soften the weight of our actions by hinting at victim consent, unusual situations, or even aggressive victims who pursued us. Some quoted 1 Corinthians 6.11

And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

They maintained that the verse condemned any DOC directive to share what was clearly in the past *before* they were washed, sanctified, and justified. But the choice offered them was clear, participate or be eliminated from the group. No one quit.

By the way, I see that verse as announcing that I am no longer the man I *was*. Being washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Jesus meant that I was called to make healthier, God-centered choices. Knowing that I could make those choices did indeed make me a new man.

Turn back to you with all their heart and soul

Those who truly seek God, accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, and believe in the presence of the Holy Spirit, might respond "I have turned back to God with all my heart and soul." But I suspect that many of them would follow that statement with "Okay, God. So do your thing. Change me!"

In some ways it is like an if-then statement: "*If* I do my part by surrendering to God, *then* it's God's turn." The result of clicking on a word in a computer program produces an instant result – the result we want. What if when we choose to click on a word we are faced with a response that looks nothing like the result we wanted?

Would we complain to the programmer? "There's something wrong with your program" we'd argue. "It didn't provide the answer I wanted." Do we, in fact, say the same thing to God? "Lord, I don't think you heard my prayer right.

Your answer looks nothing like what I was asking for. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure I can do what you are asking."

No everything changes at once. There are no 'presto-changeo' moments. Change is work and it takes time. The word "process" is often used in treatment and few of us like that word. Nothing will come easy.

I would suggest that the same word is at the heart of our relationship with God. Though we have surrendered and do seek Him, the journey is a process. It is one day at a time, growing in trust, believing that we are forgiven and are heirs to the kingdom of God, as well as knowing that at our very core we *are* changing.

**Then from heaven hear their prayer
and their plea, uphold their cause**

When we see our choices as being the "If" in the "If-Then," we see God's part (the "then" part) as being faithful to what He began. Paul wrote

"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1.6)

There are a lot of people, including good Christian people, who do not hold much hope for anyone convicted of a sex-related offense. They pray for us because it is a Christian thing to do, but I am not so sure that they believe we can change.

If that's the case, then our relationship with God is all the more important because it IS He who believes in us. God helps us change from the inside out. The verse from "He who Began a Good Work in You" points out:

If the struggle you're facing is slowly replacing

Your hope with despair

Or the process is long

And you're losing your song in the night.

You can be sure that the Lord has His hand

on you - safe and secure

He will never abandon you

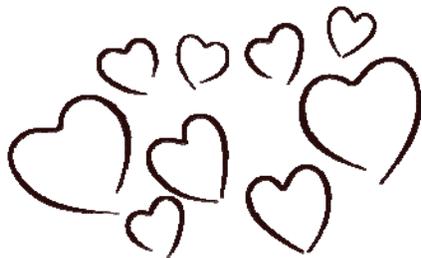
you are His treasure

And He finds His pleasure in you

Finally, God will uphold our cause because is not only just, it is a God-centered cause. With God's grace and our willingness to be His in all things, there will be no more victims.

I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15.10)

When we are frustrated or depressed, let us all keep in mind that angels are rejoicing because of us! Our prayer, then, should be "Change my heart, O Lord, make it ever true." The road we travel is far from easy or smooth but the destination is worth the focus. □



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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.

The Lord has me on what I call an "Elijah Provision" - He's trying my faith in the little things. If I can't be faithful in the small things then neither can I be trusted with the large. It's puzzling and frustrating at times but never the less I trust God because He above anyone knows what He is doing.

Most of the time I've found that I am treated in the same way I treat the COs and sometimes even when they do me dirt. When I do not respond to dirt with dirt I come away clean and the CO has an example of the Holy Spirit at work in me.

If possible, please put me on your mailing list for *Into the Light*. I'd really appreciate the humanity your newsletter offers – sanity in an insane world.

We don't love God or our neighbor or ourselves, for that matter, as we should. We are not merciful to others let alone forgiving to others as we should be. But we are stuck in these flesh bags we call bodies and therefore we tend to do things of the flesh.

We have begun a ministry for men who are getting out of prison and have so little true help in knowing exactly what to expect and what to do. The ministry is Christ-centered because we know that if it doesn't start with Him it is doomed to failure right from the start. Please pray for us.

If I had not been brought to the place of knowing I am a cherished son, I could never have gone through the healing/transformation process.

I just want to be known as a Christian with no added label. I want to receive all those who believe in Jesus as He received me – without disputes or arguments.

It is scary to think about someone discovering my past so I limit what I do and what I try to do. That's mainly why I mostly stay to myself. It is pretty much how the system is set up.

Life is hard and because I am in constant pain I have little contact with Christians because I can't get to church too easily. I often feel very alone. All of this pushes me to my Father who understands.

Faith is believing God in spite of all appearances and obeying God in spite of the consequences.

Paul's writing is true for each of us – we are *each* the worst sinner. Sin is sin. Only humans rank and rate it. God hates it all and will forgive all except the sin or rejecting Him.

Your Support Matters

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.

If you have family or friends, tell them about the website for Broken Yoke Ministries:
www.brokenyoke.org
Newsletters, links, information

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 we come to seek a new heart, a heart that is in tune with that of our Heavenly Father.
- For those who feel they are all alone, that they may come to understand that we pray for one another and that God *always* answers prayer.
- For those wanting the peace that surpasses all understanding, that they will come to know that peace in the fullness of God's love.
- For those who are nearing release, that they will trust in the plan God has for their lives and that they will see that plan being evidenced by those who serve him as ministers to those in reentry.
- For chaplains overwhelmed by the sheer volume of need, that they will remember it is God and not they who will meet all those needs. Lord, grant them the strength and compassion they need to serve.
- For those who are in civil commitment, that they will not despair nor surrender to hopelessness. Rather, give them the grace to receive all that God has for them.
- For churches, that they seek ways to serve all in prison and/or jail confinement – especially through Christ-centered prayer.
- For those who were themselves victims, that somehow they allow God to heal that wounded inner child.
- 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.

Transfigure us, O Lord,
transfigure us, O Lord.
Break the chains that
bind us;
speak your healing word,
and where you lead we'll follow.
Transfigure us, O Lord.



- ¹ I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry.**
- ² He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.**
- ³ He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear
and put their trust in the Lord.**

Psalm 40.1-3

There are many days when these verses come to mind, days when I need to remind myself what God has done for me and for all who call upon Him. In some ways, a whole lifetime is summed up in these 72 words.

I know that I am not a man without sin but I believe that God's mercy is new every morning. Each day is a new chance to grow closer to God, to feel God shake just a little more of my past off as I am able to surrender that to Him.

Sometimes I wonder how that clean garment God places on me in the morning got so dirty by the end of the day. Then I remember an unkind word or thought, the slight shading of the truth when under pressure, and the memories of choices I thought were what I really wanted but were distortions of the truth.

God reminds me that I am not back in the depths of the slimy pit. He reminds me that I am only noticing the hardened substances from the past, substances He wants to free me of as I am able to let them go.

Be blessed – God *wants* to bless you!

Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.

PO Box 5824

De Pere, WI 54115-5824



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A Little Humor . . .

A man and his wife were going for a stroll one night when they spotted what was obviously a blind man taking a walk on the other side of the street with his seeing eye dog. "Wow! Isn't that something!" remarked the wife, "look at that man taking a stroll just like us."

They continued strolling for a few minutes longer when they heard the man let out a loud yelp. The dog had walked him right into a parked car and he had clearly banged his shin pretty hard. Rushing over to help, they were surprised to see the man reach into his pocket and pull out a treat for the dog.

"Isn't that weird?" whispered the wife, "giving him a treat even when he's mad." "Why are you giving him a treat?" questioned the husband.

"I ain't giving him a treat!" said the enraged man, "I'm just trying to find out where his head is, so I can give him a sharp kick in the butt!"

