



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
July—August 2016

Sins of the Flesh

By Charles

¹⁸ "Who can see me? Darkness surrounds me, walls hide me; no one sees me; why should I fear to sin?" Of the Most High he is not mindful, ¹⁹ fearing only the eyes of men; He does not understand that the eyes of the Lord, ten thousand times brighter than the sun, Observe every step a man takes and peer into hidden corners. ²⁰ He who knows all things before they exist still knows them all after they are made. ²¹ Such a man will be punished in the streets of the city; when he least expects it, he will be apprehended. (Sirach 23.18-21)

[Note: Sirach or Ben Sira is considered part of Wisdom Literature that includes Job, Psalms, and Proverbs. This book and the Book of Wisdom, however, were not included in the 1611 edition of the King James Bible. Today they are part of what is known as the Apocrypha.]

I remember being more concerned about being found out by man than acknowledging the fact that God was not pleased. My distorted thinking had me believe that as long as I could keep my secret no harm was done and none would come. I know now that was totally wrong and selfish. Nothing was further from the truth.

I was more worried about my material, earthly 'treasures' – my ability to earn an income, my reputation, my standing in the community. I was blind to the harm I was doing to my victims and myself. I did not see them as victims. I didn't see that I arrogantly and selfishly made the decision for them that my behavior was not harmful. I wanted it to be that way so badly that I chose to see their silence as assent.

I didn't want to see the shame that I created that led to their silence – the betrayal of all that was good in my association with them.

God saw through it, though, and I was 'punished' when I least expected it, and I was apprehended. In my mind, this came out of nowhere from a situation I distorted into thinking was fine to all concerned. God used those victims and their families to force me into reality, to end this evil, sinful behavior. It was clear to God and made so through them that I was "a man given to sins of the flesh who never stops until the fire breaks forth; the rake to whom all bread is sweet and who is never through till he dies." (Sirach 23.16-17)

My material life and my flesh died the day of my arrest in county jail. I was stripped of everything – my reputation, income, standing, liberty, and choice. It might seem strange, but I was relieved. No more fear of being found out, no more double-minded thinking, no more instability. Looking back, I had to come to this stage in order to quit. I had already shown God I was incapable of stopping because I wrongly thought that what I was doing wasn't 'that bad.' God knew better.

Soon afterward I was born again. My old self was gone and forgiven – at least by God. I know what people think when they hear this part, "Another jailhouse conversion!" I promise it wasn't so with me. I knew Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. I was raised by loving parents who brought me up in the Christian faith. I went to 12 years of parochial school.

My problem was that I mistook religion with a relationship with God. I didn't *have* a relationship. If I did, He would have been the head of my life and I would have wanted to please Him. I had had all the outward trappings of faith and a lot of good works but I didn't have Jesus in my life.

When I was born again, it wasn't immediate fireworks and hallelujahs. The old self and the old ways of thinking kept at me. The devil was relentless in prison. Thanks to some 'ministering angels' who would come when I prayed sincerely, some great volunteers, staff, and inmates really helped me over the 17 ½ years I did in prison.

As I approached the final year and the scrutiny of a civil commitment hearing that could have resulted in a possible lifetime commitment, I finally gave up all my double-mindedness and got really serious about God's will. I immersed myself in His Word because where else could I find His will.

Earlier I had been told of the importance of studying the Word and had even made attempts, but it was only vain repetition. Gradually, however, I learned to pray *and* to listen. Finally, after 18 ½ years I felt turned all the way around.

God is good. He is kind and merciful, but He's not into hand "outs." He's into hand "ups" and requires us only to make sincere effort.

Darkness no longer surrounds me; walls no longer hide me; and everyone sees me. I realize that many do not like me and many probably hate me. All I can do to honor my victims and those I hurt is to live a righteous life, sometimes using my experience to reach others who have offended or may still be offending.

¹³ I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and an arrogant man, but I have been mercifully treated because I acted out of ignorance in my unbelief. ¹⁴ Indeed, the grace of our Lord has been abundant, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Of these I am the foremost.
(1 Timothy 1.13-15)

Note: Charles is currently incarcerated



**Correctional Ministries &
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I am never sure of what will happen when I am blessed to attend gatherings such as this one – especially when I am teaching a workshop. But I always trust that God knows and my job is simply to listen for His will.

With at least eight workshop offerings in any given time slot, attendance at mine was a little low but it was not unlike attendance at other workshops I attended. “What is the Hope We Offer Looking Like?” was my workshop title, based on the results of survey responses from some of you.

I tried to focus on issues of support: family and friend connections, church, employment, housing, treatment, and faith. Each of these areas was explored from the perspective of inside support and support during reentry. Not surprisingly, housing and employment have the highest concern, so I shared how some aftercare networks are trying to deal with this issue. There are no easy solutions but people are trying to find them.

As I have been sharing with some who write, I think legislation and observable community response to those with sex-related offenses in reentry tends to make any effort to overcome that negativity almost insurmountable at times. When I brought this up at a general session, there was almost an immediate silence, a feeling of being uncomfortable.

I don't think the war is lost, but I do believe that there are some difficult battles ahead. It is up to us to continue petitioning our Heavenly Father for the wisdom and strength to proceed. Anger and depression will do nothing but confirm public opinion that change is not possible and I refuse to believe that. *Bob*

Broken Yoke Ministries
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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 only thing that puberty did was to add a physical pleasure to the emotion example of false love.

All too often my focus has been on my efforts in fighting for my life rather than focusing on Jesus and allowing Him to fight my battle. The No 1 thing I believe God desires of us is to trust Him when everything around us seems hopeless. The hard part is focusing on His peace, rest, and joy in the middle of trauma.

I was recently released to a halfway house. I see family 3-4 times a week, friends once a week, attend church services on Sundays and Bible study on Wednesdays. Parole requires many programs from me, so employment opportunities are hard to find or come by with my availability and restrictions. Being in His Word daily and listening and watching sermons to keep my hope elevated to heavenly levels. Thank you for your ministry and may God continue to bless you. [Nothing is easy in this process but all is possible with God - Bob]

I can assure you that Into the Light has made its rounds to fellow inmates one-on-one, read in our very limited therapy classes over the years, and even read by and shown to our 2-3 interested counselors.

I have 12 years to do on a 20 year sentence. That would make me 78 years old. I don't like the thought of starting over at that age but I rejoice in the knowledge that God has done an awesome work. He has changed my heart and broke down the strongholds that I had allowed Satan to build in my soul.

We must learn to be wonderfully human and still be in His image in our lifestyles.

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.

When I expect to receive mercy, the very principle of mercy loses its meaning and blessing. So I have learned that acceptance is the key to my serenity. So even the

consequences of my past sins, when I accept them without shame I find strong peace in the mercy of Jesus.

I always feel like I wish I could do more for my Lord, but I know in my heart that it's not what I do but why I do it that matters.

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.

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 start each day with prayers asking God's grace and leading, and close each day thanking Him for the ways in which we have seen His love and mercy.
- For those with feelings of failure over their ongoing temptations, that they know God's joy over every victory, every effort made.
- For all who experience breakthroughs in their understanding, that they can become a source of encouragement to others on the same journey.
- For those living under civil commitment, that they experience a broad base of support from society demanding to know how things have gotten this far afield of the original intent of that designation.
- For chaplains who struggle with those who have sex-related offenses, that they recognize Christ died for all and not merely some.
- For ministries that seek ways to support all in prison, that their efforts find fertile ground, nurturing both reconciliation and restoration.
- For church communities, that they come to understand their role as the Body of Christ to all in need of faith-filled witness.
- For victims both past and present, that they find Christ's healing presence as they move out of painful pasts, able to shed the burden of abuse. (Matt 11.28-30)
- 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.

COMMENTS

SHARED WITH CMCA WORKSHOP ATTENDEES
Offered by individuals completing the survey

On being alone or isolated:

I feel all alone in this but have to know that it is of my own making. I am learning to deal with my own emotions, even doing help in church here. But still I get pushed aside and shunned because of what I am in for. Since being in prison, I have lost family, lost my inheritance money, and have been beaten and threatened.

I have no family where I have to be paroled to. The only one I can depend on to make it on the outside is myself and whatever my parole officer has for me when I am released. I will try to find a church to continue my worship with my fellow Christians. I understand work will be hard to get, but I won't give in. I will keep seeking for a job. My faith in Christ is great and I will keep a positive outlook on my life when I'm out.

On Change:

If I had a message of hope to give those attending the workshop, it would be to give God the benefit of the doubt and to trust His transformational power for those who have fallen due to sexual sins. So often we look at the past instead of what is happening in the present in the lives of those who have repented and are now walking in faith and obedience. It does no good to heap more shame on them than what they currently have.

Florida DOC does not actively seek to help those who need it. They do not publish or make available accredited organizations that are available for those seeking help. Gov Jeb Bush said "They should be locked up and the key thrown away." I have been incarcerated for 18 years and only because I eagerly and aggressively sought help for my affliction have I been able to address it. Without viable help it leaves the convicted sex offender without a means to address problems or work out a program that will help them come to full terms with their actions. God changes a man from the inside out and God needs mentors, ministers, and educators to step up to the plate and touch the hearts and souls of those who desire to once again be the person God made them to be.

On Support:

Feeling like I am appreciated or can serve a purpose in life are biggies to offer me hope for my future. I cannot give to others what I do not have. Building people up and giving them encouragement, confidence and moral support in consistent ways should give anyone hope to keep living and plugging along on this journey we call life.

It is important for others to learn that the stigma saying all incarcerated are beyond hope, not to be trusted, and scammers needs to be reversed. Many in here are good people, remorseful, and repentant.

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A Little Humor . . .

A dog walked in to the telegram office one day. He took out a blank form and wrote on it:

"Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof."

Then he handed it to the clerk. The clerk examined the paper and said to the dog, "You know there are only nine words here? You could send another 'Woof' for the same price."

The dog replied, "But that would make no sense at all!"

