



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
January—February 2017

Bought at a Price

By Bob Van Domelen

¹⁹ *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.” (1 Cor 6:19-20)*

I have learned that if my total focus was on something negative in me, some behavior I wanted to avoid, the task became all the more difficult. Such a focus would be like putting my hand in front of my face and then saying “Just ignore that hand. Look somewhere else” without actually moving my hand at all.

I won't suggest that all I had to do was move my hand away from my face – problem solved – so much as to suggest that deliberately keeping my hand away from my face helped me know it was somewhere else. And knowing my hand was somewhere else allowed me to see and make better and more God-centered choices.

Many who write me share that they cannot forgive themselves. They also share an ongoing struggle with the fantasy of past sins or the fear of future sins of a similar nature. It has occurred to me that the hand of that particular sin occupies a space that blocks any other vision.

It has also occurred to me that as much as we sometimes hate the sins we have committed, the presence of those attractions or temptations make self-forgiveness difficult if not impossible. God has forgiven us but we are hanging on to the very thing we are to reject. For some, the temptation is a reminder that the sin is still embraced. And perhaps some might even think “If God knew I still want this sin, He would withhold His forgiveness.”

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit

Anyone who has ever gone to a car dealership and sat in the front seat of a new car will immediately remember that ‘new car’ smell. I do. It was present in the 2001 Saturn I bought and every time I got in the car, that smell reminded me of the car's newness.

Sadly, it took about two to three weeks before the smell of newness was gone or not noticed. My *new* car became my car, still new but not getting the attention I gave it in the first weeks.

Recently, three of the men attending the bible study at our county jail announced that they had been baptized the night before. Each had a look in his eyes that spoke a simple truth, “I am new in the Lord.” Their contribution to the study went beyond the ‘dull’ responses often heard and to words that sometimes had the edge of excitement. And beyond excitement, I would suggest that they had a hunger

for knowledge. After all, they believed that their bodies were temples of the Holy Spirit.

In their baptism, they were submerged in the water of new life, died to their sins, and surfaced feeling that their sins had been washed away. In that moment of being reborn and in the freedom from their past sins they felt, they were able to look without distraction into their spiritual hearts where they knew the King of kings resided.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Cor.5.17) Those men rose out of the water with the ‘new scent’ of relationship with Jesus, aware of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, and alive with the newness of that experience.

The world we live in

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12.2)

Talk about a challenge! The three newly baptized men were, as some might offer, walking on spiritual air as they returned to their unit. Sadly, they were not returning to a place where everyone would gather around and offer congratulations. No one would be likely to say “Let's turn off the TV and all spend some time in God's word.” Such an offer flies in the face of the world in which we live, a world that is me-centered and not God-centered.

A moment of spiritual connection, an awareness of God's grace and love in the midst of prison or jail chaos is like the ‘new car’ smell. We know that we live in a far from perfect place but despite that reality, no one can take away God's presence unless we surrender it.

You are not your own

It is one thing to stand against the attitudes and choices of others, but our strength is more easily weakened when we face our *own* sinfulness, *our* temptations, and yes, maybe even *our* ongoing desires that we know are not of God. It is this last part (still desiring the sin) that makes it so difficult to seek help.

Success as understood by others, I think, is complete victory and complete victory means *no more temptations*. Of course, those who use this standard use it more for others than for themselves. “Well,” they might offer, “I haven't done what *you* have done. My sins are not as serious.” And it is this attitude that makes confession so out of reach, so open to further condemnation and possibly even punishment.

But if we are not our own, if we are truly sons and daughters of the Most High, why do we place more emphasis on the people in this world? Trust me, though,

when I say that I am not unaware of the penalties that could be placed on someone by treatment facilitators for such honesty. I am not unaware of the fact that churches might evict a person willing to admit to struggle.

You were bought at a price

Here is the core of my faith: *Jesus died for my sins, past, present, and future. There is nothing I have done, said, or thought that isn't covered by the blood of Christ on the cross. And if I spend all my energies looking only at those sins while failing to live in the redemption Jesus bought for me, then Satan holds me in my weaknesses. God, on the other hand, holds me in my strengths – even if I fail to recognize what those strengths might be.*

Therefore, honor God with your bodies

I suggested that the men recently baptized had walked on 'spiritual air' and they did in a fashion. By now, however, their prayers might include "God, I wish I could feel like I did at my baptism. I felt clean that evening. Some days I can still smell my sins and what frightens me is that I am getting used to that smell again."

If God has forgiven us our sins, refuses to call us by our sins ("that molester" "that killer" "that drug addict"), then we need to place the hand of God's love and grace in our own faces. We need to respond to life through that filter believing that even in those moments when past sins manage to slip through, God will forgive. God will give us the strength to move forward, and God will continue to call us His loved ones.

We are temples of the Holy Spirit and no one, no system can take that away unless we refuse to believe it of ourselves. Satan's goal is always to make sin more attractive than being in God's presence. It is a battle we face in each and every day and a battle that we often feel we are losing. The 'new smell' of spiritual wholeness is harder to find but it IS there. Remember, we have ALL been bought at a price! □



The Butterfly

One day a small opening appeared on a chrysalis, a man sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little opening.

Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no further. So the man decided to help the butterfly, he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the chrysalis. The butterfly then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time.

Neither happened.

In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly. What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand, was that the restricting chrysalis and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the opening, were God's way of forcing the fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for

flight once it achieved its freedom from the chrysalis. Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If God allowed us to go through our life without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as we could have been. We could never fly.

*I asked for strength
and God gave me difficulties to make me strong.
I asked for wisdom
and God gave me problems to solve.
I asked for prosperity
and God gave me brain and brawn to work.
I asked for courage
and God gave me danger to overcome.
I asked for love
and God gave me troubled people to help.
I asked for favors
and God gave me opportunities.
I received nothing I wanted.
I received everything I needed.*

-Anonymous

Revenge from Another Angle

Steve

Some would say that sexual addicts are weak when they admit powerlessness over lust, but I say this is revenge on addiction.

Some would say to submit to God is the sign of a fool, but I say this is revenge on prideful control.

Some would say to admit my faults to another person is not being a 'real man,' but I say this is revenge on secrets of the heart.

Some would say that to make amends is the play of a weakling, but I say revenge is forgiveness that heals the soul.

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.

I was asked why I couldn't forgive myself and after much thought decided that by refusing to do so, I was actually rationalizing my behavior so that I can keep doing it.

Sometimes God reaches down, smooths my hair, and my tears dry up.

The mercy of God is so much not what we would like for it to look like, but we believe and receive this mercy not by sight nor even often by experience, but only in faith, love, and worship!

I have been hurt so bad by these churches here in this state – all because they find out that I have a sex crime. Then

they look at me and treat me like I am the scum of the earth instead of one of God's children.

I've discovered that there are three tormentors that plague the thinking of those feeling that there is no hope: fear, uncertainty, and the darkness that results from sin.

I hated my addiction to pornography especially how it took a toll on my conscious mind. I felt so filthy, so polluted, and so worn out. I felt like such a hypocrite. I hid this [my addiction] from my wife. She hated porn and considered it to be adultery. She had a lot of insecurities and I feared how she would react if I revealed the stronghold porn had on me.

I like *Bits & Pieces* because I can see how other guys are struggling and their road with the Lord. It's not easy. But we have the Holy Spirit to help us. God's word says "Greater is he who is in us than the who is in the world (1 John 4.4)."

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 are able to both see and accept the reality that we are temples of the Holy Spirit, that our daily focus is on the strength of this relationship rather than a focus on our weaknesses.
- For those who struggle with forgiving themselves, that they ask God to show them the truth behind their hesitation to do so.
- For those who fear an approaching time of release because of all the uncertainties, that they see how God was with them through their time in prison and will continue to love and protect them.
- For those anxious over where they will live once out of prison, that although getting approvals while still in prison seems impossible, there will be options available once out. Trust God!
- For our country facing a new president, one who makes some uncomfortable, that we pray earnestly that President Trump will always place the needs of this

country's citizens at the fore of his thinking and decision-making.

- For those seeking to change legislation that makes reentry more complicated than it should be, that they will find legislators willing to listen.
- For the time or preparation for Bob and Maggie in their efforts to encourage effective discussion, that they find ways to help others consider positive steps in protecting churches/children while offering effective ministry and support.
- For victims, that they might regain power over their lives and walk in freedom.
- For treatment personnel, that they offer group members a foundation of positive and possible change.
- 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.

Workshop Proposal Accepted but Name Changed (CORRECTIONAL MINISTRIES AND CHAPLAINS ASSOCIATION) May 2017

The workshop proposal I submitted for the 5th CMCA Conference (May 5-6) in Philadelphia based on the church response to those with sex-related offenses was accepted.

The original title, "Not Scum, A Child of God," was changed to "Balancing Protection and Ministry." I did recognize that my original title was negative and perhaps a bit aggressive, yet it did describe what some in reentry have reported as being a very frustrating experience, one where they clearly felt labeled and rejected *because* of the label.

Maggie Witherow, co-founder of Matthew 25 Ministries and *City of Refuge*, and I will lead a discussion workshop on issues related to the church response to those with sex-related offenses. As I shared last edition, she brings a God-centered heart to the discussion based on the experiences of that ministry.

I have booked and paid for the flight thanks to donations received but there is still need for funds to meet other expenses connected with the conference. God answered our prayers last year in meeting every need and I count on prayers again this year. Remember, all donations are tax deductible and will be recognized by letter.

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Those who leave everything in God's hands will eventually see God's hands in everything.

Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.

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A Little Humor . . .

Two elderly ladies had been friends since their 30s. Now in their 80s, they still got together a couple of times a week to play cards.

One day they were playing gin rummy and one of them said, "You know, we've been friends for many years and, please don't get mad, but for the life of me, I can't remember your name. Please tell me what it is."

Her friend glared at her. She continued to glare and stare at her for at least three minutes. Finally, she said, "How soon do you need to know?"

