



# Into the Light

*All things are possible with God*

September—October 2013

## God Promised

By Bob Van Domelen

<sup>49</sup> Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. <sup>50</sup> My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life. <sup>51</sup> The arrogant mock me unmercifully, but I do not turn from your law.” (Psalm 119:49-51)

For the past few weeks, the daily Bible reading schedule I have been following has included the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land. In today’s reading from the Book of Numbers, Caleb stood up against the others he had traveled with while scouting this new land and he encouraged Moses to move forward, to claim the land flowing with milk and honey. But the hearts of the people were persuaded by his companions with their stories of giants and impossible odds.

Angered, God spoke to Moses saying “*Forty days you spent in scouting the land; forty years shall you suffer for your crimes: one year for each day.*” (Numbers 14:34)

Forty years! Anyone looking at forty years probably thinks that *is* a lifetime, certainly it feels like that for anyone in confinement. While thinking about this I began to wonder how many of the Israelites said “What’s the point? Why should we follow such a harsh God, one so unwilling to give us what we want?”

Then I asked “Would I have stepped away and given up on Moses?” I would like to give you an enthusiastic “NO, I’m faithful!” but I’m not so sure that you wouldn’t have found me walking away with others who felt betrayed. Leaders are great so long as their plan looks like the one we have already decided on our own.

The forty more years of exile was a sin consequence yet I doubt there were advance warning signs posted in the Israelite camp that read “Any doubters will be sentenced to forty more years in this desert.” Even if the signs had been posted, well, we all know that signs are soon ignored after the first week or so.

It all seems so frustrating and in some ways unfair that God would be so severe. I’m pretty sure that some of you sitting in a prison cell with long years to stare at the same walls might feel the same way. Yet God was being pretty up front with the people of Israel just as He is with us. “I want you to rely on me. I want you to be blessed. I want all of you, not just the parts of you that you are willing to share!”

Forty years. There would have been a first day and a last day to that time in the desert. On the 34<sup>th</sup> day, however, God didn’t say “I think you’ve learned your lesson. Besides,

I really didn’t mean forty years—I was just making a point.” No, it was forty years. Neither did God say “I’ll see you when the forty years are up, so good luck.” No, God stayed with His people then just as He stays with us now.

### For you have given me hope

If I stare at this sentence long enough I come face to face with the question “What am I really hoping for?” I have what I need in terms of things. I have people that love me and people I love. I have faith that God has been working on my heart but some days that one is a little fuzzy.

Some of the letters that come to me have a hope for release from prison. Others hope that some day they will feel forgiveness from family members. And for some, hope is a more practical thing when they say “I hope no one finds out why I am in prison.”

I believe that the word hope has a positive quality in Psalm 119. The word is not used as in “Protect me from” but more like “Thank you, Lord, for the wonderful gift you have given me.” I would like to believe we could all pray “Lord, because of the hope you give me, I will wake in the morning knowing that you are present in all I do. You help me face loneliness with a belief that it will end. You bring me peace in an environment that seldom feels peaceful.

You show me my weaknesses, my darkness, and remind me that for those sins you died that I might have eternity. And I thank you because your gift of hope is the new person in me that is emerging, in a way, from the ashes of my old self. “

### The arrogant mock me. . .but I do not turn from your law

It is pretty easy to lose hope if one’s focus is on the absence of the kind of

scorn laid on those with sex-related offenses. Even those who love us and see us with new eyes can have moments of anger that can surface in a remark, a moment of doubt, or a wish that our past had never involved them. We cannot stop that from happening any more than we can completely erase the history of what we did.

In God’s perfect love, our past sins are not remembered in that those sins are never held against us. People, however, are not perfect and memories of what we have done are long-term. Those who re-enter society believing that the past is a past that will never surface in the minds of others will find such is not the case. The key is that their remembrance cannot force us to adopt that identity. We have a *new* identity, one formed by God’s grace and our



obedience to His word. There might be some days, however, when that knowledge will be all that stands between us and despair.

Forty years. It's harsh by our standards, perhaps, but it was a time of cleansing for the Israelites and a time of being committed as a people of God, to be His chosen people. Our journey is not really different whether on the outside or in a prison somewhere. God promised. He said He would be with us always and where we live will never alter that truth.

<sup>8</sup> *But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.* <sup>9</sup> *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* (2 Peter 3.8-9)

I pray that you who read this are being encouraged and most importantly that you have hope. God creates in all of us a time when we can serve another, when we can stand beside someone who needs encouragement—not to push or pull them against their will but to witness to them the healing and change God provides all who seek it.

***My comfort in my suffering is this:  
Your promise preserves my life.***

---

## *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.*

Negativity seems to grow and spread easily with no effort or desire. Yet to be positive requires continual effort, but it's also worth it.

No one but Christ breaks the chains of all that bondage to the old ways, the old self. If I depend on myself to get out of those thoughts and temptations, I will give in every time and that will lead me further into the wrong territory.

I have always known that masturbation is a potentially fatal act for me. It's the "first" drink for the alcoholic, the "just one" cigarette. But that act doesn't just happen. I have to allow myself, my thoughts, to get there a little bit at a time. This is my battleground. This is where grace overcomes the old man.

It is the intimacy I have with God, the relationship I have with my creator that reminds me that he is a living God that, yes, still loves and strengthens me. From this relationship I draw comfort, peace, and the joy of living for God. Knowing there is someone in my life I'd never need to hide from, someone I can always trust even with the most intimate details of my life is in and of itself grace. It is, after all, God who keeps me safe and, as you know, the safest place for a Christian is to be hidden in Christ.

While still on parole, a man I know went talk to a pastor of a church concerning his attending services and was given so many restrictions that he gave up the idea of attending. I realize, as do others, that as sex offenders we are subject

to more scrutiny, but I also feel that the scrutiny needs to be tempered with Christian charity as well as basic common sense.

They say that to teach people how to know what counterfeit money looks like, they don't use counterfeit money but real money because once you know the real thing, the counterfeit becomes obvious.

It is interesting that of the different church meetings here, sex offenders make up about 80% or even 90% in some cases of those attending, even though they make up only 20% to 30% of the prison population.

A person in reentry with access to an active support system is far more likely to be successful— an important point for society to understand and accept. Appropriate personal involvement and emotional investment with those in reentry is critical. Shunning and isolating the person is a shortsighted and unhealthy approach. All dangerous temptations can be reined in and mitigated. It is impossible to eliminate all temptation and I feel that trying to do that is the wrong approach.

God has blessed me with being connected to your ministry since 1999. I have been encouraged and pushed to look at me. You have provided personal feedback via the mail several times. I thank the Lord that our paths have crossed on this journey.

I am thankful for the adversities in life as well as for the blessings. They are a constant reminder that life itself is a matter of growing and becoming, and it is through these experiences that I learn.

The man who said sin is the lack of self-respect is right, but that never made that much difference to me. What slows me down is the realization that God is in me and with me, and every sin I do is with a heart, mind, and body that should be Christ's.

I am learning that abstinence is not good enough. It is like the house that was cleaned that the demons return to. Without deliverance and in-depth inner healing, it is just an empty house, good for nothing, until every corner is filled to its fullest with God things and ways of God. Anything short of that fails to fulfill God's will.

I recently saw a short yet meaningful slogan on a piece of paper. It said, "Cherish your purpose in life." I thought that may be true but when my purpose is a life in prison, it can be a challenge to cherish. On the other hand, when I can focus on my loving God and giving him glory in this place, a life even in prison can be cherished and seen as a valuable purpose.

***All things are possible with God!***

# 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 all who dealing with issues of trust, that they come to believe that God is worthy of ALL trust.
- For all who feel exiled, that God's presence is real for them everyday.
- For those wanting hope, that they know God's promise is for eternity for all who seek Him.
- For churches, that they find a way to nurture those in confinement or re-entry.
- For those waking each day in fear, that they come to know the peace that is beyond all understanding.
- For those who live with shame, that they accept the identity God provides them.
- For family members, that they continue to see themselves as needed for support, not as solutions.
- For those in civil commitment, that they do all they can in treatment and not give up hope for eventual release.
- For those in the SORTS program, that as they grow in their healing journey they will continue to offer one another support and encouragement.
- For all who serve in ministry to those in prison, that they are able to see God's presence in each and every person they serve.
- 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.

**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.**

## Can You Help?

As it says above, this newsletter is possible only because of the people willing to financially support it. Over the past few years donations have slowed – just as other ministries have reported. The clear majority of our readers are in confinement, most unable to support the newsletter financially but they have supported it in their prayers. Printing, postage costs, and related miscellaneous expenses bring the average cost for *Into the Light* to \$350-

\$400. This expense is an every-other-month cost, but other expenses related specifically to the ministry I do are not included in that total. The bottom line is that I trust God to keep the parts of this ministry running that should be kept running. God does, however, remind me from time to time that no one will know our financial needs unless I share them. If you are able to contribute or know someone whom might be willing to do so, any help would be appreciated.

## Just Looking Ahead

The ministry I do related to prison correspondence as well as this newsletter has always been in obedience to what I have felt was God's calling. Since my release from prison in 1988, God has opened doors for me to reach out and serve. The truth is that every invitation has ultimately proven to be an unexpected blessing.

I am not old as in ancient but lately I have been wondering "What happens to this newsletter if God calls me home?" The simple answer is that it would not exist. The more complicated part, however, would be in getting the word out.

Years ago the editor of another newsletter I received at the time wrote a paragraph or two like these and simply said, "I will try to find someone to take my place, but if that doesn't happen and you don't receive the newsletter for a few months, say a prayer for me." I guess that's what I am sharing with you.

Please don't write asking what is wrong or if I am sick because everything is fine. I am just trying to be prepared for a time when I am either home with the Lord or unable to continue. By the way, you are all a blessing to me! [Bob]

## If We Go By the Numbers

"According to a recent review of 61 studies, published in the April issue of the American Psychological Association's *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, sex offenders are less likely to have recurring run-ins with the law than was believed.

"R. Karl Hanson and Monique T. Bussiere of the Corrections Research Department of the Solicitor General of Canada found that among 23,393 cases, only 13.4 percent of sex offenders committed another crime after they had spent four to five years in community. The psychologists say that although this percentage is surely an underestimate (many crimes are never reported), it is remarkably low considering the popular belief that once a sex offender, always a sex offender.

"Repeat offenders were the most likely to have deviant sexual preferences, to lead criminal lifestyles or to have dropped out of treatment."

*Kristin Leutwyler*  
SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN  
June 1998 B page 28

*Note: The comment about the "underestimate" should not bother anyone because it is most likely true. But I see 13.4 percent as being much better than the often reported 70-80 percent figures one reads in the media.*

**Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.**  
**PO Box 5824**  
**De Pere, WI 54115-5824**

Nonprofit Org.  
Zip+4 barcoded  
U.S. Postage Paid  
De Pere WI 54115  
Permit No.15



*All things are possible with God*

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

***A Little Humor . . .***

A man, late for an important meeting, was searching desperately for a parking spot in a crowded lot. Looking up to the sky he entreated "Lord if you find me a parking spot, I promise to start going to church again." The words were barely out of his mouth, when a spot opened up right in front of his car. The man looked back up and said, "Never mind, Lord, I found one."

