



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
September—October 2018

I Will Bring You Back

-- Revisited--

By Bob Van Domelen

Note: This was the lead article for January 2002 and I decided to reprint it as it was presented then

Remember, I will be with you and protect you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done all that I have promised you. (Genesis 28.15)

A new year. It seems like only yesterday we were all wondering what would happen with Y2K, and many people believed that we would certainly face one disaster after another as computers crashed. Two years later, we walk in the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, and incredible strife in the Middle East. These are most certainly difficult days we live in.

A few weeks ago, I attended a banquet and listened to the words of a man whose daily focus for living was clearly on God. His talk was a mixture of exhortation spoken with intensity and praise sung from his heart. The effect was so intimate that many in the room (myself included) felt that the message was personal.

I can't recall everything he said – this is one of those times when I wish I had a photographic memory – but there were statements that clearly stood out to me. The moment, for example, he recalled the words of Genesis, my inner ears came alive. He repeated the phrase, “and I will bring you back” a number of times and all I could think of was how God had brought me back – out of the darkness I once called light, out of the confinement of prison, and out of the prison of my compulsive behaviors.

I knew the words he shared were not just for me, they were for everyone, and they were especially meant for the newest societal lepers—sex offenders. “What better title,” I thought as I wrote myself a note on the program, “than ‘I Will Bring You Back’ for the next edition of *Into the Light*.”

Days later as I considered the direction of the article, I was almost overwhelmed for a time with frustration. “How hollow the words might sound to those serving a long sentence or facing civil commitment.” But they aren't hollow words. “And I will bring you back.” Isn't that what every one of us hungers to hear? Isn't it as much a matter of receiving the grace of hope through faith as any physical movement or anticipated freedom we experience might be?

Staring at the words yet again, I started to place the emphasis on a different word each time—a play on words in some circumstances but very significant with this phrase.

And I will bring you back

Long time readers of *Into the Light* will remember that on more than one occasion I have shared that God burned a simple message in my heart as I started my own time in prison. It was “Rely on me alone.” I did not take this message to mean I should ignore everyone else or even to ignore those in charge of my treatment program. Rather, I took it to mean that the days of my claiming to be in total control were over.

My self-control had not prevented me from abusing children or from living a lie that hurt all those who loved me. It took a surrender of myself to God before I could see how deeply buried I was in mire, and it took faith (God's gift to me because I asked for faith) to trust the manner in which God would bring me back.

And I **WILL** bring you back

This is not an idle promise God has made to His people. It is a promise that will *never* be revoked. *But if you return to me and obey my commands, even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to the place I have chosen for my name to be honored. (Neh.1.9)* The central issue, however, is that we must turn from our self-serving behavior and face God in faithful obedience.

Sadly, I find it all too easy to sin, so I don't write these words to you from some lofty tower of perfection. I need God's forgiveness each and every day, and because of the death of Jesus on the cross I know that I have it. “*God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*” (John 3.16) What better proof have we of God's love and faithfulness?

And I will **BRING** you back

When the emphasis is on the word “bring,” there is an element of being taken by the hand of the Father and led through life. We still have choices to make (and not all of them will be good choices), yet the road signs are there for us to see. God's Word is a “How To” book for all of us suffering from the human condition.

Additionally, when we are in relationship with God there is an actual sense of His presence in everything we do. God is not an abstract thought or theology, but some people like to consider Him so because it makes it easier for them to choose their own will rather than God's.

I count on the Holy Spirit within my heart to help me see where change is needed in my life. The Holy Spirit responds by nudging me in directions I need to go. Sometimes the nudge comes from a friend who points out

something I did or said that looks more like the old choices I once made than of the new choices I hope to be making.

I am learning that these nudges don't feel any less uncomfortable than they did years ago. After all, isn't the object to be "free" of all the not-so-good things in our lives? That's what people suggest, but I think that reality shows struggle is a part of everyday living. Some days can be difficult, but if I look closely enough, God was always there, always bringing me to the next level.

And I will bring **YOU** back

There is a tendency for us to read the pronoun "you" as meaning someone other than "me." If that's what you feel more often than you care to admit, read the phrase above with your eyes and hear God speaking the words *just for you!*

And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given me, but raise them up on the last day. (John.6.39) There are times when I feel like such a failure because of temptations. I wish God would just banish them from my life. I believe that God just asks me to do the best I can, to seek His grace, to be willing to admit I am weak, and to desire His love above all other things.

When I look back over the years since my arrest, the one thing that made everything possible was to believe that I was loved and desired by God. That relationship is my identity and through it I am able to channel the love I have for my wife, my children, and countless others.

Believing that God will not (or worse, can not) love me until I have fixed all the broken parts of my life is one of the lies Satan delights in promoting. He knows that sinners want God's love and forgiveness. . . he just encourages the thought that they are not possible.

And I will bring you **BACK**

Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, "Rejoice with me! I have found my lost sheep." I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. (Luke 15.4-7)

If the one sheep had not left, there would have been no need for the shepherd to leave the flock at all. I see myself as that sheep and I know that only God would continue to come after me offering His complete and healing love. We humans would never be able to forgive without limit or love without limitations—that is God's gift to us.

I wish I could say that believing all of this would make everything wonderful. I wish I could say that society is ready and willing to offer forgiveness and restoration to those of us who have sinned so grievously, but I cannot. As I write so often in this newsletter, healing is not about having everything be right in your life. It's not about always "feeling" wonderful. It IS about knowing God is always present and always loving.

As we begin this New Year together, my prayer will be that we are able to encourage one another, to pray for one another, and to allow others to pray for us. Living is one day at a time, one choice at a time, and a trust that God is with us in those moments when we don't "feel" His presence. He IS there and He will bring us back. □

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 am out of prison after 20 years and have experienced none of the negative things I have heard others talk about. The Lord has truly blessed me since I got out. [I share this because reentry is not a one-size-fits-all process. For some it is very difficult, others not so much so. Trust God! Bob]

Into the Light gives hope to those of us who may think there is no life for us to live. I do share each issue with several men and we pray that your ministry will enrich many in our Lord and Savior.

Confessing was the most difficult and dangerous thing I ever had to do and it cost me everything – wife, children, friends, some family, and physical freedom. I would do it again in the same way for I know that because of the brokenness and afflictions, though self-induced, God was able to rebuild and restore my heart.

Confession is good for the soul but only if it is true confession – which usually results in a changed life!

God told us that we would be healed but not when it would happen, just we need to rely on him for it to happen. We want what we want and sometimes God reminds us (like he did Paul) that his grace is enough.

I've taken Victim Empathy five times. The most effective was when the teacher showed videos that truly depicted the ripple effects of abuse, but she showed it to inform and not condemn.

Restoration is a wonderful process, painful at times but so necessary. "All things are possible with God!" I look at myself as an old 1954 model Ford, sitting in the back yard rotting away. But God in his mercy picked me to restore. One day I'll be in showroom condition. What a wonderful day that will be!

Once again, a special thanks to my friend, Bob, whose generous gift of stamps made the mailing of this edition of *Into the Light* possible. Please keep him in your prayers of thanksgiving just as I do. He is a blessing to this ministry!

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 those dealing with the frustration of temptation, that they are able to see the presence of Jesus in every moment, helping and loving them
- For those who feel abandoned, that they can see themselves as a member of the family of God, a family where support is endless.
- For those who seek and want change, that they come to see their newness in the Lord and hunger after it.
- For all with age-inappropriate attractions, that they recognize something in their lives has been broken but can be fixed by God's mercy and grace.
- For those in churches who are given the opportunity to be part of the healing process – for the one who has offended as well as ALL victims – that they will say yes to that opportunity.
- For the families and friends of victims, that they will do all they can to be part of the healing process.
- For family and friends of offenders, that they ask God to help them deal with their feelings (especially anger and betrayal) in order to be encouragers.
- 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.

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.

For those of you able, consider your Amazon purchases using Smile.Amazon and selecting Broken Yoke Ministries as your designation.

To change from what we were to what we hope to be requires us to recognize the 'what' in us that needs to be changed

My Morning Prayer

Written by Joe

Dear Lord,

I come before you this morning as a weak, flawed individual who doesn't always make healthy choices. My selfish nature makes me an easy prey to the corruption in my surroundings.

Yet you know I love you, Lord, and wish to serve you wholeheartedly. So I humbly ask that you change my heart, my thinking, and my selfish ways.

If left to my own devices, I would surely self-destruct.

I know you want to create a clean heart in me because you love me

and know what is best for me. But I have to want to change.

Thank you for putting loving people into my life to encourage my way.

I know you have a plan for my life and an exciting future in store for me.

I realize that the good work that you've begun in me

needs my trust and cooperation.

Help me to want what's best for myself and please give me the courage and strength to work for it.

Walk by my side today, dear Lord.

I need you to discipline me and hold me accountable for my actions.

I am nothing without you, but with you by my side

there is nothing that we cannot overcome together.

Thank you, Lord, for your love and grace.

Amen

A Resource

A Broken Promise by Mickeal and co-authored by McKrae Game looks at the issue of same-sex attraction while offering help for those seeking freedom from this and other sexual issues. Using the real experiences of six inmates, Mickeal explores their recovery stories as examples to be used. A parent's section is included in the latest edition of this book.

Contact *Hope for Wholeness*, McKrae Game, PO Box 5781, Spartanburg, SC, 29304. Cost: \$5 General public / Free for Inmates

Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.

PO Box 5824

De Pere, WI 54115-5824



All things are possible with God

A Little Humor . . .

A husband and wife were driving through Louisiana. As they approached Natchitoches, they started arguing about the pronunciation of the town. They argued back and forth, then they stopped for lunch.

At the counter, the husband asked the waitress, "Before we order, could you please settle an argument for us? Would you please pronounce where we are very slowly?" She leaned over the counter and said, "Burr-r-gerrr Kiiing!"

