



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
January – February 2021

Have I Changed?

Revisited

By Bob Van Domelen

³⁶ "When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to a land far away or near; ³⁷ 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 captivity and say, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong and acted wickedly'; ³⁸ and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their captivity where they were taken, and pray toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and toward the temple I have built for your Name; ³⁹ then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their pleas, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you. (2 Chronicles 6.36-39)

In the last edition I asked readers of this newsletter what I thought would be an important question: "If someone knowing you before you were arrested asked, how would you say you have changed since your arrest?" I asked the question for two reasons.

First, individuals convicted of child molestation face an uphill battle in terms of starting over. They must deal with the Sex Offender Registry and notification laws, communities not happy about their return, and the uncertainty of finding either a place to stay or to work. The task is made difficult because there is no one heralding the changes that have been achieved in attitude or behavior choices as a result of hard work in treatment programs.

Second, the job of rebuilding trust will only come after years of faithfulness to boundaries and evident growth patterns under the watchful eye of family, neighbors, and co-workers. I am convinced that unless individuals can recognize change in themselves, they will not have the confidence to stand with conviction in any setting.

This edition of *Into the Light* will be different. Rather than writing on a theme, I am going to share with you what others sent me as their response to the question. There will be a temptation, I think, to want to *correct* some of the thinking and I urge you not to do that. Rather see each entry as a statement representing the here and now coming from the writer's self-observations.

The flood of tears through the years, the love of Jesus, His grace and divine mercy. Not through my own strength but by and through the love, care, and support of believers who comprehended that the lost could be changed, restored, and

become new creatures as I myself never thought I could be. When Christ sets you free, you are free indeed.

Prison was a turning point in my life. When I was released, starting over was one day at a time but there was always someone willing to help when help was needed. I think that a lot of people who knew me before prison were cautious about what I said and did, but that's okay. In fact, that's healthy for me because they are making me earn the trust and respect I used to take for granted. I don't think they see me as the big-headed individual with big secrets anymore. And I also think some are willing to give me a chance.

This past ten-year civil commitment attack that has wrongfully eaten away a decade of my life was not God's fault. God gives man a choice. I chose to offend and now, though wrongly, the state chooses against my freedom. I have learned because of the God-given ability to choose, humans can choose to hurt fellow humans, yet God gets all glory for being in us and with us in the midst of our choices. And His grace will lead us home despite those choices.

A lot has changed since that day I was arrested and the changes have been for the best. I am more cautious of my thoughts and actions that do not necessarily involve anything with the crime. Frankly, I didn't know how to say NO to people and ran myself ragged so I didn't have to deal with real issues. That showed in my putting up a front that made me seem okay to everyone else. Now I am much more honest with my frailties and wretchedness because the only way from there is up. I like myself now and I like that. Besides, I have a loving Savior who is ever holding me with His right hand and will never leave me – ever.

I have a life sentence and will be stuck here forever. This is hard to accept. Dealing with the guilt of my actions has also been hard. I really want another chance and I want the help I deserve. Instead of sharing my past and getting help, I let my darkness control me and ruin my life and the lives of those I love.

Since my arrest I have had over eleven years to think about the subject of my inappropriate behavior—especially through books and stories of survivors of child molestation as well as some brave women who came to our prison to tell their story in person. When I think about the never-ending negative and

harmful affects my actions have caused my victims—it now makes me physically ill.

When I was arrested, I was self-concerned – what will happen to *me*? How will *I* come back from all of this? I went through all the stages of grieving: *disbelief* that I got caught, *denial* I had done any ‘real’ wrong, *negotiating* with God (“If I get out of this I promise. . .”), *anger* when I got a 35-year sentence, and ultimately to *acceptance* and peace. That was only possible because, as Abraham Lincoln said “I found myself on my knees praying because I had absolutely no where else to go.” And God heard my cry. I’ve changed today because Jesus removed the scales from my eyes and let me look through His. I understand the ripple effect of pain I directly and indirectly caused so many. I no longer ‘hunger for what I sought despite the consequences.’ I hunger for circumstances in my life God can use to do His will for me and others so that there will be no more victims.

Change will only happen when we align ourselves to a change agent who can bring about the change within us. External change never lasts, but when we investigate our inner self and find the bad parts that we surrender to the Great Physician, healing and change will take place.

Before my arrest, I had been systematically grooming my victims for years with abuse almost always being the end result. It took my arrest and dealing first with my own childhood sexual abuse to see how abuse affected my life and how it affected the lives of my victims. Now I try to do anything I can to help others who suffer from the same attractions. I thank God for His forgiveness, love, and divine protection while I am serving my sentence.

One thing that has changed is the way I view my victims. They are human beings with lives, dreams, and goals. They have feelings and hurt just like I hurt.

I learned I could be happy with someone and I could be the person that someone else would want to be with.

In 2018, Mr Rogers was brought back into media attention due to the 50th anniversary of the first broadcast of “Mr Rogers’ Neighborhood.” I always recall his one theme: VALUE – All humans are special. I ignored that simple truth about my crime. Now I fully understand what he was saying.

When one is sick and tired of going nowhere in life, there is time for change, a change for the good. I’ve battled the temptations and lost some, but I realize certain lifestyles don’t get you nowhere. When I first started back reading my Bible, an awe came over me like I had been missing my old friend. Feeling that awe, my shoulders got lighter and my back straightened.

I once resisted change, in fact, I hated it. But now I realize it was necessary since I could not heal myself. I needed major surgery on my wicked heart before I went into the recovery room. Being teachable moved recovery forward. I stare much less through the rearview mirror. I am no longer on a slippery slope but standing on much more solid ground. My deep reservoir of anger is much less so.

I hear myself repeatedly saying that I don’t feel I can handle this [prison] much longer. But then I remember that Jesus

didn’t intend for me to do this in my strength, which is limited, but in His, which is infinite.

The big change for me was when I was, with God’s help, able to break through the wall of denial and justifications and come face to face with the horror of the harm I had caused others. It was a long, painful process to let go of the lies and face the ugly truth about myself. I cannot undo what I have done. But I determined to live my life from now on as a helper rather than a hurter, a giver rather than a taker, and to abound in love as the way to a closer relationship with God. My life today is about doing what I can to promote healing, peace and hope to those God puts me in contact with.

My first change was living with fear. I had never really known fear before prison. I had several sources of help but by far it was leaning on Jesus that brought me through the first three years. Once I decided I wanted a lifelong partnership and meant it, I began to find myself trying to improve in other ways. It is a slow process with ups and downs, but I believe I am a better person, more filled with love, charity and brotherhood than before.

I can tell you that I have more empathy and I am taking full responsibility for molesting. In the past I blamed God and everyone else for my problems. Today I am taking responsibility for what I did and all the harm, pain, and damage that I caused. I also have a closer walk with Christ and know that on the most part, God doesn’t do quick fixes. He wants me to depend and learn on Him.

I think the biggest change is that I don’t feel like a scared little kid inside anymore. I no longer have to be in charge to feel like a man. I accept the things I cannot control, try to find my Higher Power’s message for me in conflict, and I am not angry all the time. I pray daily and I have a pretty good relationship with God. I am now a humble man who isn’t afraid to admit his mistakes, that he is wrong, or that I don’t know something and need to ask for help.

For the first time in my life, I have been totally honest with God, myself, and my loved ones. To look so closely at what I have done and how it is affecting the lives of so many has been the most painful and liberating experience I have known. My journey of healing and change is now a spiritual one with the Lord’s grace and mercy to guide me. In return I give Him my trust.

I am willing to take responsibility for my molestation and the damage it did. I desire to form relationships based on mutual benefit and edification instead of “What’s in it for me?” I don’t sweat the small stuff nearly as much. I have put my total faith and trust in Christ instead of following the watered-down “feel good” gospel being preached today. Though I still have struggles and temptations, I am no longer preoccupied with sex. I am far more focused on spiritual matters than on material ones. I am making progress on living as though God is the center of the universe and not me. And I am far more willing to admit when I am wrong and to do what is necessary to make things right.

I have come to realize that what I have done is so bad that everyone should be mad at me. I should be going to hell for what I did, but I asked God to forgive me and to show mercy on me. I want to have the faith needed to continue changing

my life and I believe that God will give me His amazing grace. God knew I was far from perfect, so He sent His only Son to die for me.

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 foremost, for our victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.
- For ourselves, that each day is a day of growth, a strengthening of resolve, and a firmer step in the conviction of moral right.
- For those approaching release, that they will be able to live the words of the Serenity Prayer.
- For those facing civil commitment hearings, that they will have the strength to desire moving forward in their treatment, believing that they will be better prepared for their return to the world.
- For families and friends of registrants, that they are able to understand the importance of the support and love they offer.
- For chaplains in all institutions, that they continue to reach out and offer the witness of God's love and hope.
- For treatment directors, that they recognize that change involves encouragement and not merely confrontation.
- For groups like SATA-SORT, NARSOL, ACSOL, and all other organizations that offer hope and encouragement to registrants, that they be blessed with the needed prayer and financial support to continue in their efforts.
- For the church, that it might be the living witness of reconciliation and restoration for both victim and offender and stand firm in that commitment rather than run from it.
- For Bob's health, that the ministry God has for him will continue to be an encouragement and hope for others.
- For this ministry, that Broken Yoke Ministries continues to be blessed with the financial support needed to meet basic expenses like this newsletter.
- (As Always) For those who are still abusing, that they will come to understand the devastation they bring on their victims and that they seek help for themselves.

All things are possible with God!

Whether prayer changes our situation or not, one thing is certain: Prayer changes us!

Billy Graham

Some Thoughts

I believe there is nothing more powerful than the witness we give one another, especially when that witness comes from someone who has 'been there'. This edition of *Into the Light* focused on changes readers believe have taken place in spite of and maybe because of their situations.

No one-size-fits-all testimony, no 'all you have to do is' sharing, just the belief that a journey based on trust in the Lord continues. For some, tomorrow might not feel as good or as positive as today but having a focus on God's love means it will never be that place of darkness once called life for so many.

Some are calling 2020 the worst year ever. Political tensions were and remain at an all-time high. The pandemic brought on lock downs, social distancing, and restrictions. At one point I found myself asking "Why are all these things happening to *me*?" Me?

During my years of *dark* thinking I was unable to see that such self-centered thinking made it impossible to recognize the harm I caused. I wasn't listening, I wasn't seeing, and I wasn't feeling what I should have heard, seen, and felt.

As I approach my 75th year, I know that God has helped me shed some of my *me*-focus. I am listening to Him and I am trying to be better at listening to others. Tomorrow might be my last day on this earth, so I hope I am able to make today a God-centered day and a day filled with opportunities to share and encourage others. But then, isn't this the same option for all of us? Be blessed on your journey and Happy New Year!

Broken Yoke Ministries is a not for profit 501 (c)(3) corporation and operates *solely* on the contributions of people such as you. All donations to this ministry are tax deductible and will be recognized. If you cannot support us financially, pray for us. *Unused stamps* are also very welcomed and a good way for those in confinement to be in partnership with this ministry. The bottom line is that we need YOU to help make these newsletters possible. So pray about becoming a partner with this ministry.

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A Little Humor – How many dogs does it take to change a light bulb?

Border Collie: Just one. "Then I'll replace any wiring that's not up to code."

Lapdog: "Oh, me, me! Pleeese let me change the light bulb! Can I? Huh? Huh?"

Dachshund: "You know I can't reach that stupid lamp! You've got a weird sense of humor."

Greyhound: "Hey, if it isn't moving, who cares?"

Pointer: "I see it, there it is, there it is, right there!"

Westie: "Listen up. Dogs do *not* change light bulbs -- *people* change light bulbs. I am not one of THEM so the question is, how long before I can expect my light again?"

Poodle: "I'll just blow in the Border Collie's ear and he'll do it. By the time he finishes rewiring the house, my nails will be dry."

Golden Retriever: "The sun is shining, the day is young, we've got our whole lives ahead of us, and you're inside worrying about a stupid burned-out bulb?"

