



# Into the Light

*All things are possible with God*  
May—June 2018

## And What Do You Ask of God?

-- Revisited--

By Bob Van Domelen

**Note:** This was the lead article for March 1999 and, like the March-April edition, I decided to reprint it and add some current reflections.

Some days were good days for the blind man as he sat among the beggars just outside of Jericho. Other days were not. This day, however, his life would be changed, for Jesus of Nazareth was coming down the road.

The blind man called out "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Those near him told him to be quiet, but he called out all the louder, "JESUS, SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME!" Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! Get on your feet! He's calling you." The man threw aside his cloak, jumped to his feet, and came to Jesus.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

"Go, your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

*(Based on Mark 10.46-52)*

We aren't told whether or not the man had been born blind, but most of those who were blind earned their living by begging. No one offered them a cure, a return of their sight, just a place to sit in designated areas where those who felt so inclined might show pity and toss a few coins. I can almost hear their words as the coins were dropped, "You were *born* blind--probably a sin of your parents."

"There is no known 'cure' for sexual deviancy at this time." So reads the first of a list of concepts that form the foundation of one state's treatment program for sexual offenders. How would that statement balance with "There is no known 'cure' for blindness at this time." I would pray that in the first sentence, the words *at this time* might hold the desire for a time when there *would* be.

The blind man would have remained blind had he not persisted, had he not demanded to be heard. Jesus called to him, and he threw aside his cloak, perhaps fearing that he might trip because of it. His faith drove him forward, the desire of his heart--to be able to see as others saw--acting like a magnet.

Jesus didn't immediately say the healing words the man expected to hear, but instead asked what the blind man

wanted him to do. The blind man simply said, "I want to see."

Maybe I am looking at this the wrong way. Maybe the statement "There is no known 'cure' for sexual deviancy at this time" is really the state acknowledging the sin and not the sinner. Somehow I doubt that. Sin and sinner become interchangeable in most prison settings.

Before some of you get the idea that I am advocating the elimination of state-run treatment programs altogether, I will assure you that I am not. In my own group treatment, I came face to face with parts of myself that I had never faced with honesty before. I saw my selfishness, my misguided lust, and my ignorance exposed. But because of balance offered in Bible studies and chapel activities, I also saw that not all was evil within me, and came to believe with all my heart that Jesus was asking me, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Make this all go away" was not a request that the Lord answered. Instead, He touched my heart and brought reality to the words "And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time (Matthew 28.20)."

After the blind man received his sight, those who knew him didn't continue to refer to him as Bartimaeus, the blind man, but more likely as Bartimaeus, the man who was once blind but now could see. And it is highly probable that Bartimaeus himself never forgot that he had been a blind beggar. Scripture does tell us that he followed Jesus along the road.

Being able to see was not the end, however, but the beginning. Perhaps some of the man's attitudes in the past had been excused because of his blindness. Having received his sight, those attitudes would have to change. Where before his work day consisted of sitting among the beggars, now he would need to find some other means of supporting himself. We aren't told how he would do these things because the focus of the story was on the mercy and love of Jesus. But the fact remains, the blind man met Jesus and was blind no more.

At some point in my own treatment, I finally accepted the truth that I had molested and had done great harm. Scraping away the layers of denial is never an easy or painless thing to do, and when that truth hit me in the face, I was devastated. I felt the millstone around my neck and the weight of despair pulling me down. But that's not where God wanted me to remain. God wanted me to experience



the redemption won on my behalf through the death of Jesus on the cross.

What a miracle! What incredible joy I felt in knowing and believing that my sins had been forgiven! But I was still in prison. I still had group meetings, wore prison clothing, and felt the forced physical isolation from those I loved. Yet it was different.

God did not strip away the difficulties of prison life. He didn't make my return home free of tension, nor did He lay everything in my lap as time passed. He simply reminded me that He was with me in ALL things.

If a system of treatment proclaims "Once a sex offender, always a sex offender," it falls far short of what it could do for those desiring a new life. Such a system will find itself unable to reach beyond its own human limitations. So what, then, is the answer?

In my humble opinion, nothing speaks truth louder than the truth of consistency, the truth of living in the manner in which one is meant to live, day after day, year after year. The state does not have to prove itself. I have to prove myself. So do you. The question now remains, "What is it that you ask of God?"

## 2018

At some point during my time of confinement I believed that while there was a lack of understanding regarding treatment for those with sex-related charges, things would most certainly improve. Over the years, treatment programs have been developed, uniform criteria for successful completion set, and a belief by states that they were on the right track existed.

In most cases, certificates, diplomas, or degrees are earmarks of success that merit words of congratulations and open doors for future opportunities. Not only do doors of opportunity not open for having completed sex offender treatment but graduation has done little if anything to alter the label assigned at the time of arrest: sex offender.

As I shared in the 1999 article, participation in bible studies and chapel activities showed me that I was not all evil. I had done evil but came to believe that God did not want me to remain in that identity. And in my heart, I felt God asking me "What do you want me to do for you?"

Like the blind man, I wanted to see and live like others who did not give in to deviant thoughts and desires. Like the blind man, I knew I would always remember what it was like to be the man sentenced to prison. And like the blind man, I wanted to walk with the knowledge that God was always with me, always encouraging me.

Others then and still want me to walk in the shame of my actions – chosen over 30 years ago – but I don't need them to remind me of the harm I caused. Choosing good, choosing God is *always* a choice made that rejects what is not good, what is not of God.

It occurred to me, however, that I needed to ask again "What do YOU ask of God?" And if God answered your prayer by giving you what you asked for, what would you ask for next? What if you and I asked for the same thing? What if that request was "I want you, Lord, just you!"?

## 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.*

Cleansing, freedom, and forgiveness of sin came at a great cost to Jesus. But the suffering that God allows us to experience as the result of sin serves to teach us to hate the sin and turn our hearts to our faithful and loving Heavenly Father.

*I'm content to do my best here in whatever God puts in my path to work on and to wait on His perfect timing. I know God allows this because I still need to work on some problems before I get out so that my life on the streets will be better.*

Most blame upbringing for what they have done but in the end we are all responsible for ourselves. We know right from wrong, so none of us have a right to say we didn't know.

*I want to say that I am getting better on my end but I can't, so I just have to trust God to save me from myself. I know that's not the way it's supposed to be but it is the best I can do for now.*

I find peace in knowing that whether I get it right or not, God is still with me – "I sought the Lord and he heard me and delivered me from all my tears." (Psalm 139)

*Don't worry. Your eventual mansion in future years in heaven will not have a 500 or 1000 foot zone.*

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*Your love means more than life to me, and I praise you.  
As long as I live, I will pray to you.  
I will sing joyful praises and be filled with excitement  
like a guest at a banquet.*

*I think about you before I go to sleep,  
and my thoughts turn to you during the night.  
You have helped me,  
and I sing happy songs in the shadow of your wings.  
I stay close to you, and your  
powerful arm supports me.  
(Psalm 63.3-8 CEV)*

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!

<Bob>

*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 fear, that they will take to heart the words Jesus shared: *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.* (Mt 28.20)
- For those who are innocent of the charges that have them in prison (and there are some), that their innocence will be proven and they will be freed.
- For those who live each day in fear of violence, that they find themselves able to trust God in all things.
- For all with age-inappropriate attractions but have not acted on those attractions, that they refuse to accept that secrecy is the solution and the path to healing.
- For those who hear of someone's age-inappropriate attractions, that their hearts be filled with compassion and a desire to bring hope and encouragement, not disdain or alienation.
- 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.

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To those who say God cannot forgive a molester, a simple question: When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, didn't he do a good enough job?

## God's Plan

Most of us would agree that God does not abandon us and we probably would agree that since God knows all things, He has everything planned. But when we are in prison or in the shadow of our sins, sometimes it's hard to see God's hand in taking care of us. And if we are sex offenders, it is even more difficult to believe that God plans to give us the future we hope for.

First of all, prison is a consequence that is supposed to be in direct proportion to the wrong that society says we have committed. It could be argued that in some states the length of prison sentence given is wrong or too severe, but that wrong will be assigned to others for their choices—not to us.

God is not, however, about erasing the consequence of what we do; God is about *being with us* through every part of that consequence. Most importantly, God is about reminding us that we are loved, that we are called.

Second, being cared for by God does not mean that there is always enough money for snacks at the canteen. (Some men tell me there are days when there isn't enough money for a stamp or an envelope.) Being cared for is not about having a TV or radio. It is not even about having a cellmate who doesn't snore or make life difficult. God's care for us is about having our needs and not our wants met.

Here is something I share frequently with individuals who tell me that God is absent or that life is too hard: "Turn around and see where you have been. And pay special attention to the fact that you have made it this far." God does some of His best stuff when we aren't telling God how to do it.

The point is that you *are* in the palm of God's hand (Isaiah 49.16); you are the Lord's (John 17.10). How could God ever turn His back on you? If you think it is your sin that separates you from His love, that thinking would never come from God, but it *would come* from the prince of darkness.

Third, the "plans to give you the future you hope for" part will need some explanation because from where most sex offenders stand, the future looks pretty bleak.

Most offenders who write me sooner or later share a dream to be able to start over; to find a place to live and have a job that provides for their needs; and to find a church where they can worship and be part of a faith community. God willing, those will become a reality.

I have a plan,  
Do you trust me?

- God

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

The elderly miser was on his death bed, and as his last request he asked to be alone with his lawyer, doctor, and minister. "I know I am going to die" he said "and I would like to take my money with me. So I am going to give each of you \$150,000 and I want you to each make sure that money gets in the coffin." It was a few days after the funeral when the minister overflowing with guilt finally confided to the other two that he only put \$100,000 back. "I'm glad you brought it up" said the doctor, "because I have also been feeling guilty. I only put \$80,000 back." "You people should be ashamed of yourselves" stormed the lawyer "stealing money like that. Am I the only honest person here? Here look at this" he said pulling out his check book. "I wrote out a check for the full \$150,000!"

