



Into the Light

All things are possible with God

July—August 2019

The Journey – The Path

By Bob Van Domelen

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. (Psalm 16.11)

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. ⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23.3-4)

The time I served in our county jail was very difficult and at times quite frightening. Before, jail was just a building I passed when driving to work – I never thought I would see the inside of one as a person found guilty of child molesting. But the world inside that place was different from anything I could ever have imagined.

Being the target of ridicule and scorn by others in the unit, my prayer life was pretty much constant. I remembered feeling God speak the words “Rely on me alone” to my heart the day after my arrest. I didn’t know what all that meant but I reached out for the hope God offered, trusting that it would fill all those corners inside me where I cowered in fear.

Eventually I was transferred to the State’s reception and processing center, given my number and a drab green jumpsuit and, because space was unavailable in a general population unit, was temporarily assigned to a segregation cell – a part of the prison filled with obscene shouts and ravings.

There was one narrow window in the room that I could open a few inches. Though I couldn’t see much through the filthy glass, I could hear grass being cut and the smell of a clean outside world filled me. Just as I was about to close the window, I felt the words “Now the journey begins” followed by a sense of peace. What I have just shared took place 34 years ago but the memories are as fresh as if yesterday.

One of the blessings I get hearing from people in confinement or from those in reentry is being able to share in their journeys in a way that is quite humbling. Every letter, every story is unique but there is a similarity in all of them – though the journey is very difficult at times, God is present in what they share.

You make known to me the path of life

For years I saw what I believed was ‘the path of life’ but it was on the other side of the street. I could see it but just couldn’t find a way to get over to it. Perhaps it was the reality of prison for what I had done that created a way for me to surrender, to admit I was fully to blame, to set aside excuses that I held inside that made what I had done seem less wrong. It might seem a strange way of saying it, but

somehow I felt I had permission to be on that path of life. My sins were no longer a separation from God but now an invitation to walk in his mercy, love, and forgiveness. It was the path I truly wanted to be on.

You will fill me with joy in your presence

Everything didn’t happen all at once but pretty much a day at a time, sometimes from moment to moment. The more time I spent in God’s word, the more I found ways of praising God, of thanking Jesus for dying for me, and of looking for the presence of the Holy Spirit. Then I sensed a joy deep within.

I remember telling others how God had turned my cell into a holy place only to hear some of them laugh and call me crazy. But it was *my* holy place, a resting spot from the world in which I lived.

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake

Every now and then I hear from someone who writes of leaving the busy world and living in a cave or some other secluded place where life would just be “God and me, no one else.” The thinking is simple – if no one distracts me, my journey will be more direct with fewer opportunities of getting lost. At least that’s what they think.

Prison taught me to pay attention to the voice of God found in others I might meet each day. Some were guards reminding me of rules; some were other inmates sharing how God had blessed them or asking me to pray for them; and still others were individuals who witnessed their faith without words but with the action of their daily lives.

It’s pretty easy to reject those who are not Christian, to condemn them for not believing as I believe, but if God created all of us, he must be part of all of us. And when others act out of a sense of goodness, whether they know it or not, they act out of God’s purpose and as the psalm says ‘for his name’s sake’ for God IS goodness.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley

Every now and then I hear those with sex-related offenses being called ‘modern day lepers.’ In the world in which Jesus lived, lepers were rejected, alienated, and feared, so the comparison is not far from truth. Unlike the leper, however, I cannot claim that I was without fault or that I was innocent and therefore unjustly labeled.

What I did got me arrested and sentenced to prison. What I did placed me on a State sex offender registry for life. What I did gave people a reason to be suspicious of my presence. I cannot change any of these things but I do remind myself that they were and are part of an earlier stage of my journey. I can’t go back and erase my choices but I can focus on the path God provides.

It has struck me before that David wrote “through” the darkest valley, not “around” it. I won’t pretend that living with a prison record for child molestation is a walk in the park, so to speak, but the valley will get only as dark as I allow it to be.

I will fear no evil, for you are with me

To be honest, I do fear sin because of the power it has to alter the path I am on, the path to eternity with God. I know from experience how easy it is for me to choose *my* way over *God’s* way, to say or do something because it answers a need I have in a way that I want it answered.

I would call anyone who believes that temptation does not exist a fool and worse, a fool with the potential to cause harm and suffering to others. So yes, I do pray daily for the grace to make right choices and the ability to recognize the lies Satan would have me accept as truth. It is easy to tell the difference between darkness and light, but not always so easy to recognize it when a sin *feels* right. But if I seek God’s way, my heart beats in rhythm with God’s presence.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me

Most of the time I would prefer to avoid discipline altogether. After all, who likes being told what to do? Who wants to be told this or that place is off-limits? Who wants to go over and over the details of a past to someone deciding if the truth is being shared or not? I think at the core of discipline might be a feeling of being under someone’s thumb, restricted by the will of someone else, and that pretty much defines being punished or at the very least, under the unwanted control of that other person.

David recognized the value of the rod and the staff, believing that the protection of the flock depended on how those tools were used to keep them together or to bring back those who had left the path. Being human, it’s harder for me to humble myself to the guidance/discipline of others, but I know that with surrender comes the freedom from a choice that would hold me back.

Each day IS a journey filled with the unexpected, the challenges, and yes, the blessings. The path might be difficult at times but when walked in the name of the Lord, it is a path filled with love and discovery. See you at the end.

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 going home now after almost 15 years. I want you all to know that your words (shared in this column) have been a real inspiration to me as well as to my family. Know that you all have a place in my heart, thought, and prayers. May God bless you all. Shalom uv'rakhot aleichem!

I am about 30 days away from embarking on the next chapter in my life after serving my 20 year term. I have thoroughly enjoyed ‘Kilroy’ all these years!

I am being released from prison and I want to make sure that you change my address before I leave. I love reading *Into the Light* and share it with others on my unit before

sending it home to my Mom’s house. Then she shares it with others. Thank you for sending it to me.

I want you to know that the Lord blesses me each time someone shares their copy of Into the Light with me. I would like to be placed on the mailing list so that I can have my own copy. Is your newsletter also in Spanish? (I recently found a way to translate the main articles into Spanish but need volunteers who might be willing to review this effort and let me know if it is accurate. Any takers? - Bob)

After serving 11.5 years, I am up for a hearing with the Parole Board and if they refuse a grant, I will have 8.5 years until my end of sentence. While I hold on for a miracle of deliverance, I have taken this advice given me – Be the kind of man God would want to let out and leave the rest in His hands.

God has many ways to plant seeds in the hearts of his lost children. “I Can Only Imagine” was one of those seeds for me. That song was planted in my heart at a time when I was not ready for it to sprout. But when the time was right, God’s perfect timing, it started to sprout and take hold.

I like the things shared in *Bits & Pieces*, seeing how God’s presence in prison is real and working. (from a mother)

Every day I struggle with my faith in God. But I have read and I have heard His word in my ear and I know Christ lives in us. So what’s wrong with me? What’s my problem?

I was diagnosed with leukemia and am currently in treatment with my chemo treatments to end some time next year. The leukemia is currently in remission – my healing miracle. I am now in my 30th year of confinement but by God’s grace, I am on His mission field!

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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 who feel lost and uncertain, that they find direction by following God in all they do.
- For those who live in constant fear, that the words of David in Psalm 23 will remind them of God’s love and protection wherever they are.
- For those who struggle with their faith, that they never tire of asking God for that gift as well as evidence of it in the lives of others around them.

- For those who feel God's call to serve others, that they will trust God in both the timing and response to that service.
- For churches struggling for balance to both victims and those who have created victims, that they would rely on the example of Jesus to create healing places.
- For those in reentry or soon to be released, that they believe the same God who protected them inside will be with them as they begin life again.
- For those who have lost loved ones, that they be granted a blessed time of grieving.
- For Bob's health, that the ministry God has for him will continue to be an encouragement and hope for others.
- For this ministry so 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

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Broken Yoke Ministries
PO Box 5824
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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

Meditation: Running the Race

By Steven
(Based on Hebrews 12.1)

There are stumbling blocks that we place in the paths of our own journey. Over time, we jump over them as a natural reaction, the 'goto' choice. Thus the sins of our risk factors become the links in the chain that slows down our progress in recovery.

The key to change is honesty about our choices and willingness to keep changing despite the desires to cling to the sins that hinder our journey of faith and progress.

When a runner engages in his race, it is one step at a time. For us, it is a choice in the moment, in the hour, in the day. By our choices we can choose to become a victor in our recovery race.

"God, show me the next right choice to make as I run my race of faith."

A Prayer

For each step that I might take,
Be my guide, O Lord of life.
For each load that I might bear,
Be my strength, O Lord of life.
For each mountain I might face,
Be my power, O Lord of life.
For each river that might impede,
Be my safety, O Lord of life.
For each place where I might rest,
Be my peace, O Lord of life.
For each sunrise and sunset,
Be my joy, O Lord of life.

Suppose a coach came up to you and said, "I think you have what it takes to make a name for yourself in this sport. Would you be willing to let me bring you to that level of play?" I think that there would be little hesitation. After all, you were singled out. You were invited to a higher level. At the same time, by agreeing, you believed in your heart that the coach could bring strength to those weaknesses you know that you have. God will do that and so much more. *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

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A Little Humor...

A man managed to get a job painting lines on the highway. At the end of the first day, his supervisor was impressed. "Wow! You did eight miles today! That's amazing!"

The second day, the man's production was down to four miles. "Still pretty darn good," said the supervisor.

On the third day, the man only does two miles. The supervisor calls him into the office. "What's going on? The first day you did great with eight miles, then yesterday you were down to four, and today you only managed two. What's the problem?"

The man rolled his eyes and said "Duh! The paint bucket keeps getting farther away!"

