



Into the Light

All things are possible with God

March—April 2019

Get a Move On

By Bob Van Domelen

¹ Since we have such a huge crowd of men of faith watching us from the grandstands, let us strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back, and especially those sins that wrap themselves so tightly around our feet and trip us up; and let us run with patience the particular race that God has set before us. (Hebrews 12.1 TLB)

Although I couldn't define how or why, I grew up knowing that I was broken in some ways, ways that I kept secret. Yet, if shared or exposed, others might have been willing to help me fix them. But I didn't share. I just didn't believe that I could continue to be loved if people I cared about knew my struggles.

Mine was not an uncommon reaction because at the center of my struggles was always the feeling "no one else thinks this way." And because I believed myself different, I never managed to feel like I fit in. It was, for me at least, like playing duck-duck-goose and never getting to sit down in any part of the circle.

So for me, arrest was not so much an end but a beginning, the opening of my dark secrets closet so that light could fill that space. The price for this 'freedom' was tremendous, the pain and feelings of betrayal almost too overwhelming for my victims and for those who knew me - as well as for me. But at the core of this feeling of freedom was the knowledge that God not only loved me but that I was someone precious to him.

Sins that wrap themselves

When I read the opening verse, I was drawn first to the words "sins that wrap themselves so tightly around our feet and trip us up." What confronted me was the idea that the sins were those I had chosen - not only had chosen but had repeated until they became a go-to choice when a specific opportunity arose. Sadly, even though I hated what I was doing, I still chose to do it.

Repetition creates addiction and addiction fosters the idea that there is no choice in the decision. But there is always a choice, even if it doesn't feel like much of a choice. An addiction, I have learned, can only be overcome by separation from the option to choose as I have chosen so many times in the past. In the race I was running before my arrest, I wrapped my own feet. I gave myself no chance but to trip.

Strip off anything that slows us down

This is where the rubber hits the road, as some might suggest, because the action demands honesty. What if the

one thing getting in my way is something I know I can do without but something I would rather keep?

Following surgery for my gall bladder removal, for example, certain foods and drinks (favorites, by the way) caused me a lot of pain or discomfort, so I chose to avoid them. I also found that my appetite was such that I didn't eat between meals, so one of the good things was the loss of over 25 pounds.

That surgery was done two months ago and I have pretty much healed. The stitches disappeared, my sense of taste is back to normal, and I have found that I am snacking between meals with the same foods and drinks I had been avoiding. I haven't gained the weight back but neither have I lost more of the excess that I carry around.

My head knows that if I want to continue with the weight loss experienced following the surgery, I need to choose between that and the snacks I like. This isn't rocket science, as they say, but simple truth. So far, I still snack but I tell myself it is not as bad as before the operation.

Some who write tell me that they continue to fantasize just as they did before they were arrested and they argue that it's okay because they aren't *doing* anything. According to them, there is no victim because they won't allow that to happen. At the same time, they refuse to strip off anything that slows them down, anything that might prevent opening the door to another victim - almost a certainty without a change in their thinking.

The key for all of us is the honesty we seek to have about our choices and the willingness to follow through despite our desire to cling to whatever it is that slows us down on our journey of faith.

Run with patience

Ask any marathon runner if their third 26.2 mile race is easier than the first and they will tell you, no. In some ways, the third is harder than the first because of a desire to do better than the previous marathon run. Most runners know their strengths and their weaknesses and pay attention to both. What drives them, however, is the finish line - not always ahead of some other runner but crossing that line. For the average runner, *crossing the line* is the ultimate victory.

What about us? What about me? I am past the age where I would even consider a marathon unless I was driving my car. Paul, however, points to the business of living as well as our personal faith journey when he speaks of the 'race.' For the runner, it's one step at a time; for me, one choice at a time, one minute, hour, or day at a time.

KEEP
Running
THE
race
- THAT IS SET -
before you
WITH
endurance
HEBREWS 12:1

Prison didn't erase my memory of past choices. It highlighted them. But I did learn that I *have* a choice and that it is mine to make. So when I go from day to day, the past is still tucked away in some corner of my mind just as are all the things that tempt me. As I frequently write, temptations are a fact of life and no treatment program will eliminate them.

Healthy choices are much easier to make when my life is balanced by a focus on God's love and grace as well as willingness on my part take care of me. Running the race with patience (and endurance) is trusting that if I fall in any way, I look to God, ask forgiveness, and then get up and continue the journey. I'm not perfect and knowing that simple fact makes reliance on God all the more important.

**A huge crowd of men of faith
watching us from the grandstands**

Here's the good part if you are willing to accept it – you are not alone on your journey. I'm not talking about all of us who made shame-filled choices. I'm talking about our cheerleaders – both the saints who have gone before us as well as good men of faith living among us. Though I wish I could say that they are always obvious, I still know they are there but I need to be serious in my search for them.

Two years ago, my wife and I traveled to a state we had wanted to visit and, as luck would have it, there was a marathon scheduled for the week we were there.

On the day of the race, we walked down to what was the finish line and watched as one entrant after another crossed to the cheers of everyone there. Some running, some walking with fatigue, but all had that look on their face that shouted "I made it" coming from some place deep within their being.

What I had not expected was my own reaction to these strangers. I found myself choked up with emotion; tears appeared for no apparent reason; and the same joy the runners felt welled up in me as well – not for me but for *them*, these strangers. So I clapped and yelled "Well done."

We have those who would encourage us although they are sometimes hard to find. And because we have those who would encourage us, we need only look at someone in group, in church, in our family, or wherever we happen to be. They *are* cheering us on. Perhaps not with whoops and pats on the back, but cheering us on nonetheless. And don't forget, you and I get to be encouragers. We get to be men and women of faith watching from 'grandstands'. So as my mom used to say, "Bob, get a move on!" That means you, too.

Transfigure us, O Lord
Transfigure us, O Lord.
Break the chains that bind us;
Speak your healing word, and
Where you lead we'll follow.
Transfigure Us, O Lord

Bob Hurd

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.

God meant for the judges to humble us. We were meant to repent of our sins and to be humbled so that we sought forgiveness and a personal relationship with our Creator. That being said, I am a repented sinner. God has forgiven me. Only man can be so cruel to create and maintain a hell on earth to inflict harm and cause his fellow man to suffer.

Most properties are handled by property management companies. They require a credit and background check and want you to pay for both. I can't pass a background check so there is no need of me wasting my money to have a search done.

I know it can be hard to be thankful while in prison and some tell me it is easy for me to be thankful now that I am out. Yes, it is easy. However, I do recall that I was thankful even while in prison and even after being separated from my children. Only God's grace could do that.

I think all porn should be taken off the web and off the market. It does no good and destroys people's lives. I know that it has ruined mine.

Someday I will achieve my goals and make my family proud of me again.

As I sit here and fellowship with you this evening, I do so in a place called confinement. I am in the best of Godly spirits as God is in control of all things. On the human side of life, I am filled with all things human that have no control of the world around us. But I have faith and trust in our God to see me through.

I know where peace and joy come from. According to Scripture, it comes from our relationship with Christ – but it is easier said than done, especially with a life sentence. That last little fact is hard to get past, even knowing that my time on earth is like minutes compared to eternity. Because we are in the present, it is sometimes hard to look past the present. I sometimes even find myself doubting the very things I tell others to believe and focus on.

The bible says all tears will be wiped away, so I hope I lose all the mental and emotional pain that tears me up.

I keep telling people Jesus is personable, taking people as they are with no prerequisites. That's amazing! The creator, sustainer, and finisher of all creation wants a personal relationship with each of us. With me. That's so awesome! Daily I ask Christ to fill me with his presence, his strength, his love, his hope, and his peace. Having done that, I know I can face the day.

*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 who feel stuck in one place, that they will hear God calling them, God loving them.
- For those who believe that any fantasy is okay as long as there are no victims, that the road to a new victim is not only possible but a probable.
- For those who live in dangerous prisons, who fear for their lives, that they wrap themselves in God's protective love and trust in his presence.
- For those who feel bound by the sins of their past, that they come to believe that they have the power to loosen the ties that bind them.
- For churches considering their response to those with sex-related charges, that their hearts and ears are open to the possibility of change and healing.
- For the families and friends of victims, that they will come to see that healing comes by seeing God was present in those moments of pain, and that he was there for the offender as well.
- For family and friends of offenders, that they find ways to be open to their role as encouragers and supporters.
- 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.
- 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 change from what we were to what we hope to be requires us to recognize the 'what' in us that needs to be changed

This is a topic that shows up in many of the letters I receive, so I decided to repeat this response written some years ago. I hope that it blesses and encourages.

**God has forgiven me,
but I can't forgive myself**

God, unlike our parents when we were kids, does not keep track of the number of times we sin. His forgiveness is as fresh and powerful after the most recent sin as it was after our first. Somehow, we come to believe that as long as we see imperfection within ourselves, we are unworthy of being in God's presence—much less in His circle of close friends. Personally, I think this attitude saddens God because He knows it keeps us from receiving the full measure of grace He wants to share with us each and every day.

Brother Lawrence, a 17th century monk, wrote in *The Practice of the Presence of God* that when he sinned, he got on his knees and asked forgiveness. He then got up believing that whatever God wanted to do to him as a consequence for that sin was God's decision and not his. Brother Lawrence shared that in the end, he had to rely on God's mercy and not on his own ability to find some level of perfection.

I doubt that we will ever feel completely comfortable with our past sins or even those which still plague our lives. I have read that failure to forgive one's self is the height of arrogance because we somehow manage to delegate God's forgiveness to some position of lower importance. I don't believe we consciously think or tell God that we will surrender our lives once we have self-forgiveness, but it is not difficult to understand how that logic might exist.

People enter the true presence of God wearing the rags of their brokenness, their heads bowed, lips murmuring "Lord, forgive me a sinner." Knowing their hearts, God robes them in the peace that surpasses all understanding, the joy of His infinite love. God, through the death of Jesus on the cross, also erases the eternal consequences of even the most heinous of sins. He reminds us that He will never leave us or forsake us whether we struggle through daily life in a prison cell or an office cubicle

Separation from God is never God's design for we are all called into His presence. Even though it is hard to forgive self, we are offered the grace to do so each and every day. Don't worry if the feeling of forgiveness escapes you or if daily temptation makes you feel that the eternal banquet is not for the likes of you. A place has been set for you and God takes great joy in your company!

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A Little Humor. . .

A woman decided to start a handyman service in order to make some extra money. Walking around a wealthy neighborhood, she stopped at the first house where a man answered the door.

"Is there is anything I can do?" He tells her "The porch needs painting, how much would that cost me?"

She replied "How does \$50 sound?" He agreed.

When the man went back into his house, his wife asked him "Does she know the porch wraps around the house?" He responded "She has to . . . she saw it."

About an hour later the woman came to the door to collect her money saying, "I had extra paint so I put on two coats." The man was really impressed and gave her the money, even a little extra. Thanking him she said "And by the way, it's a BMW, not a porch."

