



Into the Light

All things are possible with God!
May-June 2023

Where Is Your Treasure?

By Bob Van Domelen

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"
(Matthew 6:21-24)

I received a letter recently that began "Today marks two years locked up. Today it feels harder not to miss everything I gave up to be a sex offender." He went on to share a list of things precious to his heart that had disappeared because of his offenses.

My initial reaction was "Who in their right mind would give up so much just to satisfy a sexual appetite?" In only moments, however, I understood that I and perhaps most of you reading this newsletter had done the same. We chose to satisfy a desire knowing it was the wrong choice, perhaps even knowing that our choice would harm a child.

Another thought then crossed my mind. When I was a boy, I would say to my friends, "When I grow up, I want to be a <whatever my fancy was>." Some of my choices were normal choices most boys consider, yet my imagination took many directions. One choice I never considered, though, was to be a person who molested. Nor did I offer "When I grow up, I want to go to prison where I will be assigned a number I can wear for the rest of my life."

In my teen years, I occasionally noticed news items in the paper about someone arrested for sexual assault, and again, I wondered how anyone could even consider doing that. In 1985, the headline read "Band Director arrested" and I was the subject of that article. Even then, I wondered "How could I have ever gotten to this point?" But I had.

***For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.***

Inside, I protested, "That's not where my treasure lies. Not in bringing harm to those who did not deserve to be harmed." My treasure, I thought, was to become well-known in my profession, not someone others would avoid and even hate.

If treasure is defined as what is most desired, then somehow my definition got terribly mixed up based on the choices I was making. I became addicted to a sexual appetite that should never have been acknowledged. And in the center of that darkness, I allowed my heart to exist – despite frantic pleas in my prayers that it be otherwise.

One thing I have learned, however, is that despite my

addiction, my heart at its core desired what God wanted of me. I was not created a child molester, but a child molester is what I had become. Unlike my lifetime requirement as a registrant, God speaks to my heart, just as He speaks to you, and reminds me that my identity is in Him, not as one listed on a state registry.

Eventually I realized that God wanted me back, to be His. And God wanted me to see His love and mercy as the treasure I sought above all else.

***The eye is the lamp of the body.
If your eyes are healthy, your
whole body will be full of light.***

We all know someone whose eyes literally sparkle or come alive when they talk, and observing that, there is a contagious joy that fills us. It doesn't happen often, but when I meet someone like that, I drink in the happiness behind those eyes. I want that for myself.

Likewise, there are people whose eyes radiate holiness, the presence of God. Usually that comes in meeting someone experiencing *the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding*. (Philippians 4.7) Most of us, I think, are drawn to those whose lamp shows in this manner. We want what they have.

***But if your eye is bad,
your whole body will be full of darkness***

On the other hand, the eyes of some are flat and lifeless, almost as though they are detached from everything and everyone. The eyes of still others can be hard and cold, a mirror of their inner life. I have heard people say, "I don't like that guy. His eyes tell me he is evil and to be avoided." That sounds like how we define Satan.

This kind of person can be frightening, warning us off from any attempt at a positive connection, but sometimes inviting us to participate in choices we shouldn't.

For where your treasure is

My hope in these articles is always to offer something that leads to hope, that gives encouragement. More than anything, I want to share God's mercy, the love for us that allowed Jesus to die for our sins, and the presence of the Holy Spirit seeking to bless and support us in our daily choices.

Before anything else, please know that I am on the same journey you are on, facing some of the same obstacles, looking for directions along the way, and trusting that you and I will reach the destination God has designed for us. What I consider a blessing is the ability to share with you how I have gotten to where I am.

Surrender

There are few things more difficult than living that old saying, "Let go, let God!" but as long as I feel the need to be in control of everything in my life, I will always fail to recognize the grace God offers in drawing me toward His design.

I still have free will (and I still sin) but that same free will allows me to choose God over self *because I want to make that choice*, I want God to be my treasure. I want my heart to beat in rhythm with His.

The miracle, I think, is that none of us is required to fix everything in our past before we make this choice to seek God in all things. Remember, we will always have to deal with the consequences of our actions. Society demands the controls placed on us, yet I know that the peace that surpasses all understanding is still possible.

Relationship

If I choose God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, then what I am seeking is a relationship with them. To make that possible, I have to take the time to get to know them. When I made this decision after my arrest, I started reading the Word with new eyes and ears, for God was showing me examples of how to live. Listening more intently, I could hear God's word touching my life, coming alive, being real.

Every day is an opportunity for us all to practice being in God's presence. Every day opens us to the lives of others seeking the same treasure. We cannot ignore them any more than they can ignore us, for the light of that treasure we seek is visible to all willing to look for it.

All things are possible with God!

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.

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 and for all victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.
- For those who feel cut off and alone, that they come to feel God's grace and believe that they are important.
- For those who still look to the 'treasures' that brought them to prison, that they will be awakened to what they have done and what they have given up to pursue those dark choices.

- For those who look in the mirror and see vacant eyes staring back, that they ask God to renew the joy that was once theirs, that they see joy and peace instead of that vacant look.
- For chaplains, that they continue to encourage those who come to them, pointing them toward the One who will never forsake them.
- For those who have been victimized, that each day they see a more positive self-image than the day before.
- For families and friends, that they come to understand their role in this healing process, even when the world wants them to believe it isn't possible.
- 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.

Bits & Pieces

The following are taken from letters I have received. Some are meant to offer hope and encouragement to you while others call out for us to be in prayer.

I am currently serving a sentence in Kentucky. Sadly, they do not offer any classes or recovery programs. [But] I interact with other like-minded individuals who are good Christian brothers interested in holding each other accountable.

It is a lot easier to be open with people and earn their respect in time than to withhold info and let Satan convince them I sought to deceive them.

Every night I pray for all my survivors in general (mostly for healing for the damage I've caused) as well as what damage others have caused. And when my mind opens up to a specific survivor, I pray a more focused prayer for that person.

I've noticed that since I have returned to the church, the devil is throwing spiritual darts at me. But I am keeping my cool and thinking first before I react. I go to church now to serve God, not man. I want to build that relationship.

After 15 ½ years of incarceration, I want to experience some healing. It's imperative, I think, to deal with underlying issues but to do so with a mindset to the future, eventually moving past them. If the emphasis is only on past things or current perceptions, one gets pigeonholed and labeled.

I live my day with the knowledge that I have an energy within that propels me forward, away from my addiction

and addictive behaviors, toward my total spiritual self and my true destiny. I am not my crime/charges.

I'm continuing my monastic prayer life here. Prayer and devotion are always a blessing! In such Christ truly sustains me and benefits my soul so much.

His Will – My Yes

Charlie

To surrender is to allow God to shape my will which has proven to be more difficult than fighting or attempting to fight on my own. I must be open and honest about myself. I can't just give up the good and holy to God while ignoring the dark and dangerous I would like to disown.

Light shines in the corners, and I am face to face with all that I have done, all that I secretly desire, and the ways that I deceive myself. In the presence of these things, I must surrender even my self-control.

Maybe it's about trusting God above the momentum of a lifetime. It's certainly admitting that my best has not been good enough. I must find the dividing line between surrendering and giving in. It's not giving the go ahead for sin to have free rein but giving God the reins. It's seeing that I have not been successful in battling myself, because it is nearly impossible to convince my mind that my deepest thoughts and emotions are somehow not me, or if they are, that I need to kill that part of me.

However distorted some thoughts may have become, they have their own survival instinct. They know how to hide until the time is right or the time is wrong. I couldn't say. Grace is the only answer I can see. The Spirit is the only hope.

When I first surrendered to God, he took away the power but not the presence of certain desires. For 25 years, I was able to develop a habit of purity of actions. It's time now to fully surrender and let the spirit gain mastery. So ironic that the toughest battle of my life, surrendering, is a battle I cannot fight. All I can do is present to him the totality of me and wait for him to do something with the chaos.



Can I Tell You Something?

Available for purchase on the internet at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and several other retail websites. Please help get the word out.

CMCA Correctional Ministries Summit

May 18-20, 2023

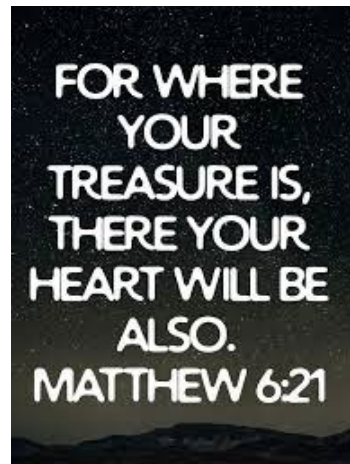
Wheaton, IL

My workshop, *The Church and Registrants*, is scheduled for **Saturday, May 20, at 10:15-11:45 AM**. Please keep the workshop and me in your prayers.

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.

The bottom line is that we need YOU to help make these newsletters possible. So, pray about becoming a partner with this ministry.



O Lord, grant me the grace to feel you near to me, to rejoice in your presence knowing that I have so many things on my mind, so many things to do, so many worries, so much weakness. Grant me that peace which you gave to your friends because only you can give me peace and only near you can I feel that peace which I need so much.

Fr. Sergio Vallejo Martinez

The Call

"This call is for Bob Van Domelen. My name is Deputy Lewis with the Sheriff's Department. When you get this message, please call as soon as possible but before the end of the business day." It was already the end of the day, so I called the next morning but got no answer. A few hours later, I was on my way to my dentist appointment when the phone rang, so I pulled over.

The gist of the conversation was that I had been sent a letter back in January (which he said I signed and returned) about coming in for a risk assessment to determine if I could be removed from the state's registry list. I said I had not gotten any such letter. A quick sample of my handwriting, he said, would answer that question. However, I was told that because I failed to attend the initial date, a bench warrant for my arrest had been issued citing contempt of court.

The deputy told me I needed to turn myself in where I would be arrested and put in confinement for approximately two weeks until such time a judge could schedule a hearing to determine if my claims had merit. I could, however, post bail and avoid confinement.

The amount of bail would be, I was told, returned if the judge dropped the contempt of court charges. And if that were the case, the prospects for my being removed from the registry still looked good given I have been out for 35 years.

I was given instructions for where I could post the bail, so after the dentist appointment, I started to follow the instructions I was given for doing that. The next call should have set off all sorts of warnings, but by that time, I was caught up in everything I was meant to believe. I was told that the bail would have to be submitted using Bitcoin, a virtual monetary system beyond my understanding. Nonetheless, I did as I was told and slipped \$3345 in actual currency into a bitcoin machine.

Having completed that, I was told to report to the Sheriff's Office where I would be given the necessary paperwork to sign and learn my court date. The deputy told me to call him when I got to the Sheriff's Department as he would meet me in the main lobby with the paperwork all set for me to sign.

There were several times up to this point that warnings flashed in my mind, but the words the man used were right on target – Satan's lies. Just enough truth to make them believable.

I called each of the numbers he had used, and each gave me the message, "This phone is no longer in service." I went inside the building and managed to stammer out why I was there. A very kind woman said, "Oh, honey, that's a scam. You didn't give them any money, did you?" I told her how much and started crying. She gave me the phone number for the Police Dispatcher and said I should call immediately. She also told me that I was the second man from the area experiencing this scam that day.

On my way home, I felt God ask, "Can you forgive this man?" I replied, "Yes, Lord, I forgive him." Then I felt God ask, "With more than words?" That is, I think where the

rubber hits the road when it comes to forgiveness. The words can come easily sometimes, but whether they are supported by the heart is another matter.

Once home, a policeman came to our house and took down the information, though he said it was rare that they could do anything. After he left, I cried again. Then I called the Wisconsin Sex Offender Registry in Madison to report the scam. I was told that they have warnings on their web site, but I pointed out that anyone on paper was not allowed internet access. Her response was that they also send notifications to all parole agents in the state. When I asked about being taken off the registry list, she said, "That will never happen."

I sent this story to a close friend in Syracuse, NY, and within minutes he called and asked how much money my wife and I needed. I told him we were fine. When my younger brother heard the story, he offered me \$3000, saying that we had helped them out early in their marriage, so it felt right to help us out now. Both offers were a reminder that there was love surrounding us; both reminded me to be thankful to God for these people. And if I get another call like this one, I'll hang up. By the way, my wife would have hung up sooner. She's the smart one.

While I might not have thought so at first, I realized that God was speaking to my heart, warning me that there was no truth in the call that started all this. But I believe it was my pride that made His voice hard to hear. After all, I often warned others about possible scams because they were registrants and vulnerable, yet I believed myself capable of separating fact from fiction.

Thank you, Lord, for reminding me that despite my mistakes, you are still with me.

A Little Humor . . .

Just a few quick ones

1 Last night I dreamt of a beautiful walk on a sandy beach. At least that explains the footprints I found in the cat litter box this morning.

2 My friend talked me into lending her money for plastic surgery. I've been trying to get it back for months. Unfortunately, I have no idea what she looks like these days.

3 My dog used to chase people on a bike. It got so bad, I had to take his bike away.

4 Two prison guards are changing shifts in the morning, "You know that prisoner 885 ran off in the night?" The other guard sighs, "Finally. No more of that early morning hammering."

5 I saw a poster today, somebody was asking "Have you seen my cat?" I called the number and said that I didn't. I like to help where I can.

6 A waiter gives a gentleman a cup of coffee. The gentleman takes a sip and spits it out. He turns to the waiter and says, "Waiter! This coffee tastes like mud!" The waiter, looking surprised, turns to the gentleman and says, "But, sir, it's fresh ground!"

