



Into the Light

All things are possible with God!
January-February 2025

How Long, O Lord?

By Bob Van Domelen

¹ How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? ² How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? (Psalm 13:1-2)

The letters I received since the last newsletter included words of appreciation for the main article, “How Should God Answer Our Prayers?” But those writers also shared, “Why doesn’t God answer my prayers?” “Is God listening to me?” and even one writer telling me that “Praying to God isn’t the answer – effective treatment is.”

I am no different from any of you. I pray for success and happiness for my children and grandchildren, extended family members, and friends. I pray for those I don’t particularly like (yet hope they pray for me). I also pray for those whose lives were affected by the choices I made – choices that never should have been made.

And like you, I would like a sign that my prayers are being answered, especially an answer that looks like the outcome for which I had asked. I’ve come to recognize, however, that the timing of God’s response rarely seems timely if it comes at all. Sometimes I even forget my petition until years later when I recognize God did answer.

Reading Psalm 13, I realized that the first two verses sounded very human, very us, and the question “How long” is asked and asked again.

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?

When I was a boy and asked my mom or dad something, if they answered, “We’ll see” I knew I was in for a wait. But the response (not always what I wanted) eventually came.

At some point, I found words in Psalm 90 that added a new concept for me. “*A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.*” (vs 4) Not a week, a month, or even a year. A ‘thousand’ years. But to God, that passage of time was little more than a day (or an hour or a second). In other words, our definition of time is not anywhere close to God’s. And if God is perfect, isn’t that a good thing because I certainly am not?

How long will you hide your face from me?

Perhaps we think of these words in a very human way, as in being able to see God’s face just as we see the faces of those around us. In the Old Testament, Moses asked to see the face (the glory) of God, and God responded, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.” (Exodus 33:20)

Scripture also talks of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). I believe that the ‘face of God’ is His presence in everything we do, provided we invite God’s presence or, better still, seek to live in that presence.

I can’t speak for you, but when *my* schedule and *my* busyness take first place, I sometimes forget that He is the source of all I am, and without that presence, nothing I do will mean much. It certainly won’t last because my schedule of things is just that, my schedule.

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

During my time of court-ordered confinement, I sometimes looked around and wondered how others were doing to change their thinking, thinking that had resulted in actions harmful to many. But as I listened to conversations or observed how some behaved, it seemed as though prison for them was little more than an inconvenience. There was no need to change anything.

But I also was blessed to meet others who saw prison as a consequence of *their* choices, *their* actions, and they were determined to do whatever was necessary to leave prison a different person.

There is an important link in the verse above. The first part focuses on ‘wrestling’ with my thoughts. The second part speaks of a daily sense of ‘sorrow’ for the thoughts. Remembering without that sorrow would be a shallow choice and without an appropriate response from me.

After my arrest, I had come face to face with my brokenness. Those who continued to love and support me reminded me that there was some serious work ahead. It would not be enough to say, “I’m sorry” and that would be that.

My victims and extended victims certainly would not be able to hear my apology and then respond as though I had done nothing. I needed to wrestle with the contradiction of the man I thought I was in those choices and the man I knew I was called to be. I needed to feel sorrow for what I had done and sorrow for those whose lives were changed because of *my* choices.

I cannot leave this section without sharing the “How long” question. In the 30+ years I have been answering letters that have come to this ministry, there have been many who could not start a day without seeing their sin, without thinking of the harm they brought. They did not think it was possible for them to *ever* experience freedom, nor did they feel they deserved to have that freedom.’

I can understand the feelings they have because I have had those feelings. Fortunately, people I care about and who care about me reminded me that Jesus didn't take my sins to the cross so that I could continue living in my past. I am called to remember what I have done – not to wallow forever in that. As for those I harmed, the best I can do is become what I have been called to be, a man of God.

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

There are many who roll their eyes when people start talking about Satan, and I think Satan takes great joy in being seen as unreal or a legend created to scare people. But evil does exist – sometimes in the world around us and sometimes within our thoughts.

I often write that the prison system can control your movements, refuse you privileges, and institutionalize your thinking by taking away choice, but it cannot take away your inner peace or your relationship with God unless you decide to give them up.

We will always have to face temptation. We will always have issues both in and out of prison. We will always have people who completely reject us and our right to be among them. I do believe that the enemy will have no more control when we surrender control to matters that should not hold us back.

What about God answering my prayers?

I'd be willing to bet that you were wondering if I would finally answer the questions I raised at the beginning of this article. The simple truth is that I cannot tell the exact timing of God's response any more than I can tell you who will have a successful parole board hearing this next year.

I do think, however, that the four questions raised in Psalm 13 provide us all with focus.

- **Will you forget me forever?**

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:20)

- **How long will you hide your face from me?**

The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. (Psalm 145:18)

- **How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?**

But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings (Hebrews 10:32)

- **How long will my enemy triumph over me?**

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (1 John 5:4)

The scripture I have shared on each question does not provide the 'when' of God's reply, but they do remind us that we are His. They point to God knowing we'd cry out for answers or relief. And I think they also remind us of the following scripture:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

No quick answers but any or all of these verses could provide us options to help us deal with our anxiety when God feels absent.

Does any of what I have shared make you feel better? Maybe not, but throughout God's word we read that our struggles and concerns are not unique. The only unique thing is how God loves, even and especially as we struggle. *How long, Lord?* might be a question that comes up often – I don't think it ever goes away – but God is still the answer to everything and, as I shared before, His timing is perfect. Be blessed in that knowledge.

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 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 fear God has forsaken them, that they see evidence of His presence in people and circumstances in their lives.
- For those who are weighed down by temptation, they see temptation as an opportunity to make new choices and not a mandate to sin.
- For those who fear they will never walk in freedom, that they experience an intimate freedom that only God can give.
- For the church, that they see themselves witnesses of God's love and mercy.
- For family, that they (like their loved one) refuse to wear any label others use that is not of God's design.
- For chaplains, that they continue to preach, teach, and be representative of God's love and mercy.
- For Bob, that as he gets older and experiences issues all seniors face, he will rely on God's love in all things, that he will continue to seek ways to serve.
- For this ministry, that Broken Yoke Ministries continues to be blessed with the financial support needed to meet basic expenses like this newsletter as well as being a resource for those in need of that information.
- (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.

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.

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.

thank you and Broken Yoke Ministries for being there for me.

I don't know how people without God in their lives manage to survive prison. Many don't. God is my strength despite my inability to draw as close to Him as I would like. I'm a 'work in progress', though.

The content of the newsletters always reminds me that I am not alone and that other men are facing the same struggles I am. You give me hope and remind me to turn to the Lord for strength and guidance. Thank you for reminding me that I still have value especially when the world of prison and most of society says I do not.

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.

In Psalm 51, David asks the Lord to create in him a clean heart. I wondered whether David wrote Psalm 19 and/or Psalm 139 before his affair with Bathsheba, which he eventually confessed in Psalm 51. In Jeremiah 17:9, he proclaims "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" We know that God can understand it and that He can also 'cure' it. But it is not an easy process. Through the years God has gradually revealed to me my self-centeredness and lack of love for others. I can now see errors I didn't see then.

I gave my life to Jesus over five years ago, and I am very dedicated to my Lord. However, I still have sexually impure thoughts at times. I've had to repent and to pray to God for deliverance from these thoughts several times. I want to be truly and fully consecrated and fit for my Lord's use.

How do I know for sure God calls me when my ears can't seem to hear His still, small voice despite my best efforts to do so and my open invitation for Him to speak to me?

Can I claim to be in His will when I knowingly think as I do contrary to His commandments? Even though I believe 'once saved, always saved', am I in danger of hearing Jesus proclaim, "I never knew you"? Am I an evil doer? The list of troubles found in Romans 1 & 2 is nothing compared to my fantasies.

After my arrest in 2008 when I would try to pray for my victims, my thoughts would quickly turn carnal. As time went on and I began to spend more time in God's word, that slowly changed. God helped me to present my body and my thoughts as a living sacrifice for Him.

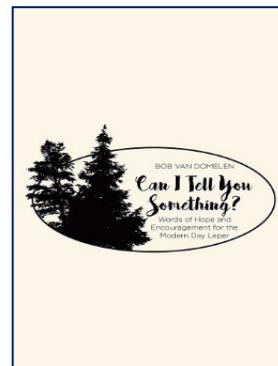
Prison is a dark place for any person but especially for those convicted of crimes that are sexual in nature. While I find great solace in the Scriptures and in my relationship with my Lord, I still find myself lonely way too often. It's a comfort to know that somebody cares, so once again I



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Bits & Pieces is based on letters I get. If you want to share, please consider contributing.



Can I Tell You Something?

By
Bob Van Domelen

Just a short progress report

Since the book was first published in October 2021, a little more than 300 copies have been sold or given as gifts to inmates requesting a copy. Obviously, the book is not on any best seller lists. I can tell you, however, that Amazon ranks it # 2369 in the list of Christian counseling books currently marketed. If you have a copy, you are someone who makes that ranking possible. Thank you!



A Little Humor . . .

Just a short story this time



My friend thinks he is smart. He told me an onion is the only food that makes you cry, so I threw a coconut at his face.

I told my girlfriend she drew her eyebrows too high. She seemed surprised.

I went down the street to a 24-hour grocery store. When I got there, the guy was locking the front door. I said, "Hey! The sign says you're open 24 hours." He said, "Yes, but not in a row!"

I couldn't figure out why the baseball kept getting larger. Then it hit me.

I just read a book about Helium. It was so good that I couldn't put it down.

So a blind man accidentally walks into a women's bar and says to the girl bartender, "You wanna hear a blonde joke?" and the bartender says, "Well, sir the lady next to you is a blonde weightlifter, the two waitresses are both blonde and in a girls wrestling team, the other bartender is blonde as well as me, we are both bodybuilders. Now, sir, are you sure you wanna tell that joke still?" And the man says, "No. Not if I'm gonna have to explain it five times."

Can You Hear Me, Lord?

There are several prayers in the Bible that ask God to hear and answer, including:

- **Psalm 27:7**

"Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; Be gracious and compassionate to me and answer me"

- **Psalm 86**

"Hear me, LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy"

- **Psalm 5:1**

"O LORD, hear me as I pray; pay attention to my groaning. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for I pray to no one but you"

- **Psalm 143**

"O LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief.

- **Psalm 102:1-25**

"LORD, hear my prayer! Listen to my plea! Don't turn away from me in my time of distress. Bend down to listen, and answer me quickly when I call to you"

Prayer for Hearing God's Voice

I seek Your face, Your truth
and Your word for my life.

I want to know You more,
hear You more
and obey You more.

Your Word says Your sheep know Your voice
and we will not follow the voice of a stranger.

Help me to know Your voice
and not be deceived by any other voice.

The year 2025 in a large, stylized, white font with a dark blue outline, set against a light gray background.

As the dawn breaks
on a new year, let us give thanks
for all we hold dear:
our health, our family
and our friends.

Let us release our grudges,
our anger and our pains, for
these are nothing
but binding chains.

Let us live each day
in the most loving ways,
the God-conscious way.