



Into the Light

All things are possible with God!
March-April 2025

The People Were Weeping

By Bob Van Domelen

⁹This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. ¹⁰Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:9-10)

Recently, I was attending a morning service, and the Old Testament reading included the words from Nehemiah above. What caught my attention, however, was the response the people had while Ezra read from The Book of the Law of God. They were so deeply affected that they wept. Why? What would cause that kind of response?

Maybe part of the answer can be found in me, in you. The Jewish people at the time of Nehemiah’s writing were exiles in Babylon, living far from places they called home, and having little control over what they could or couldn’t do. We, on the other hand, committed crimes, and because of those crimes a return home was not so much defined as a distant place as it was some distant time away.

People in authority over us determined our schedule, inventoried our personal belongings, and monitored our behaviors. I wasn’t “Bob”. Security called me “Mr Van Domelen” and, by doing so, withheld some of my personal and more intimate identity from me.

Because of my charges, family and friends struggled with feelings of betrayal. Because of my charges, most people believed that I could never change, could never be trusted. Had I not felt the love of good people and their efforts to reconnect me with God, I doubt I could have changed.

I was blessed, however, by a small prayer group who believed in healing and in the power of Jesus to work miracles. Every week for a year, I attended their meetings and heard words that inspired me.

At one such meeting, a guest speaker with a reputation for bringing to life God’s love intoned, “At this very moment, someone in this room is being healed. I feel someone with ongoing headaches. Someone else has a knee that makes movement difficult.” And so on.

As he spoke, I prayed, “God, let him say ‘Someone is being healed of sexual brokenness.’” But those words were not spoken. “I guess what people say about me is true. I can’t be healed. I will always be despised and mistrusted” was what I thought. But there was more.

“Some of you in this room feel separated from God

because of sins you committed. God calls healing on you. God calls you to reach out, to seek His love and mercy. God wants you to be whole again.” In that moment, the tears flowed freely, for me and others, but they were not tears of despair. They were tears of joy because I knew deep within me that God had forgiven me.

For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law

No one mistakes light and darkness, for one is the absence of the other just as, for example, good and evil are at opposite ends – one being light and the other darkness. Maybe we sometimes mistake following rules as the foundation for making good choices or of just being good.

When I had broken a rule as a boy, my first thought was to avoid being found out. My thinking was that if I didn’t get caught, what I did wasn’t so bad. The older I got, however, the more serious were my steps into the darkness and the more separated I felt from God.

“Lord, I won’t do that again. I am so, so sorry!” And sometimes I cried. But after a time and with repeated failures, I knew that the odds were that I *would* do ‘that’ again. How could I be sorry if I was willing to do something simply because I *wanted* to do it? I thought I didn’t want to hurt anyone, betray trust, or turn my back on God, but I did all those things.

That morning in church, I also found myself thinking, “When I was arrested, people wept for me. My wife, my family and friends, and many who would never have thought I could do such things.” At that time, I was like a child caught in some major infraction of a rule. Initially, all I could feel was “What’s going to happen to ME!” I could never admit that openly, but the feeling was there.

Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared.

Toward the end of that meeting, the guest speaker I wrote about invited everyone to come forward. He would say a prayer or offer something he believed God had for him to share with each of us.

The line seemed to move way too slowly, but eventually I stood in front of him. Putting his hands on my shoulders, he leaned in so that he was close to my ear. Then he whispered, “Miracle.” That was it. No explanation. Nothing. But something inside of me was very excited, excited enough to share this word with the woman who brought me to the meeting. “So, what does it mean? I asked her. “How should I know,” she answered. “Why don’t you ask God?”

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I was disappointed but determined, so I opened my bible and looked straight at a passage that caught my attention. It read, "if the **miracles** that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matthew 11:21).

Looking further in that section, I found, "For if the **miracles** that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day." (verse 23) In that moment, I felt something of a chill and in the next, tears.

I suppose that skeptics will point to coincidence. Some might suggest my emotional response helped me to believe what I wanted to believe. I had no doubts. I had asked God what 'miracle' meant, and He told me. If we ask, should we not expect an answer?

Inside those two verses were some very important things to consider. In the first, had the people been making God the center of their lives, they would not have sinned as they did. They would also have recognized that having sinned, they were called to repent. That word, repent, means to go in a different direction, to turn away from.

In the second, the connection with the sin of Sodom was not lost on me. Had the people of Sodom recognized that God was working miracles in their community, they would not have turned from God. God, for His part, would not have destroyed Sodom. The key to both verses, though, is the fact that miracles had taken place.

The word 'miracle' whispered in my ear that evening was personal. It was an invitation to repent and do whatever was necessary to turn away from my sin choices, to accept consequences that were both fair and necessary, and to believe that what I prayed for was possible.

It took me a long time to see that I had a right to rejoice in God's love and a longer time to feel the right to celebrate with others as one of them. In the years that followed, God gave me opportunities to invite others who felt no right to His mercy and love into a place where they might feel what I was feeling – and continue to feel.

Do not grieve,

for the joy of the Lord is your strength

Please understand that there is a balance that is needed. I cannot walk in joy without recognizing the harm I did others, because there are still people weeping. But that doesn't mean I should reject God's joy and desire for my life to be whole – just as He meant it to be. It means that I pray for victims (my own and others) so that one day they will hear the word 'miracle' and believe that God is working that miracle in their lives.

Ignoring the consequences of my actions on those I offended would be pure selfishness and, I think, an act of molestation from a distance. It might not be a sexual molestation, but it is a molestation that is devastating, for it denies healing for those need healing. That is their prayer, and it is ours. Let's pray that prayer together!

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 seek repentance, that they trust God to surrender enough to see the end goal – being one with the Lord.
- For those who despair at the darkness of their environment, that they come to look for and see God's healing presence.
- For those who have felt God's touch, that they start each day being open to the manner God is reaching into their hearts.
- For the church, that they pray for those in prison and weep for the destruction sin brings.
- For families as they encourage the miracles they see in loved ones.
- For chaplains, that they celebrate the steps those they serve are making on their spiritual journey.
- 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.



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

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.

For me, the giving and then retaking of issues isn't about my stupidity (at least I hope not). It's more about my pride. My way is best; my timing is best; and my plan is best. Ha! I laugh as I write because I know I'm being honest. But reading that, in fact, shows my stupidity and my fear. Can I see further into the future than the God who already lives there? Can I plan and weave a tapestry of my life better than He can? My track record would say otherwise.

I seek God and praise Him. I am happy not because I am in prison but because my happiness from what the Lord has done and is still doing in my life. Now I can say that I will be glad and rejoice in all things for I have learned to be full and in need just as Paul shared (in Philippians 4).

One thing about being in prison for my offense is that SOs typically stick together – safety in numbers. The problem is that many are still participating in or glorifying the very things that got them here. Some, including myself, are trying to get better and we've even tried to help others. But many don't want help.

All I know is I don't know.

We are nothing . . . and nothing but a sex offender . . . and we'll always be that. So yes, that's how I viewed myself while I was in treatment. [We must see ourselves as the men we want to be, not the men we were. Ed.]

Cast all your anxiety, all your worry, all your fears and pains, every tear and heartache, every doubt, every sorrow and trauma on the only one who can handle it, because He is recklessly, passionately, and extremely in love with you.

God gives us the strength to overcome, to endure, and to start all over again. But it depends on us individually to work hard - working on our issues, values, goals, and dreams. We are also called to carry our cross and be willing to help bear the cross of others to the extent we are able.



Can I Tell You Something?

By
Bob Van Domelen

Just another short progress report

This resource continues to move lazily in the sales department – even in the inmate request department. But there is another issue I have been facing – where to send a book if an institution scans mail and sends the scan to a tablet or kiosk. Some states, like Pennsylvania, have separate addresses for inmate mail and another for books, magazines, etc. If you are interested in receiving a copy, please provide me with a correct address. Every book that is sent costs the ministry \$15.

We Hung Our Harps on Willow Trees

August 2005



Beside the rivers of Babylon, we thought about Jerusalem, and we sat down and cried. We hung our harps on the willow trees. Psalm 137.1-2 CEV

With these words, the psalmist provided a most powerful image when describing the exile of the Jewish people, an image of pain and separation that cannot be ignored. So great was their despair that an instrument used for praise was not hidden but displayed openly hanging from a willow tree.

As a musician, this symbolism reminded me of a time many years ago when I stared at piano wondering if I would ever play again. There was no spirit of joy to prompt the kind of playing I enjoyed, and somewhere within myself I think I wondered if God would even accept whatever I offered.

The offenses I had committed that brought me to this point of shame were too great, I thought, and the pain I had caused so many others prompted silence as a substitute for words I couldn't find.

One day, a friend asked me to make her a copy of a cassette I had recorded containing the songs I had written. Listening to the music and adjusting sound levels, I started to cry. The songs I thought I had written for others were just as healing for me.

A few days later, a simple melody came to me, followed by words. With guitar, manuscript paper, and a pencil in hand, **Come, Share My Love** was completed within an hour. I don't sing it often, but each time I do I remember that the Lord wants to bless me despite the many times when I had 'hung my harp.'

Many who struggle with addictive sexual issues experience the feeling of exile. They face a world that either tells them it is perfectly "normal" to act on their desires or one which demands change - with a simple formula of words. The reality of the struggle most overcomers face is that change is a process. And while they are in that process, they may have to deal with the isolation experienced by the polarized views of others.

An overcomer might find that support groups can be extremely valuable as places where they can be affirmed in their decisions. The group structure can also be a reasonably safe sounding board for the expression of feelings that had earlier remained hidden or unspoken.

Healing for any person begins with an internal belief that changes are possible, and that God's grace is at the core of those changes. People can and do offer a contribution of support to the wounded who stand before them. The support they can offer is critical, but the real healing changes originate, proceed from and find completion within the wounded themselves.

I have experienced times of intense praise and joy, times when my conversations with Jesus have flowed with love. He instilled in me a passionate belief that I was His and that my hope for healing was not an idle thought. It saddens me when I think of the times I have hung my harp of praise on a willow tree, silent because of feelings of isolation or separation while in the presence of others.

We fail each other - often on a daily basis - not because we intend to let others down, but because our own needs sometimes cloud our vision. If our relationships with others sit on one end of a scale and our needs on the other with God as the central point or fulcrum, there will be times when the weight shifts from good to not so good. When that happens, are we still able to focus on God who is the fulcrum?

Relationships and needs will always be intertwined. The parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 reminds us that we have a responsibility to one another, to serve and reach out as well as to be served in our own needs. We are to act as witnesses of the Lord and as one who seeks the Lord in others.

A Little Humor . . .

Don't blame me - I didn't write them - I just copied them out for you.



"I once bought some used paint. It was in the shape of a house."

"I plan on living forever. So far, so good."

"How many opticians does it take to change a lightbulb? Is it one or two? One... or two?"

"I bought the world's worst thesaurus yesterday. Not only is it terrible, it's terrible."

"This is my step ladder. I never knew my real ladder."

"What's the difference between a good joke and a bad joke timing."

"My wife told me I had to stop acting like a flamingo. So, I had to put my foot down."

"What rhymes with orange?" 'No, it doesn't' "What do you mean, does nothing rhyme with orange?" 'No... that doesn't rhyme either.' "Well, I know 'that' doesn't rhyme, I'm asking, what rhymes with orange?" 'No! It doesn't!' (And so it goes)

"Did you know that Jesus drove a Honda but just didn't talk about it? *For I did not speak of my own accord.* (John 12:49)"

"Guy walks into a bar and orders a fruit punch. Bartender says "Pal, if you want a punch you'll have to stand in line" Guy looks around, but there is no punch line." (Might've repeated this one, but it still is funny.)

Come, Share My Love

See how I love you. See how I care for you.

Not even the flowers are arrayed as you.

See how I love you. See how I care for you.

I gave you my only Son. What more could I do?

And I will lift you up, and I will give you life.

Bring me your sorrow and all that worries you
Come sit down beside me, let me share your pain.

My love is endless, I'll never leave you

Just come share yourself with me,

Just come share my love.

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