



# Into the Light

*All things are possible with God!*  
July-August 2025

## You Are Never Alone

By Bob Van Domelen

*Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)*

For many who read this newsletter, *You Are Never Alone* contradicts the reality they face every day, a reality that might include harassment or worse. They watch as others are called out for a visit or for their turn at the phone. No one visits them. There is no one to call.

Most people in prison would suggest that they are alone, and I won't disagree, but I would offer the same encouragement that was offered the Jewish people when they were in exile (8<sup>th</sup> century BC). God said,

***Fear not, for I am with you***

I can't speak for anyone else, but when I was arrested and placed in a holding cell, I felt I was completely alone. That wasn't really the case, but it felt as though it were. Even after bail was set and I was allowed to leave the county jail, the cell I felt myself in was still in place. And when I prayed during that time, my words sounded pretty much like "Lord, get me out of this situation. Make it all go away." But that didn't happen.

A few days later, something happened that I have shared in this column before. I was alone in a room and found myself face down on the floor. When I looked up, I saw a hand reaching out to me, not taking hold of me but waiting for my hand to reach out, waiting for me to see God's love and forgiveness extended to me. I took hold and, in that moment heard, "Rely on me alone."

There was no brilliant light filling the room, no overwhelming sense of peace. Just a belief that God was with me. I didn't stop fearing but I did start believing in His presence in a way I had never felt before.

***Be not dismayed, for I am your God***

I found the following on *The Hope Line* website, a resource for people in times of stress:

*Dismayed means feeling distress or anxiety, typically at something unexpected. It also means to look around in terror. God is speaking with tenderness here, telling us not to look around as one might do in danger or in a state of alarm.*

That's not easy for someone to hear – especially to one facing years in prison, rejection by family and friends, and the uncertainty of a future once released. What I had heard those many years ago was, "Rely on me alone" and the feeling of "Keep your eyes fixed on me." My response was, "Don't let go of my hand! Don't leave me!" Nothing has changed. And God willing, nothing will.

***I will strengthen you***

Set aside the image of bulging muscles or the ability to lift heavy weights (nothing I ever had or did) and focus instead of God becoming your personal trainer. He not only sees you where you are but also where you've been and where you will be. He knows your life experiences, the good as well as the bad, and with your permission will help you build on the one and overcome the other.

We have all experienced at least some positive moments or times in our lives when we recognized that what we did, thought, or said was good. We have all experienced at one time a positive connection with someone else, a connection that felt healthy and perhaps even God-centered.

We have also experienced thoughts we knew were not right. They might have 'felt' good but that was the body speaking – not the moral compass literally yelling, "DON'T DO THAT!" And yet, we did what we wanted to do despite the pleading of that inner voice.

With each repetition of that behavior, we made the choice more possible in moments of temptation. Repetition also made that choice feel like the *only* choice we had. That is Satan's lie, not God's truth.

***I will help you***

*Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. (Romans 8:36)*

I used the words 'moral compass' in the section above, and I do believe the Holy Spirit is that compass. Jesus himself said,

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:26)*

There is an important point that needs making here. God the Holy Spirit cannot give what we refuse to receive, and unless we seek God's presence, we won't recognize it when it is there.

If I consider God as Teacher, then the Bible is His lesson plan. Ignoring what God has laid out as aids on our journey is like traveling to a location with no idea exactly where that location is.

In the days before GPS or cellphones when my wife and I used to take long road trips, she was the navigator, map in hand, telling me where to turn or where the next wayside bathroom was. I listened. I trusted. And we got where we were meant to go. In life, God is our navigator,

and He will get us to the right place in our choices. We have to pay attention, though. We have to listen. We have to agree and choose accordingly.

***I will uphold you  
with my righteous right hand***

Maybe at some point someone said to you, "We'll get through this together, my friend. You can count on me." When things got difficult, however, a quick look told you that no one was there. Your steadfast friend was nowhere to be seen. And just maybe you see God the same way – full of promises but absent when most needed.

Try saying that last sentence at a Bible study and watch the reaction you get. My guess is that "I should never have said that" will pop into your mind. After all, no one (other than you) even thinks that way. Then again, maybe some of them do but would never admit it.

Yet in the actual moment of crisis when we cry out to God, we are asking God to respond in a specific way, a way that looks exactly like the words we used when calling out – "Help me, Lord!" or "Get this guy out of my face!" or any other situation that comes to mind. But it takes faith to believe that God is listening to those cries for help.

"I will uphold you," says the Lord, "with my righteous right hand." That's what it comes down to. God's promise. God's strength.

***And behold, I am with you always,  
to the end of the age.*** (Matthew 28:20)

Being alone when we want connections can be a real issue, an emptiness in each of us that needs to be filled. Even if everything else is right in our world, we all experience that hunger for connection from time to time.

In the story of creation, we read "*It is not good for a man to be alone*" (Genesis 2:18). Those words signify that human beings are created for companionship and community. When I came home from prison, I learned that community as I knew it before my arrest no longer looked the same. And to this day, I grieve those losses because my actions created them.

Yet, "Rely on me alone" was still fresh in my mind the day I was released, just as it is even today. God has been restoring relationships in my life and creating new ones as I am open to them. One thing I have come to see is that I am in a better place to connect with others because the person I present myself to be is the person I am. And that's a good feeling.

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## 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 totally abandoned by family, friends, and church, that God will open their

hearts to feeling His presence and love.

- For those who believe that there is no point in living, that they find ways to feel hope.
- For those who feel they have lost everything, that they are able to see the gifts and talents that were part of their past are still available.
- For the church, that as they consider the harm brought to their church family because of an abuser, they also consider ways God is teaching them how to forgive in realistic ways.
- For families, that they come to understand that healing is never achieved by ignoring what happened, but by dealing with it.
- For chaplains, that they remind all they serve of God's love, mercy, and forgiveness.
- 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.

## 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.*

We each have a ministry to fulfill. God uses our epic failures to reach those who also fail in epic ways, so we can let them know that when they hit bottom, bounce, and hit it again and again, they'll know they are not alone. Someone will sit with them through their mess and show them how they are loved by a wonderful heavenly Father.

*I did enjoy the encouragement offered in the new column, "There is Life after Prison." Even though I still have 21 years to go, hearing from someone how they are transitioning after a lengthy incarceration shows that there is still hope for all that have a lengthy outdate.*

The last newsletter was very powerful and thought-provoking, especially Brother Don's message. Much is happening, and I am seeing prayers answered after many years of pleading to the Lord for restoration in my family. Recently, I found email messages from two of my sons – in one week?! I was in shock because for a long time, I had been in a 'spiritual desert' and was feeling rejected. What's up, God?

*I get no satisfaction having to admit this, but if I gloss over or try to cover a sin I don't want to continue, I am more apt to continue with that sin. I need to get back into failing forward, using those times as lessons to learn from*

*instead of them holding me back.*

When you say, "I will be able to accept God's love when (i.e. I overcome this sin)." But we have it backwards. It should be "I stop or change XYZ because I accept God's love – even if I don't understand it."

*Jesus tells us to forgive. Please understand. I can't yet.*

"There is Life after Prison" was great. What caught me off guard was learning that prison created damage like PTSD in my life. That's something you don't know or know how to deal with it. I ran from it, tried to bury and hide it, and used horrible ways to cope with it. I should have been in counseling.

*The column "There is Life after Prison" was interesting and I am hoping you'll have more. The article gave one a different look at life outside here than I have been dealing with in my thinking.*



Write Bob at:

**Bob Van Domelen  
Broken Yoke Ministries  
PO Box 5824  
De Pere, WI 54115-5824**

*Bits & Pieces is based on letters I get. If you want to share, please consider contributing. And remember, **tell others about Bob's book.***



## Can I Tell You Something?

By  
Bob Van Domelen

**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.**

*All things are possible with God!*

*This is the second in a series of articles written by Don, a man who served 25 years inside and is now rebuilding his life. His is a wonderful example of trusting in the Lord – serving God and others as well. Your feedback is welcome and will shape the direction of future offerings. [Bob]*

## There is Life after Prison

"A Real Relationship"  
by Don

From my own experiences, I think I started thinking about life after lockup as soon as I realized I was really locked up. Maybe you did, too. We dream of how things will be when we are eventually released based on how things were before our first day in prison. Naturally, it's mostly the positive relationships we remember (avoiding the elephant in the room) - the wonderful relationships we had with family, friends, church members, and those with whom we worked. It took some time for me to finally see reality. 'Real' relationships just aren't that easy.

In the early days of lockup, I thought as many do, that making relationships would be the same process I used before. Of course, eventually I would have to talk about my actions, what I'd learned about myself, and how I'd changed.

But even in prison there were good times - the positive things I'd done and the folks I'd helped before prison. Given all that I had done for others, surely all would be forgiven. I thought to myself, "Look at all the folks now keeping in touch with me. Look at all the phone calls I accept, all the letters I get wanting to hear from me. Surely, this is proof that my relationships with those people will be as strong as they have ever been." Given all I have shared, all should be forgiven by most, wouldn't it? Dream on.

As most of us in prison have experienced, it didn't take long for of this support to die down as reality set in. Attitudes of people on the outside changed without me seeing it happen or just without me just accepting that they had. The reality of my unlawful actions had set in with others before they set in with me. But some of my dreams of relationship continued. The dreams of family remained—those with my sons greeting me with hugs and high fives on my release. They had, however, grown up with me missing all the graduations and major events in their lives. I missed their marriages, and I missed the births of my grandchildren. Relationships had truly changed. This dream was not to be.

While inside, I thought, "Surely the church relationships would be there. After all I was a regular and held many leadership positions. Forgiveness is a truly Christian virtue, isn't it?" Another dream shattered. Not only was there just one visit with an Associate Pastor, but much to my surprise and after twelve years inside, I received two separate certified letters demanding that I withdraw my membership. The letters stated I had done

irreparable harm to the church. However, I knew church membership had added over a thousand folks in those years without me, people who did not know me or my past service.

So, how about God, then? How was that relationship? After all, I was just barely surviving safely day to day in this earthly 'Purgatory'. I prayed daily and attended chapel services, yet I was sure I was living under a dome of evil that I thought even God couldn't get through. As a result, I questioned my relationship with God, even to the point of asking where the relationship with my *real* self was? Who was I really?

But thank God. Literally. All of this is the past. Life is a process and so is our relationship with God. Just look at the Biblical stories of what happens over and over with those God works with. God is always there whether they think he is or not. He's even there when they don't listen to him or don't act in Godly ways.

As I look back five years since my release, I can see how God was there with me the whole time, even getting through that dome of evil, constantly watching over me and working on my behalf without me even realizing it. Oh, all may not have been roses, but I not only survived but grew and helped others grow. I couldn't see the real me, but God could. And to this day I feel and know that HE is the Real Relationship. HE is all that really matters! Not only is HE with me now but was all along.

*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.*

### A Little Humor . . .

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



"There was a king once who was 12 inches tall. Terrible king, great ruler."

"My grandpa always said when one door closes, another one opens. Smart man but a horrible cabinet maker."

"People are usually shocked when they find out I'm not a very good electrician."

"Of all the inventions of the last hundred years, the dry erase board is the most remarkable."

"Man goes to his doctor and says, "Doctor, I think I'm losing my hearing." Doctor says, "Can you describe the symptoms for me?" Man replies, "Sure. Homer is fat and bald; Marge has tall blue hair..."

"It's not the best ceiling I've ever seen, but it's up there."

"I once got stuck in an elevator. Now I take steps to avoid them."

"A priest, an Imam, and a rabbit are donating blood. The rabbit says, "I think I'm a typo."

"What's the difference between Dubai and Abu Dhabi? The people in Dubai don't like the Flintstones, but the people in Abu Dhabi do."

"I bought an expensive Rolls Royce but didn't pay for a driver. All that money and nothing to chauffeur it."

### Psalms 63:1-4

O God, you are my God;

earnestly I seek you;

my soul thirsts for you;

my flesh faints for you,

as in a dry and weary land  
where there is no water.

<sup>2</sup> So I have looked upon you

in the sanctuary,

beholding your power and glory.

<sup>3</sup> Because your steadfast love is

better than life,

my lips will praise you.

<sup>4</sup> So I will bless you as long as I live;

in your name I will lift up my hands.

*God is love*

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