



Into the Light

All things are possible with God!
March-April 2026

I Said I Was Sorry

By Bob Van Domelen

[This is a modified revisit first shared March 2004]

¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. ¹⁵ But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (2 Samuel 7.14-15)

Just before the judge sentenced me, he asked if I had anything I wanted to say to the court or to the family of my victims. I remember trying hard to find the words that might clearly express how sorry I was and how much I had hurt so many people. Even though I had rehearsed a little the night before to make sure everything I felt was important got said, in the emotion of the moment nothing really felt like it was coming out right.

The judge pronounced his sentence and gave me a few moments with my wife and my attorney before the bailiff directed me to the receiving area of the county jail. I had expected to be able to go home, to say goodbye to my children, and to return the next day to begin the sentence, but it didn't happen that way.

Actions are all about consequences. Good deeds usually result in favorable outcomes and bad deeds in unfavorable ones. Most of us try to excel in the good stuff but we are, after all, human and we're bound to have our share of poor choices.

For most of the bad things I did as a child or a young man growing up saying, "I'm sorry" usually brought some balance to the situation. The offended party might say, "Well, just don't ever do that again" or "I should think you would be. You had no right to do what you did."

Punishment, if it was called for, was in the form of denied privileges, time in my room to consider what I had done, or having to live with the stony silence that usually accompanied the anger others had.

Dressed in a green jumpsuit that was a little large on me, I was ushered into a smoke-filled cellblock where there were four bunk beds and thirteen men. I was given a thin mattress pad for the floor and a pillow that was so flattened it had to be rolled up to serve the function of a pillow.

That first evening I stared at the ceiling and thought, "Didn't I say I was sorry? I shouldn't be here. I should be at home proving to everyone that I would never molest another child." But no one came the next morning to say I could go

home. Nor for some time to come.

***When he does wrong,
I will punish him with the rod of men***

Ask the average person on the street what should be done to child molesters, and the answer might be "Lock them up forever" or "The death penalty is too good for them." The "rod of men" is more than a mere prison sentence. It's the hate that follows a molester like a shadow even when there is no light.

It's a final separation in most cases between a molester and his or her family. It's the sex offender registry, the narrow job market, and the perpetual label that will be attached regardless of treatment or any personal effort to be different. But it is not the rod of God.

Some offenders say that there is a complete lack of balance in the state's punishment or "the rod of men." They would argue that the consequences of molestation should be as clearly defined as they are for any other offense.

They also maintain that life should start fresh when a sentence has been served, not be an ongoing pattern of rejection. I can't argue with them, but this kind of punishment is not the rod of God either.

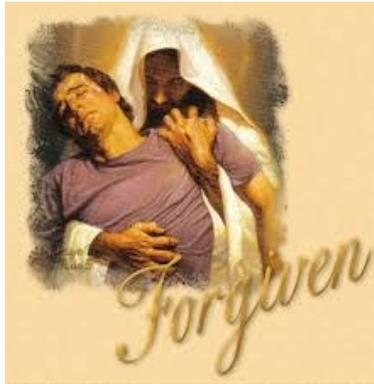
When David sinned against God by calling for a census to determine the strength of his army, God gave him his choice of three punishments. David responded, "*Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men*" (2 Samuel 24.14). What followed was a plague that took the lives of 70,000 people. *That was* punishment with the rod of God.

More would have died but for two things. First, the Lord was grieved by the loss of so many and second, David pleaded for the punishment to befall him rather than his people, and a much-chastened David offered sacrifices of atonement. God heard and the plague passed.

But my love will never be taken away

Understanding the public outrage over child molestation is not so difficult. Understanding why some churches refuse to accept an offender who has served his or her time and has completed treatment is. And if the churches turn their collective backs on sex offenders, have they redefined the sin that cannot be forgiven?

I think some people honestly believe that child molesters fall outside of God's mercy and certainly outside of His forgiveness. Rigid hearts are formed, walls of



rejection are built, and a new form of abuse is born—all in the name of public morality. For offenders who have truly surrendered themselves to the process of change, fear and hopelessness grow where they have no right to grow. And unfortunately, many offenders say, “What’s the use?”

Sometimes the frustration I feel in letters from men and women in prison is almost overwhelming, yet in my own life I have accepted the truth of God’s continual presence and unending love. And that’s what I keep reminding others is their inheritance as well.

I will be his father, and he will be my son

In the end it’s all about this precious relationship, a relationship that exists despite and sometimes because of adversity. It certainly exists because I need God. Even as a man who has caused “one of these little ones who believe in me to sin” I am still an heir. God still calls me His own.

I said I was sorry in the courtroom that day, and I have said it on countless occasions since then as opportunities presented themselves. The words were sincere in the beginning, but I think I was expecting something then for having said them. Maybe it was resolved tension; maybe it was reconciled relationships I wanted; and maybe all I really wanted was a clean slate in life. The words themselves are necessary, but they are not all that is necessary.

Forgiveness is not the absence of consequences; it’s just forgiveness. I believe God has forgiven me, yet I know many people might never do so. The one that matters most, however, is the forgiveness of God and receiving that forgiveness makes me more aware of my responsibilities, my need for accountability, and my need to submit myself to God’s loving discipline.

¹⁰Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, *that we may share in his holiness*. ¹¹No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:10-11).

Sometimes we have to say, “I’m sorry” without justifying our actions or ourselves. Sometimes saying, “I’m sorry” is, at the heart of things, a way in which we recognize our capacity to harm others. And sometimes saying, “I’m sorry” is not really as good as saying, “I am sorry.”

All things are possible with God!



Write Bob at:

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

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.

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 feeling abandoned, that they always sense the presence of God’s healing love, believing that they will be restored.
- For those who struggle with the belief that they cannot be forgiven, that they will come to believe that Jesus atoned for what they did.
- For those who need to forgive those who have harmed them, that they find the strength to do so.
- For the church, that messages on forgiveness given from the pulpit find their way into the hearts of listeners.
- For families, that they support one another because, broken or healthy, they are still family.
- For chaplains, that they remind those who seek their help that each day can be a step in a healing direction.
- 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.

There is Life after Prison

"Steps"
by Don

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.

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 still amazed at how much God makes His presence felt – even here where most are not thinking of Him at all.

Now isn't the time to walk away or turn from my faith simply because I'm not getting my way. "Thy will be done." God carries us when we are frightened or too weary to go on. We may not feel it at first because we want to be in control. "It's my life." We sometimes forget the one who gave us that life. We are to do His will and glorify Him. That seems like a tall order, but if we keep our trust in Him, even if we dislike where we're led, we will hear the words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Come, inherit My kingdom."

I am just about eight months from the door. The closer I get, the more I realize I need to keep close to the Lord and rest in His peace. So many others fall apart as they approach release. It seems that – much like a meteor – they break apart in reentry. Where would I be without Him, His peace, His rest? Chaos. Nothing less.

After reading "Be Real. . . Temptation Is," I couldn't help but agree. Temptation never goes away, and it's when we let our guard down that Satan steps in. It happened to me and I'll never say, "It won't happen again." I will say, "I'll try to stay on guard and do everything in my power to protect myself." That includes finding as many people as I can to surround myself with to help keep me accountable."

I will accept the tolerance given me by the church and people in the church, but I want more, and more isn't possible. So, this is a God problem. That means that I can't change it and must turn it over to God.

To be called "woke" in a world that sleeps through suffering is no insult—it's the Gospel. Woke means awakened by compassion, guided by truth, humbled by grace. Committed to justice—not just for some, but for all." (Pope Leo IV)

I hope many of you remember the Three Stooges: Moe, Curly, and Larry. In my younger days, I watched them every day after school. One of my favorite bits was called "Niagara Falls."

Moe and Curly are standing a few feet apart when Curly says, "Niagara Falls."

Moe looks surprised and replies, "What did you say?"

Curly repeats it louder. Moe turns and steps madly toward him as he repeats, "Niagara Falls" once more and, moving closer, continues "Slowly I turn, step by step, inch by inch" until face to face with Curly. Then he clobbers him!

It was very funny then, but as you slowly turn toward your release from prison, are you taking it "step by step" to keep from being clobbered when you finally exit? After all, you've seen many people leave. It's simple. They've packed up. They wait. Then they are called out and disappear never to be seen again. Or maybe not.

Do they get "clobbered" and later return expecting all to welcome them back? I know I saw it more times than I should have. Why?

Were they really ready to get out? Did they slowly take the steps to be ready? Most likely not. I can assure you that if you don't plan for your release and a new future, you will slowly "re-turn."

You've seen and heard it many times from guys who return to personal fanfare like some kind of hero or like others who are in for the first time. One of the first things they talk about is getting out and all they plan to do once they are. To those who are returning, what plan did they have to get out and stay out? Is that you? Did you have a plan?

These guys are often checkers champions or masters at every card game; they know so much and are willing to display their knowledge in every conversation; and they control not only Sports TV but every show - especially "Price is Right". After lights out, they become wandering souls all night. Is that you?

One thing you won't often see is them working a job, getting their GED, going to AA or SA meetings, taking a self-help class, or considering any helpful therapy. Is that you?

The days do seem to pass slowly. Tomorrow is followed by tomorrow and more tomorrows. When are you going to slowly turn and go "inch by inch" toward a successful reentry? Or are you going to take no steps, ignoring all

that's available like the guys listed above rejected. All the steps they avoided can and should be taken.

In addition to staying out of trouble by being busy, plan for your housing (best to try transition housing) and finding a job. Do you have your Social Security card, a state ID like your driver's license? All will be needed but none happens automatically should you need it.

Now if this all seems like a lot, it can be. It depends on whether you want to slowly take it "step by step" or get clobbered and blame the system, your family or friends. Is that you?

Just when you think no one is there for you except those you want to blame, remember that God is. Ask him for help and, even though you may not see it right away or until you later look back, He IS there. Just listen to what decent folk are showing you about the steps you can do for your own good. In case you are wondering, that's God answering your prayers.

Listen to what the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg said. "Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time." And I'm betting it's slowly. I'm also betting it's "inch by inch."

in Reentry is the current title and one I think will work.

Another change is a shift from Covenant Books (publishers of *Can I Tell You Something*) to Inscript Books, a subsidiary of Dove Christian Publishers. By the time you read this, I am hoping we will have completed the final edit of the text. After that, the book will go to the production stage.

Most books being published these days by people like me are called vanity press, because authors pay for their work to be made into works available to the public. Some publishers will do that for any author writing about any topic. Fortunately, Inscript Books doesn't accept any work that falls outside their guidelines. I will share that I felt blessed by the editing process so far, because the editor's questions and suggestions showed an understanding of the topic.

When the book is finally available, I will advertise that and pray that you will encourage loved ones to obtain a copy. I am also hoping to be able to offer my books at the Correctional Ministries and Chaplains Association Summit (May 14-16 in Wheaton, IL) where I will have a display table. Bottom line: Pray for this effort, pray for the finished product, and pray for all those who will read it.

Special blessings on Karen Hart and members of KEYS ministry for being a part of the book by sharing their experiences. I am indebted to your help.

When I was in prison, I read Psalm 51 every day. The words of David felt like truth coming from the deepest part of my being. The final three words in the main article were "I am sorry." I pray that you will feel God's loving and forgiving presence as you read these verses. And if you want a real blessing, read the entire psalm every day.

A Little Humor . . .

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



- (A real story) Eight men were in a lineup after a robbery. The Police Sargent said, "When I call your name, step forward and say, 'Give me your money or I will shoot!' One of the men in the lineup said, "That's not what I said."
- A fake noodle is called an impasta.
- Why was the broom late for work? It overswept.
- Why don't ants get sick? They have anty-bodies.
- What do you get from a pampered cow? Spoiled milk.
- What did the dentist win at the competition? A little plaque.

NEW LIFE - NEW DIRECTIONS



Registrants in Reentry

BOB VAN DOMELEN

THINGS CHANGE!

In the last edition of this newsletter, I announced that I was nearing the completion of my second

book, *Everything Has Changed: Registrants in Reentry*.

Well, the book is finished – at least what editors call a first draft, but the title has changed. Discussing cover art with my son, he paused for a moment and then said, "Change the title!"

I was taken back at first because I had shared an idea that I thought would work and I am, if nothing else, a man who could be accused of occasionally wearing blinders. But at the same time, I recognized that the original title created an image that made reentry difficult if not impossible for some.

As you can see, *New Life, New Directions: Registrants*