



Into the Light

All things are possible with God!
March-April 2026

A Bruised Reed - Revisited

By Bob Van Domelen

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. (Isaiah 42: 3, 6-7)

Every now and again as I consider a topic for this column, I wonder whether I am supposed to be offering clinical advice of some type. It only takes a few moments, however, for me to remember that I am not a licensed therapist, nor have I discovered something others have not thought of before.

The basic direction of this newsletter has not changed since the first edition (May 1997). It is my desire to offer you hope and encouragement, and a firm belief that change is possible despite the opinion of the world.

Isaiah 42:3 is the signature verse for Prison Fellowship, an organization founded by Chuck Colson serving the needs of inmates in prisons around the world. For me and many others, the image of a bruised reed is not an incompatible image. Most of us have felt more than bruised. We have felt completely broken and useless.

A bruised reed he will not break

These words show the difference between how we see ourselves and how God sees us. God wasn't on the other side of a closed door when we molested one of His children. He was right there in the same room, in the same place, and He grieved what was happening to an innocent child. He also grieved what was happening to us, for we are also His children.

Our decision to molest was not some "it just happened." Our lives had been out of control, our behaviors increasingly carried on in darkness, and perhaps most perversely, many of us justified what we did. Over a course of years, we were not just bruised, we were black and blue, and God saw each bruise as it happened. He did not break us as one might snap a pencil in two and throw it away. He kept calling us to Him, but we had our hands over our ears.

A smoldering wick He will not snuff out

Matthew Henry, a 17th century Bible scholar, described the bruised reed as those oppressed with doubts and fears, and the smoldering wick as the wick of a candle newly lighted but about to go out. God's desire is to strengthen the reed and to fan the flame of belief, hope, and relationship into a

flame.

My flame had all but extinguished on April 3, 1985, the day I was arrested. I wanted out of life, because my life had become so distorted, yet I sensed God fanning the smoldering wick of my being, though I would never have used those words at that time. He called me in my despair, reminded me that I was loved, and planted a vision of freedom from the darkness in which I had walked. My surrender to that vision was, perhaps, the first real step of faith I had ever taken. The hand of the Lord was there for me, and I took it.

In faithfulness He will bring forth justice

Justice to one who has not surrendered his heart in obedience sounds like this: "The system is out to get me. What I did wasn't so bad that I should be in prison." To agree with these words, one must ignore the reality of the pain brought to the lives of victims. No one can justify molesting a child. No history of being abused evens the scales of justice.

God loves us through the consequences of our actions. A prison sentence does not ignore the horrific childhood an offender might have endured—that sentence is meant to address the wrong done to another. Far too often, however, treatment seeks only to focus on victim empathy while rejecting the need to deal with the abuse an offender might have endured. Healing should not be for one or the other but for both.

Called you in righteousness

We are called toward the light of God's presence, toward His righteousness. I get letters on occasion from inmates who have decided that this call justifies them rejecting any need for treatment. They are, they remind me, a "new creation." To the idea of being a "new creation" in the Lord, I offer a solid "Amen." To the idea of rejecting treatment because it is not centered on God, I offer that this newness will allow them the ability to see molestation with new eyes, and to see treatment as being able to understand themselves with those new eyes.

I don't agree with everything some SOT programs do, because I believe some concepts they teach merely shift inappropriate behavior from one age level to another. But programs can bring to light important information. At the same time, some of our behaviors are just wrong, and even if they involve age-appropriate partners, they are still wrong. Immorality is immorality.

I take hold of your hand

If ever there was an image that speaks to my heart as a



child of God, it would be seeing my hand in God's hand, feeling His love and protection.

As a little boy taking my father's hand, I knew he was taking me somewhere that was good - certainly somewhere that would be an adventure I'd remember. Like all little children, there were things I wanted to see and do, so sometimes I would pull away and run in a direction my father had not intended me to go. As I got older, I didn't take his hand, but I knew when it was right to stay close and when to venture off.

When I was 16, my dad went to be with the Lord. It wasn't his choice but the effects of diabetes that took their toll on his body. When I think of him, I see him differently now. I see him as a child of God, his hand in God's hand, being loved for all eternity in God's presence.

And I see myself also reaching out for God's hand, guiding me in my choices, healing my bruises, and fanning into flame the spirit of His love within me.

Open eyes that are blind

Not long after my arrest, someone asked me, "Didn't you see all the people that cared about you and loved you? Why didn't you let them help you?" My answer was simple, "I couldn't see them."

The very walls that I created so that others wouldn't know of my dark side also made it impossible for those people to get inside me to where they could do some good. Maybe that has been one of the more difficult aspects of my past - knowing how I had turned my back time after time.

This might sound overly simplistic, but the more I seek God in my life, the more I am able to see those He places somewhere along the way of my journey to walk a distance with me or to offer directions. And sometimes, I get to do the same for them, and they recognize God's hand in that, too.

Free captives from prison

Release those who sit in darkness

During my confinement, there were times when I truly wanted God to release my body from prison. I hated the buildings, the locks, the restrictions, and the separation from my family. Most of all, I hated the despair disguised in its many forms demonstrated by inmates and prison staff alike.

Some inmates buried themselves in activity of any kind that would allow them to escape the reality of prison, but the ones who truly made an impact on me were those who recognized why they were in prison and what they needed to do to avoid re-offending should they be released. They were the ones who attended chapel activities not as something to do but as a means of learning how to change. They were the ones who would attend Bible study and return to the unit with a desire to be different. And they would be. It wasn't phony or pretend. It was real.

Healing and change are real. Although the bruised reed will always bear some scar, some indication of being wounded, it will stand with other reeds, drawing its strength from the sun, its need for life-giving moisture from the rain, and its connectedness with the soil that provides

nourishment.

You and I are bruised reeds. It takes courage, however, to become vulnerable enough to allow others to see our bruises without feeling the need to defend how we got them. God the Father loves us and calls us, and He gave His Son, Jesus, to die on a cross to atone for our offenses. That cross reminds us that Jesus has already done what we could never do, and that should give us the hope and strength we need to live from one day to the next.

For those who have surrendered to God, the Holy Spirit consumes our lives, awakening in us the senses we felt long dead, senses keen on recognizing the presence of the Lord in every aspect of living. A bruised reed He will not break. What a loving God we serve!

All things are possible with God!



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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 feeling bruised and broken, that they remember God makes strong what is weak.
- For those who fear disclosure, that they come to understand that nothing can separate them from the love of God.
- For those who want to isolate, that they see isolation for what it is – an invitation to relapse.
- For the church, that their buildings become places of healing for all who need healing, not just for those pretending to be healed.
- For families, that they are able to both encourage and support all who are broken.
- For chaplains, that they find their own healing in the

encouragement they offer in the name of Jesus for those so desperately needing that encouragement.

- 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.

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 wish I had a time machine so I could fix all the pain I caused. I know I did the right thing by self-disclosing, but I didn't fix anything.

Once I finish reading my copy of *Into the Light*, I pass it on to others to read.

Every institution I have been in accepted into the fold. Because of those men, I felt loved by God. I was raised in a church with my family, but I never felt the love there that I have felt in prison.

I am well aware of the problems offenders face when they are released. I wish that the public was more informed about the situation. Yes, I have a story to tell. That is why I want to thank you for the newsletter and why your work is important.

Reentry takes more than just days, weeks, or longer. It is an ongoing process for me since SORNA does not go away. I did find it best not to attempt to go it alone. And to my surprise, I found out I didn't have to. The professionals I have dealt with are very understanding and helpful. As I worked the process, I found God not only guiding me but also putting folks in my way to help me. Life is here and I'm here with it.

The support you received (that so many of us don't) undoubtedly helped you turn around and begin a better life.

We all need that.

A Pew Report showed that fewer people admit that they believe in God. I wonder if people actually don't believe or if they are too embarrassed to admit it.

I may not be perfect and I still sin, but God knows my heart.

I am not afraid of demons – only of my own weaknesses. I am trying to give God all of me rather than just my problem areas. Very hard to do. It feels like soul suicide, though I know it's the best form of true life.

I have learned to rejoice for others when good things happen and mourn for them when they don't.

There is Life after Prison

"Who? Me?"

by Don

I guess getting out has one question that needs to be answered before you get around to facing the real world again . . . even if it's just between you and God. The question? "Who was it?"

One of the answers I remember hearing most around the prison was "It wasn't me!" This wasn't only popular with inmates but just as prevalent with prison staff. Not much help when rehabilitating inmates supposedly getting ready to deal with the outside. The question could be as simple as how, when, or where, and the staff's answer will usually point to someone else – not them. It came to a point where I began to realize no one was responsible for anything.

Prison ended up being home to no one being responsible. "Well, it's not me," "Have you checked with," or "I don't know. Have you asked <anyone else>?" Worse, some staff accepted no responsibility for something they did or said that was wrong. "It wasn't me" often followed by "It was <inmate>. He attacked me!" when it was the staff member who attacked the inmate.

No one is supposed to be responsible but it's most often the inmate because he is the one whose irresponsibility got him in prison. Prison is definitely not the place to learn responsibility. So, are you going to get out with the proper answer to that question or continue to answer, "It wasn't me!"

Have you come up with the proper answer yet? How many times in your life, especially concerning your crime, have you said, "It wasn't really me." Being a registrant myself, I can only imagine how many times we all desperately want it to be someone else's responsibility or

fault. Age didn't matter. Gender didn't matter. Relationship didn't matter. It was still the OTHER that made ME do it. Having been in group therapy as well as in and out of the justice system, I think I can truthfully say I've heard it all. But when push comes to shove, I've said it all or thought it all just to get by in every case presented.

If you had the privilege of taking therapeutic courses or be in groups, sooner or later those experiences make you see that you are no different. At first the truth is only in your mind, but soon enough you'll find your "It wasn't me" changes to "It WAS me!" And yes, it was!

That's the answer and feeling you have to have when you get out, no matter what else you learned, saw, or did in prison. On top of this, the answer becomes what is expected of you by your victims, their families, the community, and members of the justice system – the ones who will require you to report on a regular basis.

I can only hope that you were able to come to the reality of this truth while in prison, a place where reality rarely exists. If you haven't been able to do this, now is the time, because if you don't, get ready for a redo.

More important than anyone I have mentioned, even more important than you, is God. He wants to hear it or see you feel it, or be asked for His assistance, or has already given you such assistance. God deserves your obedience. He forgives you (and me) in all our actions. You will find, though, the hardest thing is forgiving yourself, God can help you with that, too.

Avoiding responsibility, saying or feeling "It wasn't me" won't get it with anybody, including you or God anytime, any day.

of the cost involved, I require that you have approval for the book to be sent as well as a mailing address that works.

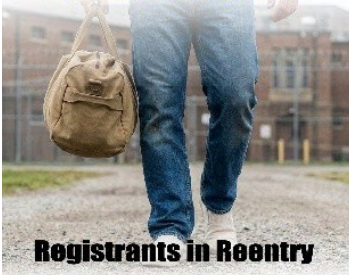
A Little Humor . . .

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



- What's the best way to make ice cream? Go to sundae school.
 - How did the cat get all A's on its report card? It was the teacher's pet.
 - Why do tigers have stripes? They don't want to be spotted.
 - What causes dry skin? A towel.
 - What's the best way to catch a fish? Have someone throw it to you.
 - What one word does everyone pronounce wrong? Wrong.
 - How does Darth Vader like his bagels toasted? On the dark side.
 - What's the best way to cook an alligator? In a croc-pot.
 - How much do dead batteries cost? Nothing. They're free of charge.
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NEW LIFE - NEW DIRECTIONS



BOB VAN DOMELEN

The book is officially out there and just waiting for readers.

If you are interested in a copy, the easiest way to get the book is through Amazon as most prisons approve of them as a safe distributing site. Cost: \$13.95 +S/H.

Copies can also be purchased with a \$10

donation to the ministry on website <https://brokenyoke.org>.

I am willing to offer complimentary copies but, because

“Fear not,
for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name,
you are mine.”

Isaiah 43:1