



Into the Light

All things are possible with God!
November-December 2026

Prayer or Promise

Revisited from July 2010
By Bob Van Domelen

¹⁰ *Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request. (1 Chronicles 4.10)*

At the entrance of a local Christian bookstore was a cart with a large "Clearance Items" sign. My eye was drawn to a picture frame wedged behind some CDs that were for sale, and when I pulled it out, I saw the text was titled "Prayer of Jabez." In 2000, everyone was talking about that prayer and a companion book of the same title by Bruce Wilkinson. And as I paid the cashier, I could see a space on my office wall where it would hang.

My spiritual advisor suggested I memorize the prayer and start each day with it. For a month I said the words but then discontinued. Why? Well, I think I was afraid that God would do what I asked, do what the prayer suggested – ask Him to enlarge my territory. What if I couldn't handle that? My response was to set the prayer aside without telling anyone.

Oh, that you would bless me

I can remember speaking publicly years ago at conferences, sharing my struggles with same sex attraction and eventually about the behaviors that brought me to prison as a sex offender. Despite my nervousness, every testimony included sharing how God had blessed me—especially as I found myself being drawn closer to Him despite and maybe because of difficult situations.

God's blessings often came in ways I would not have expected. Permission granted by security to go to chapel services while still in the restricted area of intake; a transfer to a treatment program being started for the first time in another institution; and cell mates who allowed me to see more than their tough exterior, who shared stories of the families concerned about them, and who showed a willingness to get to know me despite my crime.

It is always easier at the end of any day to focus on the bad that happened that day. As a matter of fact, those negative things have a way of overpowering us, of blinding us to the good things, the blessings God gives. And whenever I share stories of how I was being blessed, there are always people nodding their heads because they were remembering their own blessings.

On days when things don't seem to be going well and I start churning inside, I am actually getting in the way of the peace that God wants me to have. My solutions to my problems, however, are often grandiose and me-centered.

God's solutions are simple and often look nothing like what I asked God to do. Sometimes I even say, "Well, God, that worked but I think you could have done better." Fortunately, God has a sense of humor when it comes to my self-centeredness. He knows that eventually I will learn.

And enlarge my territory

When I came home from prison in 1988, my goals were pretty basic - finding a job, learning to live in a space bigger than a prison cell, and slowly restoring lost relationships.

I quickly learned that employers are openly concerned when they see "Yes" to the question "Have you ever been convicted of a felony?" They looked at me and said they were looking for someone more qualified or who had more of the right work-related experience.

In my case, it was a friend of our family who offered me a part-time job in his accounting firm. It was not a lot of money, but it was a start that eventually opened another part-time door that became full-time a few years later.

Anyone who has ever spent time in prison and has been released will tell you that the outside world is incredible. I was almost overwhelmed at the simple things-- a comfortable chair, watching a program without guys yelling or making obscene comments, a walk early in the morning or late in the evening without having to sign out.

My family had changed while I was away. They had become strong in the face of negative community reaction, frugal in managing what money there was to make ends meet, and definitely more aware of me.

My crimes shocked them, hurt them, and challenged them more than I will ever know. I did learn that my time in prison was something of a comma, a pause in their ability to process everything they felt about me. Coming home was, in some ways, a re-opening of those wounds yet with the hope that they would heal.

Though years have passed, not all relationships have been mended. Some might never be. As the "Serenity Prayer" reminds us, we can only change our own lives. We cannot force others to like us or even forgive us. And you know something? That's hard to accept some days.

As ministry became more involved over the years, I certainly had no idea it would lead to what I do now. The territory of this ministry has enlarged; the experiences sufficient to fill a book or several books. But it was God and not Bob who enlarged the territory.

I have been thinking of how this part of the "Prayer of Jabez" works for anyone still in prison, especially for lifers who will never see the outside of prison walls. The answer

is that one's territory is not a physical boundary. I believe that my territory is the impact I have on others and their impact on me. The more I seek to serve God as a blessing in the lives of others, the more I receive of the blessings God gives them to share with me. Staying in a cell even when one can leave that cell is to be isolated. Such a person who isolates is unable to touch the lives of others and certainly unable to receive the blessings the other person might offer.

It does get tricky, though, because prisons tend to hold people who don't care about others. Yet, if God is trusted to enlarge our territories, there will be that one person who connects. And that connection will lead to another and another. When these connections are God-centered, there is peace in knowing that the body of Christ's followers can make a difference.

**Let your hand be with me
and keep me from harm, so that
I will be free from pain**

At first glance, these words might be difficult to accept, especially for those in prison situations where lives are threatened every day, where molesters are fair game for the physical assault others feel are deserved, where guards turn away from this abuse because they believe the same thing. After all, if God is with us and if God hears this prayer, shouldn't the abuse stop or never even start?

There are pat answers some people give to that question, but I haven't found one yet that seems right. I guess I see the issue as the apostle Paul must have done—being a servant of God does not eliminate hardship and sometimes it encourages it. God reminded Paul that it would be in his weakness that he would find God's strength.

Of one thing I am certain. God's hand has been with me just as it is with all who seek Him. Most often, it is the changes we have experienced in *our* daily living and the choices we make that have borne their own witness, changes that *have* kept us from harm and free of pain.

And God granted his request

The only other reference to the name Jabez comes in verse nine where it says "And Jabez was more honorable than his brothers." I think I wanted to find out *how* God granted his request, but the specifics are not there. Being honorable implies an attitude of respect for others, certainly obedience to God. Why, then, is the prayer Jabez raised to God so important?

I think it's important *because* there is no listing of specific blessings, no mention of how the territory of Jabez was enlarged, and no evidence of how he was protected from harm and pain. In other words, the prayer is personal. God's response is personal. The way God wants to bless us, enlarge our territory, and protect us is personal. And we can trust that when we say such a prayer, God promises to respond. There is no maybe. □

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 who feel that they are no longer of use to God, that they remain open despite their fears to whatever God has planned for them.
- For those who isolate, that they find ways to step beyond their fears and trust God.
- For those who identify as their temptations, that they see themselves as God sees them.
- For those who shepherd their church flocks, that they always hold out hope and encouragement rather than attitudes of condemnation.
- For families, may they offer territories for growth and love, not walls of restriction or rejection.
- For chaplains, that they speak the truth and transparency that draws inmates closer to God by reminding them "The truth will set you free!"
- 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.

My dad will be 65 soon, and I do feel blessed that he has been in my life. He's my stepdad but he's my father, the one who raised me when he didn't have to. I look up to him and have for many years. He is one great man!

Sometimes I have a hard time believing all things are possible for me with God, but I'm sure that's just all in my head.

You're not eligible for treatment until you are a maximum of four years to release. I'm less than three and haven't heard a word on if I will get into the program in time. Most offenders are doing at least a decade. Many I know are doing two or three decades. Where's the help?

While reading *New Life, New Directions* (Bob's new book), there were times when I was cheering those in reentry on and times when I cried. The book brought back memories I have not thought about since I left prison. In the 20 or so months I have been back in society, I realized during that short time that God has brought me a mighty long way! *I've tried to kill myself a lot in the past, but I always tried to remind myself that I'm here for a reason and that God has a plan for me. I just don't know what that is yet.*

Some things have been easy for me to work while others remain sins that "easily beset me." But I know in whom I have trusted, and He will get me through this.

The parole board asked me what guarantee I could give them that I wouldn't reoffend. I told them that no one could guarantee anything followed by measures I will take to lessen the chances.

People don't want to believe sex offenders can be forgiven, because if they believe a sex offender can be forgiven and change, they have no excuse for the sins they hold onto and continue to do in their own lives. In that, they are denying "We can do all things in Christ Jesus, which strengthens us." This "all" includes overcoming the very sins that we refuse to overcome.

I have been singing a lot lately and revisiting the hymns of my youth. It just puts a smile on my face when I worship the Lord.

**Please pray for this
world
we live in.**

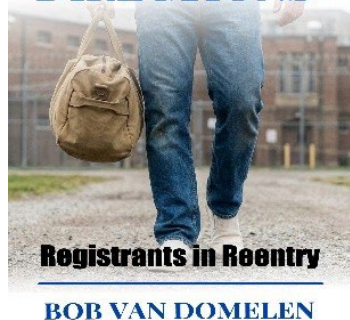
Sorry to disappoint. . .

I have been getting many requests to be on inmate email lists and have to say, "I can't do that." I apologize knowing it is less costly for you, but beyond what I can cope with.

There is Life after Prison

Will return in January

NEW LIFE - NEW DIRECTIONS



I am hearing from people who have read this book, two even posted positive reviews on Amazon. Please pass the word on to family and friends to get a copy and then share their thoughts. Paperback Book \$13.95 +S/H. Kindle \$4.99 available immediately on Amazon.com

A Little Humor . . .

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



- I couldn't figure out why the baseball kept getting larger. Then it hit me.
- I can always tell when someone is lying. I can tell when they're standing too.
- If your house is cold, just stand in the corner. It's always 90 degrees there.
- What month is the shortest of the year? May, it only has three letters.
- My uncle named his dogs Timex and Rolex. They're his watch dogs.
- I found a book called *How to Solve 50% of Your Problems*, so I bought 2.
- I was going to tell you a joke about boxing, but I forgot the punch line.
- I wanted to buy some camo pants but couldn't find any.

A Difference of Opinion

By Daniel

"I am dedicated to all ex-offenders to the degree that I am willing to deny myself to serve others."

This statement that I made was recently challenged in treatment. My treatment provider used the analogy of an empty cup trying to fill the cup of someone else. I was told I need to care for myself first and fill my cup before I try to care for someone else. I believe this is a secular, selfish world view. It's not of God.

In Romans 12:10, the Apostle Paul tells us we're to "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves . . ." I believe God revealed this to me as a rebuttal to my provider's comments.

I believe it isn't my responsibility to fill my own cup, but it's God's gift to me. God, the One who made me. As believers, Paul urged us to fill someone else's cup *through* Him.

Verse 20 says, "If your enemy (or friend – addition mine) is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink."

Yes, this is about overcoming evil with good, but I believe it has deeper implications. This is why I put the needs of others before my own. We should do this in faith. We should fill the cups of others. We should do this with our kindness and our actions.

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13 NIV) I believe this doesn't just mean putting oneself in danger to protect someone else – possibly even dying for them. It also means denying yourself to serve someone else. God likes that, and the one who does this willingly with a pure heart and without hope for a reward will be blessed.

Even if you burn yourself out in service of Him or others, God alone can renew your strength. "But those who hope in the Lord will renew your strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah 40:31 NIV).

He will renew it in you, and He will renew it in me. We are to care for the last, the lost, and the least. That includes us. "Whatever you have done to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me." (Matthew 25:40 NIV)

Forgiveness comes from Jesus Christ and out of our changed lives. Forgiveness can also serve as a reminder of how we nurture each other or how we minister to the lost and the hopeless. As believers, this is everyone's calling, and I embrace mine.

God bless you all.

Daniel

A Prayer

"Lord, I come to You today
with an open heart
because the struggles in my life
weigh heavily on me.

When fear, doubt, and exhaustion
grow loud,
quiet the noise so that I can hear
Your voice.

Remind me that You are my refuge
and my strength,
a very present help in trouble.

When I am weak,
let Your power be made perfect
in my weakness.

Anchor my hope in You,
walk beside me step by step,
and give me the grace and courage
to face today.

In Jesus' name, Amen."

