



# Into the Light

May-June 2006

Matthew 19.26

## Change for the Right Reason

By Bob Van Domelen

*"There is no need for us to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If our God, whom we serve, can save us from the white-hot furnace and from your hands, O king, may he save us! <sup>18</sup> But even if he will not, know, O king, that we will not serve your god or worship the golden statue which you set up." (Daniel 3.16b-18)*

Some days I seriously consider turning my back on newspapers, radio, and television. Not that I don't find useful information available in all three or even that there is no entertainment to be found in them—because there is both.

Were I not a member of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's colony of social lepers known more commonly as anyone who has been convicted of child molestation, I sometimes wonder if I would be like lots of other people, perfectly okay with the current response to sex offenders.

I might nod in agreement to someone saying "The death penalty would be too good for them" or even stand with a "Not in my neighborhood" sign protesting the possibility of a sex offender looking for a place to live in my city.

Instead I am angry and growing angrier by the day over what appear as solutions to the problem of sex offenders. And before you say anything, yes, I am angry because I have worked hard to change my life around and all that effort seems to make little or no difference to lawmakers bent on protecting society from the likes of me. If that sounds personal, it's because it IS!

Fortunately, answering 30-40 letters a week from sex offenders in prisons around the country reminds me that this is not about me alone. It's about all of us. But if you are expecting this whole article to be little more than an expression of anger or words of frustration over what society does or doesn't do, you will be disappointed.

One thing I have learned about God's word: it is often illogical and even questionable when stacked up against the way the world thinks. Some believe that God's word is meant to evolve just as societies evolve; that God's word must be interpreted in the framework of contemporary language. If society says something is okay, then they believe God's word must be interpreted in such a manner as to agree with that. Okay. Let's move on.

A week or so ago, I was doing my morning Bible reading and came across the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the Book of Daniel. The opening verses shared above leaped off the page at me, and I was drawn to something very fundamental in my life as an overcomer of a truly dark past. What the world thinks of me or demands of me is beyond my control, but my daily walk with and toward God is the very thing that truly defines my existence.

### **There is no need for us to defend ourselves**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood before the king, their very lives on the line for refusing to bow down and worship that king. The king, who had been flattered by the enemies of the Jews into believing that such praise and worship was his by right, was furious with these three men and he was determined to show them who was boss.

For their part, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego believed in the God of their fathers Abraham and Isaac. They recognized the king's authority over them and his right to take their lives if he should so desire. In other words, they were not arguing his authority, for nothing they could say would change that.

*The state does have authority over my life. It can demand I report my current home address, my job status, and several other pieces of information. It also has the right to put that information on the internet or a billboard for anyone to see. I am not saying that doing so is morally or ethically right, just that they can do that.*

*I do not define myself as a sex offender. Rather, I admit to being a man who did molest children. Again, the state has the right and authority to continue labeling me a sex offender. And again, that authority is not necessarily morally or ethically right.*

*The moral or ethical rightness is based, I think, on something basic to all society—the potential for goodness in all people and the responsibility of society to foster that goodness. We live in a society that believes, at least in principle, in good over evil, right over wrong.*

*We live in a society that believes, again at least in principle, what is broken can be fixed. For that reason, I would argue that it is immoral and unethical to deny positive change in one segment of society, and I believe authority wielded without a focus of change for the better is authority wielded incorrectly.*

### **May He save us. . .but if He does not**

What immediately stood out to me was that there was no bargaining with God for their lives. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not afraid to ask God for His protection, but God's protection was God's to give or not give and did not affect their belief in Him either way. They believed and served God because they believed and served God.

*For years before my eventual arrest, I prayed that God would free me from the darkness in which I lived, but I always added, "but don't let me be caught." I wanted to bargain with God. I wanted freedom but I wanted it my way. And when I was arrested, God gave me the grace to surrender and to trust in His love. And that's what I did.*

*I went to prison wondering if I would survive the experience (many sex offenders don't) and I did. Sex offender treatment was difficult and I wondered if this*

secular experience would help bring me out of the addictive thinking I carried for so long. It did although I have learned that freedom is not the absence of inappropriate thought but the ability to choose correctly.

I was released from prison wondering if I would be able to handle ten years of probation and ongoing accountability to the DOC in my state and again, I did. Now I am listed on the sex offender registry, have personal information listed on the internet, and daily read of pending legislation about electronic monitoring or 1000 foot restrictions for offender residences.

I wonder how many more things I and a host of others will have to endure so that society feels protected. Yet, I know in my heart that despite what the state does it is God we must seek. Easy? By no means. But it is HIS peace I feel and rely upon each day.

#### **We will not serve**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego declared their faith in God as clearly as they could in the face of the one who had declared authority over their lives. But they went further. They declared that what was set up as an image of divinity to represent the king's divinity was nothing but a statue, a work of human hands and not worthy of praise.

When I went to prison, I made a decision to change because I needed to change. Without something being different in me, I had little hope of avoiding a repeat offense once prison was in the past.

Treatment without a belief that treatment will work is merely time spent going through the motions of treatment. I met realistic specialists who said not everyone could change but that was not the same as saying one couldn't.

I have decided that I cannot serve an attitude that keeps me in the same place I was 20 years ago. I have come to see that although the state mandates treatment, many people in state office do not believe treatment works. Ironically, these same people continue to demand that treatment and they continue to hold it as a solution.

I have decided that I cannot serve the concept that life long restrictions are the solution to protecting children. I choose instead to believe that children must be the trust of all adults; the protection of children their responsibility.

Finally, I have decided to affirm as strongly as words can do so, my desire to serve the Lord in ALL things. Such service is not denial of my past but recognition of my future. Perhaps these words will touch someone who is ready to read them—I hope so. God is faithful—in ALL things!



## **Regeneration Books Closes**

**Exodus International to continue resource ministry**

After more than a quarter century of service, Regeneration Books is closing its doors. Exodus International has expressed an interest in continuing what Regeneration Books began, but if approved, the transition will take some time. Contact information will be given as soon as that information is available to me.

#### **Change in Policy**

In the past, inmates have been able to order my booklets and other materials free of charge from Regeneration Books, a policy that resulted in significant losses each year to that ministry. If things go as planned, my booklets will be available for \$4 each.

#### **Endowment Fund**

Because many inmates have no funds available to them, I have discussed with Exodus International the possibility of an endowment fund to cover costs for those who might not be able to purchase booklets. Information will be included in this newsletter when something definite has been set up.

#### **Blessings on Regeneration Ministry**

Please join me in prayers of gratitude to God for those at Regeneration Books over the years who have served so many. Alan Medinger, founder of Regeneration, often shared that this was not a business; it was a ministry. And what a ministry it has been!

## *All things are possible with God!* *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 always foremost, for our victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.
- For Regeneration Books (RB), that those who have served so faithfully for so long will walk in the knowledge that they have served and blessed many.
- For Exodus International, that as it considers taking over the resource ministry of RB, that God's timing and blessings be on their efforts.
- For those struggling with surrender, that they will come to see God's plan for them and the true freedom they will experience in having given themselves over to God.
- For those in treatment, that the changes they seek are for the right reasons.
- For those struggling with authority, that they are able to recognize the authority of this world without losing the peace that comes from God's authority.

**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. If you are in a position to make a financial contribution so that more might receive this newsletter, please consider doing that. The bottom line is that I ask you to pray about becoming a partner serving with this ministry.**

- For support ministries dealing with sex offenders, that they find encouragement to continue their efforts.
- For Bob, that he continues to listen for the voice of the Lord in all things; that his life be filled with healthy balance and accountability; and that he has the time needed to do everything.
- (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—whatever the cost.

## A Response to W

In the article by “W” (in the March ITL) called “Who I Am,” a statement was made that I find disturbing: “God has delivered me.” When I look at the progress of my addiction from the age of 10, it took me 38 years to arrive in prison. The progression varied—sometimes growing quickly, sometimes lying dormant for years. But it was always there waiting to rear its ugly head when I least expected it. One of the things I always wanted to believe is that I was “cured.”

I have been celibate in every sense of the word since July 28, 1999. There has been no pornography (abundant in prison) and no masturbation. Each day I commit myself to the Lord and ask to be found faithful. Each day He provides strength, courage, friends, and groups to make it possible to embrace the gift He has given me. But not once have I presumed that it was gone.

During my incarceration, I have heard many men claim deliverance from addictions of all kinds. Unfortunately, I have seen numerous men return on technical parole violations or new sentences usually involving the same addictions that plagued them for many years. Time after time it is the same story: letting one’s guard down and/or not seeing temptation approach.

I honestly pray that W has been delivered from his sexual addictions. I pray he will never again succumb. But as for me and many others with whom I have spent time in therapeutic groups, it is a daily struggle. It is a daily surrender to the Lord. It is daily awareness. It is a daily cross.

But it is also a daily victory. It is a daily testimony. It is a daily fellowship of the wounded, a daily strengthening, and a daily growth towards maturity. K

## Bits & Pieces

Watch for Bob on the *Life Today with James Robison* show the week of May 8. There will be two segments: one a brief testimony and the other a discussion of response to sex offenders. Joining Bob in the second program will be Dr. Doug Weiss, a specialist in sexual addictions. The programs don’t get too in-depth, but James and Betty Robison are serving God by their encouragement of the healing process. If you are not able to view the program, please be in prayer for it as the response is expected to be fairly strong due to the subject matter.

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*From The Repository (12/8/05): The American Psychiatric Association has opposed civil commitment programs, saying government officials seem more intent on punishing sex offenders than treating them. Medical guidelines*

*require that a person be mentally ill, dangerous because of the illness and capable of being treated before they are committed to a hospital. Most sex offenders do not meet that criteria, said Roxanne Lieb, director of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, a state-funded think tank. “Typically, they are not mentally ill by a traditional definition of the word,” Lieb said. “They don’t have a mental disorder, they don’t have a thinking disorder, they are not psychotic”*

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From an untitled news article (01/24/06): The state’s prosecutors urged lawmakers Monday to eliminate a requirement that convicted sex offenders live more than 2000 feet from a school or any day care. The Iowa County Attorneys Association said the restriction does little to protect children and makes it virtually impossible for offenders to find housing in many of Iowa’s cities. [Another article pointed to the fact that the 2000 foot rule does nothing to protect children inside the home where an offender lives if the intent is to keep offenders at a distance.]

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*From an inmate letter: “I am sure I am not alone in thanking Warren and Ann for their generosity in covering the cost of an edition of ‘Into the Light’ Be blessed because you blessed us!”*



## I am a Christian

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I’m not shouting “I’m clean livin’”  
I’m whispering “I was lost”  
Now I’m found and forgiven.

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I don’t speak of this with pride  
I’m confessing that I stumble  
And I need Christ to be my guide.

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I’m not trying to be strong  
I’m professing that I’m weak  
And need His strength to carry on

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I’m not bragging of success  
I’m admitting that I’ve failed  
And need God to clean my mess.

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I’m not claiming to be perfect  
My flaws are too visible  
But God believes I’m worth it.

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I still feel the sting of pain  
I have my share of heartaches  
So I call upon His name.

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I’m not holier than thou  
I’m just a simple sinner  
Who received God’s grace, somehow.

*All things are possible with God!*

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*All things are possible with God*

**Dated Material**

### ***A Little Humor***

A man was hiking in the country and found himself becoming very tired. Coming across a farm that had plenty of horses, he asked the farmer if he could borrow one. "Well, son," the farmer said, "I only have one to lend you because all the others will be working soon. This one is, however, a very special horse. If you want to make it go, say 'Praise the Lord,' and if you want it to stop, say 'Amen.'"

The man climbed on the horse and shouted, "Praise the Lord!" The horse, starting slowly, picked up speed until it was at a full gallop. Frightened, the man wanted to stop but couldn't remember the right words. In panic, he saw that they were headed right for the edge of a cliff. Closing his eyes, he started to pray and finished with a heart-felt, "Amen!" The horse stopped inches from the very edge of the cliff. Breathing a sigh of relief, the man looked up to the sky and with hands raised, he shouted, "Praise the Lord!"

