



# Into the Light

*All things are possible with God*

November-December 2008

## Common to Man?

<sup>12</sup> Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it <sup>14</sup> Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. (1 Corinthians 10.12-14)

There was, I think, a time when most of us viewed our sins as belonging in the not so serious category. Then we got older and our sins, at least those that we even called sins, became far more serious. And the more serious our sins became, the more we hid them away in some remote space. "What others don't know," we reasoned, "can't hurt them." Actually, as most of us have learned, it does.

Over the years, I think we have all heard a sermon or two on the above verses and perhaps we walked away feeling encouraged or at least a little hopeful about our circumstances.

I cannot speak for any of you reading this, but perhaps some of what I will share will ring true. At the very least, I hope to prod continued thinking on Paul's words.

### **who thinks he stands**

About two years ago, I met with three women who ran a counseling service. In the course of our conversation, I tossed out a line I had been using for some time. It goes like this: *Once we do something, we make that decision an option in our lives.*

It was clear that the words did not sit well because one of the three said, "I totally disagree. I had an abortion and it is something I would never, ever do again." I had not meant that doing something one time would make it a mandatory option in the future—just that if similar circumstances presented themselves in the future, the original choice would be an option, although a poor and rejected one.

I haven't used the opinion since that meeting and feel in a way that I seriously offended her despite my apologies at the time. Still, she brought out something that must be part of what I now share that goes "With vigilance, poor choices are unlikely choices."

A percentage of letters I receive from offenders announce that God has given them total freedom from this or that behavior. Peter said to Jesus, "Though all may have their faith in you shaken, mine will never be." (Matt.26.33) But deny Jesus was exactly what Peter did despite his bold words.

I am not denying the level of victory possible in anyone's life but I am strongly suggesting that we are all called to "take heed lest" we fall. In short, we need to pay attention to our inner life, our relationship to God and

others, and the potential we have to do the very things we hate.

### **No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man**

This is, I think, a very difficult thing for anyone convicted of child molesting to believe. Molestation is *not* common nor is it accepted in any circle of individuals—even among offenders themselves. Why then, would Paul make such a statement? What hope can be gained when this particular sin is looked upon with such revulsion? In short, are sex offenders to be eliminated as being non-human? Some might suggest that but I would offer another opinion.

If we were to make a list of sins, we might categorize them by severity. But as our list grew with more choices deemed sinful choices, I think we'd start to see common links. The links, though, are not meant to minimize the severity of any one sin but to show a connection that might help us understand both ourselves and the sin better.

Pornography, adultery, and prostitution, for example, are all sins that would be described as sins of lust. Yet not all who give in to lust would commit adultery; not all would spend hours on internet porn sites; not all would seek someone with whom they could act out sexually; and certainly not all would molest a child. The root of all these sins is still lust but there is always some level of comfort people take in saying "At least I didn't commit *that* kind of sin. *Those* people are degenerates. *Those* people are perverted."

Again, placing child molestation with other sexual sins like adult pornography is not meant to make it less harmful than it is. The difference is that I molested where my neighbor would never have done so. He would have indulged in pornography. Yet our connection, our common sin was still lust.

### **tempted beyond what you are able**

Having looked deeply into my heart, I cannot buy the excuse that I didn't have a choice. I *could* have said no and most times I did, but too often I did not. I will admit, however, that when I did act out, I usually felt myself as being completely out of control and unable to make the right choice. Being out of control predicts the likelihood of abuse but there is always a choice to make.

### **the way of escape**

God IS faithful but God does not step in and do for us what we are called to do for ourselves. All the prayers in the world will not make me a great basketball player unless I am willing to spend incredible amounts of time in practicing the fundamentals alone, with others, and finally in game situations. Common sense tells me that faithfully watching my favorite basketball team might give me insights into the mistakes I see the team make, but the coach of my team is

not going to call me up with an invitation to play just because of my viewing habits.

Studying God's word, developing a relationship with Him, spending time in fellowship with others, and daily determination all work together to create the potential for healthy choices in my daily living. All of them together become the way of escape in times of temptation.

Calling out in the heat of temptation might help separate us from that temptation, but it is the most difficult moment in which to make the right choice. That doesn't mean we will always give in; it just means that without training and self-discipline, the odds start to work against us.

#### **flee from idolatry**

When the word idolatry is used, most people tend to think of false gods or graven images. Sometimes, however, a sermon is preached on the connection of idolatry to an obsession with having wealth, good looks, or positions of authority over others. I'd like to suggest some you might not think as idolatry but I believe that they are.

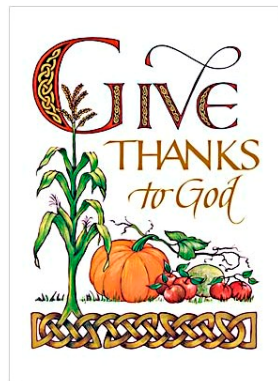
- Believing one's actions define a person forever. No change is ever possible.
- Accepting as true the identity *others* want for us. If others think I am an abuse just waiting to happen, then I won't disappoint them.
- Believing self-spoken lies such as "I am worthless" or "I cannot love or be loved in a healthy relationship."

Idolatry is placing something not of God ahead of God, even if that something is self identity, especially a negative self-identity.

Years ago I wrote in this newsletter that I will always admit to the things I have done and to the harm that I caused, but I refuse to wear my past sins as my identity. For years, I was a sex offender and a molester. That is what I did, not who I am. More recently I also wrote, "God does not call me by my sin. He calls me by name. He calls me Bob."

This is not denial; it is an affirmation of the walk I am called to make in my life. It's the walk we are ALL called to make. □

**This newsletter is made possible by the donations of its readers and would cease to exist without that support. Please consider a tax-exempt donation to Broken Yoke Ministries, PO Box 5824, De Pere, WI 54115-5824. And if you cannot contribute, please pray!**



*Wherever you are,  
whatever your  
circumstances, God is  
always loving you. A  
simple, "Thank you,  
Lord!" would be nice.*



## *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 those who experience despair, that they will be touched each day by words of hope and encouragement.
- For those who feel God's love and presence is for everyone but them, that the power of His love breaks down this wall of falseness and distortion.
- For those are dealing with civil commitment issues, that their focus is on becoming new creations in the Lord and not the refuse of society.
- For all with age-inappropriate attractions but have not acted on those attractions, that they find strength in God's word and hope that is evidenced by God's people.
- For those in a position to reach out to a sex offender, that they will remember "whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me."
- For the families and friends of victims, that they feel the blessings of the Lord as they continue to show love and support.
- For churches, that the word of God and the example of Jesus opens the door for more and not less ministry to those considered modern day lepers.
- For organizations like PAN (Prison Aftercare Network), that they see the ministry they do as an important link to other ministries working with the imprisoned.
- For the Salvation Army, that the service they offer remains inclusive, their love unfettered.
- For Bob and Cathie, that they continue to live each day with the same trust and faith in God that they've had from the start.
- For this ministry, that Broken Yoke Ministries continues to be blessed with the financial support needed to meet basic expenses like this newsletter.
- Finally, for those who are still abusing and are reading this newsletter because God made that possible, that they will do whatever it takes to stop the cycle of abuse and harm caused to their victims.

To contact this ministry, write me at:

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De Pere, WI 54115-5824**

Please remember that most institutions do NOT forward bulk mail (like *Into the Light*), so if you are transferred or released, please let me know so I can make changes in the mailing list database.

## Bits & Pieces

From a letter: "I am forwarding *Into the Light* to my 86-year old dad. He's one of my best friends—second to Christ—they both know my story."

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From a testimony by Norman: "I am at peace with myself and I now have love that I rarely had in my past life. I'm learning to repair broken and burned bridges with my family. I'm learning to become a better man through Jesus. I'm truly thankful that God never gave up on me—not once, no matter how many times I gave up on God."

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From a letter: "Don't know if I felt like Andy (ITL Sept-Oct 2008) as being full of trust in our Lord. Yeah, many mixed feelings entering prison and even now."

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From a letter: "Jesus told us to love our enemies as ourselves. Once we get past hating ourselves and learn how to forgive ourselves, how can we have any enemies?"

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From a letter: "The most amazing thing I have recognized about this journey is that what I thought was the biggest thing wrong in my life was only really the tip of the iceberg. As the old lusts and desires cool and die, I see more and more how pride and self-centered living were my real enemies. It is very humbling to watch the Lord wipe my soul clean and purge me with fire inside."

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From a letter: "Sex offenders who cannot forgive do not recognize from what they have been forgiven. Forgiveness of self is our first step to freedom."

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From a letter: "I know all the Scriptures. I know how to rebuke the devil. I stay in the Word. I've almost given up TV and yet still have the most vivid, wicked dreams. How do I fight dreams when I fall asleep praying or reading God's word or a religious book? Please don't think I am giving up. No way! I'll fight Satan every second of every day until God calls me home. I guess I just needed to vent." [Thank you for venting and reminding us that we need to be in prayer for one another.]

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## The Garage

By Joseph

O Lord, so many days I feel  
as if my mind is like a garage.  
Year after year,  
I leave more and more there.  
And when it is full  
of all my past failures,  
it is time to bring out the broom.  
Lord Jesus, help me this day again  
to clean up my mind with Your word.  
For when the time comes  
the only way to park your blessing  
is to make room within.  
the garage of our hearts.



Envoy Thom McMahon and Bob Van Domelen pose for a picture at the recent 2008 Divisional Social Service Seminar.

## Some thoughts to Share

It has been several years since I first met Thom McMahon at an American Corrections Association conference, but our friendship has continued since that first meeting. More importantly, God has allowed me to see the servant heart of this man and his wife, Jan. Their work within the Army focuses on serving those in prison as well as being part of aftercare ministry.

My workshop, "Not in My Neighborhood," was well received although we had hoped for a larger group of listeners despite the fact that two other workshops were being presented at the same time. When the question time was over, I was very blessed when one of the audience members asked if everyone could all gather round me and pray for me. An invitation was offered for me to present another workshop next year and I accepted.

The bottom line is that not all people turn their backs on sex offenders; not all reject offenders as being beyond help. But it is also clear to me that we each have a responsibility to work on our issues because that is no one's responsibility but our own.

## A Letter to Andy

Andy,

I want to thank you for the excellent article you wrote for *Into the Light*. It was as if everything, and I mean everything that you wrote came directly out of my own mind. You are absolutely right, "We have a choice to make—living for ourselves or living for Him." I wasted many hours (almost a year and a half of my incarceration) reading a bunch of books on recovering from sexual addiction but they were not healing my attractions. It was only when I started spending time in the Word of God that I started to change. I encourage you to stay close to the Fire and let your light shine so that men may see your good works and glorify God in heaven.

Tim

*Several wrote with similar views and a few who disagreed with the points Andy made.*

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**Dated Material**

### *A Little Humor*

A missionary was going in to the most remote section of Africa. He found a native that would take him upstream to a tribe of headhunters cut off from civilization. In the distance they could hear drums. "What is that drumming?" he asked nervously. The native replied, "Drums okay, but if they stop it would be very bad."

The drums continued for 3 days as they got closer and closer to the headhunters' village. Then without warning the drums suddenly stopped. The forest fell eerily silent. With panic in his voice, the missionary called out to the guide, "The drums have stopped! What happens now?" The guide crouched down, covered his head with his hands and with despair in his voice, answered, "Tuba solo."

