



Into the Light

All things are possible with God

September—October 2011

Define Miracle

By Bob Van Domelen

²¹ For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

²³ For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. (Matthew 11.21,23 NIV)

“It’s a miracle!” The phrase was passed from person to person when the parents of a young child undergoing treatment for cancer were told that no trace of the disease could be found in the latest series of tests.

Skeptics hearing of this miracle might politely agree but “It was really the medication and the chemo that cured the child” would be closer to what some might have believed. Still, they reasoned, the child is better so who cares if others think the change is a miracle or not.

I grew up believing that miracles were the kind of thing that happened in the Old Testament (Noah and the flood, Moses and the parting of the Red Sea, etc) or connected to Jesus healing so many during His time on earth. I also believed and still do believe that people were and are healed when the laws of science said they should not have been. But, in the back of my mind, I always felt miracles were for other people, holier people than I.

For if the miracles that were performed in you

Shortly after my arrest in 1985, friends took me to a charismatic prayer group meeting. Though they had explained what I would see and hear the evening before, I was not really prepared for the experience. Though confused, I wanted to come back the next week and the weeks after that.

The people attending the prayer group were very clear in rejecting what I had done but they brought me to the well of God’s love. They spoke of healing—not just of the physical but also the emotional and spiritual. Though somewhat skeptical of those who were proclaiming “I feel God is healing someone in the room right now of arthritic pain,” I secretly craved hearing the words “I feel God is healing someone in the room right now of sexual addiction.” But the words I wanted to hear didn’t come.

At the close of one meeting, however, the out of state speaker put his hands on my shoulders, leaned in close and whispered “God is giving me a single word for you. Miracle.”

I felt a rush of excitement and quickly shared what was given me with a friend. She looked at me and asked “What does *that* mean for you?” And in that briefest of moments, all the elation I had felt left me like air released from a balloon pricked with a pin. Seeing my despair, she added “Well, if you don’t know, ask God to tell you.”

Later that day I let my Bible open to whatever page the positioning of my hands encouraged. My eyes immediately fell on *For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.* The word was there but my eyes focused on *would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.* In that very moment, I saw the miracle God was working. I had been sincerely repenting of what I had done and had surrendered the outcome of my life to God.

For if the miracles that were performed in you

But that was not all. My attention was drawn to next miracle reference just below the first and this time I connected with the sin, a sexual sin. But there was a difference.

The conversation in my heart went like this: “Bob, I am *working* a miracle in your life and if the people of Sodom had surrendered themselves, that same miracle would have saved their city.”

This was not the message “I feel God is healing someone right now of sexual addiction” I had earlier wanted, however, because then my earlier desire had been for a complete cleansing *and* freedom all in a single moment. The miracle God performed in me was different. I had become open to the process of change and had surrendered the control I *thought* I had in favor of God’s design. Best of all, in that moment I knew I belonged to God!

²² *Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.* ²³ *They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* ²⁴ *I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.”* (Lamentations 3.22-24) Reading these verses, I actually read “his compassions” as “his *miracles*.” “They are *new* every morning.” Perhaps some will argue against such an interpretation, but believing in the light of daily newness, I am not limiting God as to what He can or cannot do.

Surely people will believe

Not every person with a sex-related offense will see the need to change as a priority in his or her life. Not every person will surrender his or her will to the long and difficult process of treatment. And indeed, some will leave prison having changed not at all. But the majority who write to me *are* on that difficult journey and *do* want change.

Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth, yet the Pharisees refused to believe that the miracle came from Jesus. He had, after all, healed the man on the Sabbath. But the man knew. He had sight. He could walk about unaided and could, I suppose, find employment that was

denied him in the past. But to the Pharisees, he was still blind.

I was recently blessed with an invitation to speak to a church committee wanting to know what they could do for anyone with a sex-related offense wanting to worship with their faith community. They had already actively sought out information from sources they believed would help them in their decision-making process.

Our meeting did not answer all of their questions—maybe even created some new ones—but there was a willingness to prayerfully consider what I had shared with them. For my part, I learned that some in the church were adamantly opposed to the notion of someone like me attending services there. For them, the example of my life and the lives of others like me made no difference. I was still a child molester.

And if they don't believe

If you are reading this with the hope that you will find your church waiting with open arms for your return, you might be disappointed because I can't paint such a rosy outlook. Some people will never believe in the man or woman you have become but their disbelief should not diminish *your* reality. *You* know where you have been; *you* understand the struggle of daily living; and *you* invite God into that daily journey. In the end, God will welcome you for eternity as one of His good and faithful servants.

No one will ever be able to convince me that God didn't do a miracle in my life. I read letters from saints in prison each and every day, individuals whose lives are also filled with miracles. For us, the reality of God's love, His miracles, is new every morning—a cause for joy *and* thanksgiving. □

Bits & Pieces

The following are segments from letters I have received since the last edition of "Into the Light." Some were in response to my request for you to share miracles and most from general correspondence I received since the last issue of this newsletter.

Miracles

It's a miracle to me how God can work through me so others who cry for help to overcome homosexuality can receive help. As a sex offender with a toe tag sentence, a victim of incest when I was seven, a sex toy for my peers and adults, at 10 years old chose to be a homosexual, and now sit in prison for my wrong sexual choices. Isn't it a miracle how God can use an overcomer to help others to be overcomers.

My dad told me over the phone just the other day of how proud he is of me. That meant more to me than any college degree I could ever attain.

I am in a sex offender program and have been for almost the past eight years. It's an outstanding program run by a wonderful therapist who allows us to work our faith into our therapy even though this isn't a faith-based program. She knows the importance of spirituality and understands that our faith can be a big part of that. I feel blessed to be here in program.

Looking back on my life, I can say that I had plenty of miracles in my life that my higher power/God was there for me and saved me from dying when I overdosed on different drugs, especially when I intentionally took way too much to do myself in because at that time, I didn't feel like there was anything worth living for any more. I asked myself so many times, "What do I really have to live for in my life?" And now I can say I have my higher power/God and life to live for. I am also having more patience now by believing in my higher power/God because that helps me make it through each and every day of my life.

I asked for prayer for a woman who had cancer. A number of us have been praying for her for some time. Praise the Lord! She is now cancer free! God still answers prayer.

We were approaching the chow hall on afternoon. When I came to the gate just outside, I could feel a presence I had never felt in my 45 years. Passing through the gate, I entered the chow hall. When my table came into view, I saw three-foot flames rising from the floor. They did not burn anything but continued as I silently ate my meal. I asked several men later if they had seen anything. They didn't. I want to share that I was not on any drugs at the time.

It's not exactly a miracle but I guess if you want to use anything as my miracle it would be that God taught me how to be content, even in prison.

General

I know I cannot change the past but I know that I am forgiven and when I go to see my maker, I will walk through the pearly gates.

It seems people love to focus and tear apart others but God forbid the spotlight would come upon their own lives. I can't help but think that all the signs point to the season for those who have ears.

No matter the circumstances, Lord is near. When he seems far away, he is near. No matter what we feel, he is near.

Satan wants me to have anxiety but I claim 2 Timothy 1.7: "no fear, but power, love, and a sound mind."

My armor is composed of a healthy fear of God, an acute awareness of my environment/activities, and unwavering resolve to abstain from giving in to any form of temptation, saying no to all lascivious thoughts, selectiveness of what I allow myself to see/hear/say, and prayer. Proper application of this recipe provides me with the protection that I need from the elements of worldliness that used to seduce and ensnare me stealthily under the guise of pleasure-while all the time being poison.

There are times when I have good days and not so good days. I thank God for the fact that he never leaves or forsakes us. God does not leave us--we leave him.

Jesus paid the price for my sin on the cross to become right with God but not with man. I refuse to complain about this cross of consequence for what I have done. In this chapel,

there is no doubt that we are sinners of record so to speak, but we manage to worship God together.

I have learned long ago that I can't control what others say or do, but I can and will never let that hope go out. Learning to be a true follower of Christ is and will be a challenge. He is my only hope and I will trust him to give me what I need.

No amount of having or not having destines who I am. Christ is the destination and my point of reference.

This is the first time I read your publication (*Into the Light*) and I was really moved by it. I think this is the first time I've come across any publication that talks openly about offenders who had given their lives over to God. The mere mention of "sex offender" invokes all kinds of negative emotions and feelings in our society. And even among other sex offenders it is considered taboo to talk about outside those groups. We need to communicate the great power of God's love, grace, and healing power--the power to turn lives around, the power to heal deep emotional wounds, and the power to restore us to sanity.

While reading Romans 12, this tremendous insight blessed me. Verse 1 says "I beseech you brothers by (on account of) God's mercies." I took this phrase "on account of God's mercies" and applied it to the rest of the chapter. No transformation *without his mercies*. No overcoming evil with good *without his mercies*. It all depends on his abundant mercies.

I've come to learn that not everyone in the faith based programs here wants to do the right thing. I pray that God will help me be a good example to them, though.

Will we choose faith in God over faith in an outcome? The importance of this question can't be overstated because the depth of our relationship with the Lord depends on its answer. Until we allow God to be God, we act as if he is our servant and are sure to be disappointed in the consequences of such delusion. If we fail to surrender our agendas, wish lists, and master plans to him, will never see Christ as he truly is--or personally experience him as our resurrection and life. (*Lazarus Awakening* by Joanna Weaver)

One lesson I am learning is my need to desire God more than I desire deliverance from my circumstances and pain. He has begun a good work in me--His grace is sufficient for me and he will complete it. He is faithful.

I have learned that if you let flowers go once they bloom and produce seeds, that's it. They are done blooming for the rest of the year. But to keep removing the fading flowers, not allowing the plant to produce seed, the flowers will keep blooming. To keep blooming spiritually, we must remove the old, stagnant fading parts of our lives.

A felon who beats up an old woman and steals her purse for drug money is treated like a lost soul and rushed through treatment, found a halfway house and rehab, then released in record time and no one cares that his home plan is with

his 80-year-old grandmother. We don't want special treatment--just equal treatment!

The thing that scares me the most is those people who have faith so figured out that you have to believe as they do about their doctrines or you aren't saved. Secondly, there are those who tell me that if their doctrine isn't right they might as well stop being Christian. What they don't realize is that they aren't Christians at all but followers of their doctrine instead of followers of Christ.

I really hope that at some point soon someone begins to challenge residency restrictions and other related laws.

I would like to encourage my fellow brethren to not give up on prayer. God will answer in his time and in his own unique way--which could be shocking or surprising to us. But it is God's will that will be done.

I pray and beg for help. I am afraid that without getting help I will get out of prison and look at child porn again. Maybe even cross the line and abuse a child. I know that there is hope out there. I just need help.

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!



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 all who struggle with a fear of the future, that they will recognize the miracle of the journey they are on.
- For all who cannot see themselves as God sees them, that one of us will be a witness for them of that identity.
- For families needing healing and a sense of normalcy in living, that God's miracles will be evident.
- For those struggling with re-entry, that they believe that God will meet their needs.
- For all who are dealing with issues related to civil commitment, that they will believe that they *do* have the power to define themselves as individuals in the process of change and healing.
- 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.

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A Little Humor . . .



When my son was in the ninth grade, we reluctantly agreed to let him move into the basement. Then I realized how convenient it was to get him to the breakfast table. Before, I used to stand at the bottom of the staircase to his upstairs bedroom and scream his name. Now all I had to do was flick the basement light off and on, and he was here.

One morning I flicked the switch, and nothing happened. I did it several more times. "I'm coming," my son called up. "You don't have to yell."