



Into the Light

January-February 2008

Matthew 19.26

If Only

By Bob Van Domelen

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him.⁴³ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. ⁴⁴She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. (Luke 8.43-44)

It has always struck me that the miracle of the woman healed of bleeding is more or less sandwiched in the middle of another miracle story, the healing of the dying daughter of Jairus. Perhaps there is some significance to that, perhaps not, but my eyes are drawn to details of the woman's story.

Scholars suggest that she was suffering from consumption (TB), a disease for which there was no cure but more than a few willing to take her money in exchange for remedies they guaranteed would work. But they didn't and the only thing that got better was the purse of the one selling the remedy.

Here's an obvious statement. She was a woman. I bet you are impressed with my grasp of the obvious, well, at least a little.

But in the time of Jesus, there were certain things, personal things, that women did not openly share in public. So her approach to Jesus in the large crowd was meant to avoid drawing attention to her problem. Yet even in her secret approach, she had faith. We read in Matthew's account of the story in chapter 9,

She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed." (vs.21)

And she was!

I've wondered why Jesus stopped and asked "Who touched me?" His disciples had tried to minimize the situation by pointing out the size of the crowd, but Jesus said, "*Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.*" (vs.46) Knowing she could not hide, the woman came forward, knelt before him, and told her story. Jesus responded, *Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.* (vs.48)

I am guessing that in that specific moment, no one else existed for that woman but Jesus. She saw no one but Him, heard no other voice but His. It is not possible for me, however, to imagine that the crowd merely ignored what had happened.

"Heal me! Heal me!" the people had called out wherever Jesus went. And Jesus healed. He touched them or allowed them to touch Him and they were healed. But this woman was called on to explain her condition to strangers, to humble herself without letting anything stand between her and the desire she had for healing.

On rare occasion I receive letters from individuals with age-inappropriate attractions who have not acted on those feelings but neither have they found the courage to be open to other people about the nature of their struggles.

I also get letters from individuals who have acted out and have either been arrested or are awaiting charges. Sometimes the letter is from a spouse or a friend of the offender, but the bottom line is the same basic request. They want healing!

Finally, there are the letters from men and women in prison—some serving long sentences, some doubtful of ever being released. Because of lengthy sentences, there is no treatment available to them in the first years of incarceration (a time when help might be most effective) and certainly not much hope being offered them.

Like all these, I pleaded with the Lord in my prayers to heal me, to take away the darkness that was mine. But nothing changed. There was no "*Your faith has healed you. Go in peace.*" I didn't give up on God but I sure wondered what it took to get His attention.

I was arrested, sentenced to prison confinement, and experienced changes in my life I could not have imagined possible. And through all of that, I still did not wake one morning and hear, "*Your faith has healed you. Go in peace.*"

Instead, I woke each day asking God to be more real in my life. With increasing regularity, however, my requests included "but in your time and in your way."

I know that I am still a work in process with some seriously rough edges. The Master Carpenter knows those edges, their shape and their course texture. His gentle hand runs through my life, smoothing a little more with each pass.

If Only

The woman had thought, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed." But it did not stop there. She cautiously inched forward until the tassel of his cloak was within reach, until she finally touched it. Then the miracle happened. The flow of blood stopped.

It is difficult to reject bargaining with God by making "If only" promises. The woman really didn't do that, but she did arrive at the decision to touch the cloak because of an "If only."

Jesus completely healed the woman who touched his cloak because of her faith. He healed the blind and the lame, expelled the demons that had invaded the lives of many, and brought Lazarus back from the dead. Why aren't our prayers for complete freedom answered? Too little faith?

Healing of a Different Kind

"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹"No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I

condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8.10-11)

I had been caught in my sins and they were made public. In the days that followed my arrest, the number of people getting involved in my disclosure increased. I somehow believed that their purpose was to bring healing and help. But it wasn't.

Their purpose was to gather evidence that would be part of hearings leading up to my sentencing. The police had assured my wife and children that they would be there for them, yet once the case was closed so was their connection and the offer of help and support.

I prayed for probation and for extensive treatment without prison but that was not to happen. My sentence was pretty much standard for that time but I had to ask, "What about the prayers, the pleading? Didn't you hear me, Lord?"

God *had* heard my prayers! I was like the woman caught in adultery hearing Jesus say, "Go now and leave your life of sin." I had expected Jesus to step into my life and make it impossible for me to ever be tempted or sin as I had? God didn't do that.

Instead, He brought me into relationship with His Son and introduced me to the intimacy of the Holy Spirit. The miracle, then, was to know that I was loved and forgiven. When tempted, I knew I could make other choices.

Jesus healed the blind and made them see; healed the lame and made them walk; forgave those who sinned saying "Go now and leave your life of sin." I think that the greatest miracles Jesus worked were not those connected with physical issues or demonic possession, but those whose souls had been transformed.

If you look carefully, you will find that God's Word is full of "If . . . then" promises. We shouldn't be afraid of them because they are a reminder that we have a choice in how we respond. And in this respect, I really want the spiritual courage of the woman who said "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."

Unfortunately, not everyone will be in our corner or stand cheering us on in our healing journey if we are a sex offenders. But the power of the Almighty *will* be and if we listen closely, look intently, we *will* see evidence of His presence. □

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 361, Waukesha, WI 53187-0361. And if you cannot contribute, please pray!

CHANGES

Some of you know that I will be retiring from my full-time secular job in May 2008. One hope my wife and I have is to be able to move closer to family, so at some point the mailing address for the



newsletters and personal correspondence will change. The letters and newsletters, however, will continue for as long as God leads.

A major concern this ministry currently faces is the expense of printing and mailing *Into the Light* to almost 2400 inmates around the country. Conservatively, it costs \$900+ for each edition of ITL and that money comes from donors—many of you among them. At some point, we will have to find out how many of those 2400 newsletters are actually being received and how many thrown out.

The purpose of the newsletter remains just as it was announced in the very first issue over ten years ago—to offer hope and encouragement to those with age-inappropriate attractions (in prison or not) as well as to those who seek to support them. I hope to be able to count on your prayers. You are in mine!



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 10 years of *Into the Light*, that it will continue to serve as an outreach of hope and encouragement.
- For those feeling the frustration of not being able to start treatment, that they will see that God encourages them each and every day to hear His heart in their lives.
- For those who are in civil commitment, that they ask for an increase of faith, a hunger for truth, and a heart for witness.
- For churches, that they recognize themselves as a community of the Body of Christ here now on this earth, reaching out as Jesus reached out.
- For those affected by adverse legislation, that solutions be found that will protect children without completely closing the doors needed for restoration.
- For the persecuted, that in their response to the persecution inflicted on them they will have the countenance of Christ, the steadfast joy of the Holy Spirit.
- 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.

All things are possible with God!

Bits & Pieces

From a letter: "Jesus has heard my plea for mercy and has forgiven me of the crime I committed. He wants so much to heal me and give me the strength to release to Him my past, not only yesterday or the crime itself but also those seemingly innocent factors from my past that ultimately led to my committing the crime."

From a letter: "We haven't been rescued from depravity simply to pursue personal happiness. We cannot withdraw into the shadows and try to avoid the pitfalls of what it means to live in society as a sex offender. Acceptance would be grand, but I have an idea it must be bought with some hardship at first. C.S. Lewis put it this way in Mere Christianity, 'It costs God nothing, so far as we know, to create nice things. But to convert rebellious wills cost His crucifixion.'"

"For those who have been brought back to life from the edge of the abyss, we have an obligation to do more than live well. At some point we must awake to a higher purpose. God changes the world when we are courageous enough to answer His call."

From a letter: "I am surrounded by a lot of fakes here, and I get disappointed being around them. I just want to be around healthy people. You know how it is in prison and how some people act. They play the game, abuse religion to their needs, and think the world owes them something."

"I am not saying I am perfect and I am not an angel in any sense of the word, but I have a sense of what I need to get better, need to change, and that the State treats us unfair, playing politics with our lives. It just gets depressing and I don't know what to look forward to."

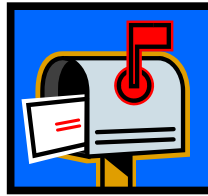
From an editorial in The Tulsa World: "Scores of new Oklahoma laws go into effect Thursday (Nov. 1), including some of the 'feel good' variety—those that give lawmakers something to trumpet to their constituents, but leave little to be desired in terms of practicality."

"An example is House Bill 1760, which creates a three-tiered system for rating sex offenders. The law was changed in order to comply with a federal statute, a piece of which mandates that states that don't get on board can lose federal grant money. The type and severity of the crime, and the number of convictions a person has, will determine his or her rating."

"The Tulsa World reported that nearly 80% of sex offenders will fall into the highest risk category, which requires them to register as a sex offender for life. Sgt. Gary Stansill, a veteran sex crimes officer in Tulsa, said the new law is too broad. 'The least number of people should be in the worst tier, but the most number of people are going to be in the worst tier under the new law,' Stansill said." (The bill passed, according to the paper, with "nary a nay vote.")

*Holy, holy, holy
Lord God Almighty
Who was and is and is to come!*

A Letter



This letter has been sitting on my desk for over a month and I think was meant to be shared with you. I have changed the name of the writer but nothing else.

My name is Natalie. I am currently incarcerated for drug related charges. I happened to pick up your newsletter (Sept/Oct and Nov/Dec 2007) while I was attending choir practice in the chapel. I must admit that I am not a sex offender, but I was a victim of incest and molestation as a child.

For many years I blamed God, then myself and the people who had hurt me. I eventually became a drug addict and a prostitute.

Today I have come to terms with my past. Even though none of the men who hurt me ever faced any consequences, I have forgiven them. I believe that everything that has happened in my life was necessary to bring me to the point I am at right now.

I turned my life over to God (again) last year, and I am currently paying my debt to society. But God has helped me every step of the way.

Your newsletter gave me a sense of peace that maybe the world isn't "all bad." I am very proud of the people whose stories I read, and I will be praying for your ministry.

Thank you.

I am always touched when I get a letter from someone like Natalie. Most people would tell her to hang on to hating her abusers but she has chosen to forgive them. I believe that forgiveness is not an act of denial that terrible things happened so much as a decision to refuse the kind of power such acts have over the lives of the victims of those acts.

I personally cannot accept the notion that God would approve of any child being molested, but I do believe that God takes great joy in watching how victims and offenders alike rise above such terrible circumstances and behaviors to find Him ever more intimately in their lives.

Most people on the outside wish one another "Happy New Year" without giving it much thought. For those in prison, the New Year might be a time for going home—or at least a year closer to doing so. From Broken Yoke Ministries to you,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Be blessed!

Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.

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All things are possible with God

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Dated Material

A Little Humor

There was a young Scottish boy called Angus who decided to try life in Australia. He found an apartment in a small block and settled in. After a week or two, his mother called from Aberdeen to see how her son was doing in his new life. 'I'm fine,' Angus said. 'But there are some really strange people living in these apartments. One woman cried all day long, another lies on her floor moaning, and there is a guy next door to me who bangs his head on the wall all the time.' 'Well, ma laddie,' says his mother, 'I suggest you don't associate with people like that.' 'Oh,' says Angus, 'I don't, Mam, I don't. No, I just stay inside my apartment all day and night, playing my bagpipes.'

