

RANSOMED
HEART
ministries

June 2005

Dear Friends,

At last – summer is finally here. What a long winter we had in Colorado this year. Eight months of snow. The winter of our discontent, as Shakespeare had it. Now the green is back, the days are warm, the flowers are brilliant, and I am so *grateful*. Something in my heart feels like it's coming out from winter as well, coming alive.

Grief melts away
Like snow in May
As if there were no such cold thing.
Who would have thought my shrivl'd heart
Could have recover'd greenness?
(The Flower – George Herbert)

A heart blooms again. “Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee,” as the old hymn goes, “opening to the sun above.” A resurrected heart. It's possible, my friends, and wonderful, wonderful to experience. And central to true Christianity.

Many of us for so long have heard that the heart is so desperately wicked. And indeed, that *is* what Scripture says in Jeremiah 17:9. We need no further proof than to watch the evening news. Or go shopping during the holiday rush. God knows the human heart has gone desperately wicked, and he planned for us a stunning remedy:

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ez 36:26).

Thus in the Old Testament God promises to give us new hearts. He knows that no amount of external pressure will be enough to change human nature. The Law merely exposes our sin; it does not enable us to live a holy life. So God proposes a remedy: a new heart. Listen to Jesus on this very subject:

People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars. *The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart*, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart (Luke 6:44-45).

Later, explaining the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus says,

But the seed on good soil stands for those *with a noble and good heart*, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. (Luke 8:15)

Did you catch that? A noble and good heart. Jesus clearly teaches that the human heart can be good and even noble. What about the heart being desperately wicked?

That is true of every person *before* they become a Christian. But after they come to faith in Christ, something profound happens. Here is Paul on the transformation of the heart:

No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is *circumcision of the heart*, by the Spirit, not by the written code. (Romans 2:28-29)

God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them [the Gentile believers] by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for *he purified their hearts* by faith. (Acts 15:8-9)

A noble and good heart. A heart circumcised unto God. A heart purified by God. I know, I know – it still sounds like heresy. But it's right there, in black and white. Ask yourself, "What do I believe about my heart?" To help drive this home, just substitute "desperately wicked heart" in these verses:

"Love the Lord your God with all your desperately wicked heart" (Matt 22:37).

"All the believers were one in their desperately wicked hearts" (Acts 4:32).

"Love one another deeply, from your desperately wicked hearts" (1 Pet 1:22).

"Sing and make music in your desperately wicked heart to the Lord" (Eph 5:19).

"It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my desperately wicked heart" (Phil 1:7).

I hope it's becoming clear. We *must* get this treasure of the Gospel back. Now – am I saying that we no longer battle sin? Nope. Am I saying that every desire and inclination that passes through our soul is good and holy? Nope. Am I saying that we do not need anymore to "watch over our hearts" with diligence (Prov 4:23)? Nope. I am saying God kept his promise. That through the work of Christ our hearts have been redeemed. Resurrected. Purified. Circumcised. Made new. Your deepest, truest heart is good.

Now, there is much *healing* that yet needs to take place in our broken hearts. Not evil hearts, just broken. There is much *wisdom* and training that needs to take place in our newly transformed hearts. But the remedy has taken place. You have a good heart.

May it be ever more a reality for you.



John

PS Two administrative matters to explain. First, the envelope. We include it in each letter because we want to give you the opportunity to support our ministry. We don't beg, we don't plead. We simply provide the occasion. And for those who do support us, thank you so very, very much. Secondly, we have opened up a community forum on our new website, which will help you connect with folks who are walking in this message – maybe even find some allies who are in your neighborhood! Check it out at www.ransomedheart.com, under Community.