

RANSOMED  
HEART  
ministries

July 2007

Dear Friends,

I'm sitting in front of my computer this morning, my hand frozen over the left-click button on the mouse.

My email program is asking me, "Are you *sure* you want to delete this email?" And I'm not so sure. It is *such* a good email. It's incontestable. Undeniable. It's long overdue. Someone has ticked me off, and I've written them what I feel to be is a very honest, straightforward, somewhat shaming and altogether irrefutable reply. I'm about to hit "send" with the same satisfaction you see on the face of a player who gets to slam dunk a ball he stole on a fast break during the Final Four. This is going to be so good.

And God says, *Don't do it.*

Don't do it??! Awww. Something in me sinks. The ref just blew a whistle. There's a foul on the play. Dang. It was going to be so good. It was deserved. *Why can't I send this?* I don't need for God to reply. I know why. The fact that I've found the whole process so utterly delicious tells me why. (You know that delicious. You have these moments, too, those conversations you have in your head where you are brilliant and the other person is speechless). I can sense the Spirit saying, *It won't do any good. They aren't in a place to hear it. Let it go.*

A long pause. A deep sigh. Things are shifting down inside. I am accepting more than guidance here. I am accepting change. Down in my soul where the juncture of my will and my heart meet, I am accepting *transformation*. I click "yes, delete" and let it go.

Jesus says that as our good shepherd, he is leading us. What an encouraging thought. Jesus is leading you, and he is leading me. He is shepherding us. True, we may not know *exactly* what God is up to in this or that event in our life. But whatever else is going on, we *can* know this – he is *always* up to our transformation.

God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun (Romans 8:29-30, The Message).

God has something in mind. He is deeply and personally committed to restoring humanity. Restoring you. This is good news, by the way. All of the other things we long for in life – love and friendship, freedom and wholeness, clarity of purpose, all the joy we long for – it all depends upon our restoration. You can't find or keep good friends while you are still an irritating person to be around. And there is no way love can flourish while you are still controlling. You can't find your real purpose

in life while you're still slavishly serving other people's expectations of you. You can't find peace while you're ruled by fear. You can't enjoy what you have while you're envying what the other guy has. On and on it goes.

God wants us to be happy. Really. But he knows that in order for us to be truly happy, we have to be whole. Another word for that is holy. We have to be restored.

Think of it this way – think of how you feel when you really screw things up. The look on your son's face as you yell at him. The distance that's grown between you, even though you apologized. For the hundredth time. How it tears you up inside to indulge in romantic fantasies about someone else's spouse. You want that but you don't want that, you wish you could but you really don't, and why is this going on inside? The guilt you feel when you lie straight-faced to a friend. And they find out. The hours you've wasted harboring resentment. The embarrassment of your addictions. You know what plagues you.

Now, what would it be like to never, ever do it again? To not even struggle with it. What would your life be like if you were free of all that haunts you? O, the joy, the utter relief it would be to be transformed. That in itself would be more happiness than most of us ever experience. And – as if that's not enough – it would free us to live the life God has for us to live.

How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. (Ephesians 1: 3-4, The Message)

Whole and holy. The two go hand in hand. O, how important this is. You can't find the holiness you want without deep wholeness. And you can't find the wholeness you want without deep holiness. You can't simply tell the meth addict to quit. She *does* need to quit, but she is going to need profound healing to *be able* to quit. You can't simply tell the raging man to stop losing his temper. He would love to stop. He'd give anything to stop. He doesn't know how. He doesn't know all the forces within him that swell up and overwhelm him with anger. Telling him to stop it is like telling him to hold back the sea.

This month we release one of the best and most important teaching series we've ever done here. It's called *The Utter Relief of Holiness*, and I think it will really help you to understand the *process* by which God makes us whole and holy through his love. And then, knowing that, we can cooperate with what he is up to in our lives. For he is always up to our transformation. And for that I am very thankful. Utterly relieved.

With love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'John' written in a cursive, flowing style.

John