

# RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

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April 2015

Dear Friends,

April has been a very conflicted month.

We celebrated Easter on the 5<sup>th</sup>—the absolute high point in the Christian year—and with it not only the resurrection of our Jesus but also *our* resurrection in him. All of the life and healing and restoration, all of the goodness that has come to us, and *will* come to us, comes because Jesus is *alive!*

But three days prior, on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, we read the reports of more than 100 Christian Kenyan students who were executed for their faith by Islamic extremists—yet one more among many atrocities taking place against believers around the world.

Friends—we live in a brutal world. This *is* a love story, but it is set in the midst of a terrible and violent war. That should be very clear to us all by now. And what I would like to speak to is our need for restoration *because* we live in such a war.

The LORD is my shepherd...he restores my soul. (Psalm 23)

Very few of us pass through this life without significant damage inflicted upon our heart and soul. When the old prophet Simeon takes the baby Jesus in his arms at the temple in Jerusalem, he says something ominous to his mother:

“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” (Luke 2:34-35)

Watching her beloved son tortured and executed was going to be so devastating, the damage to Mary’s soul would be as real as if a sword had run through it. This is very validating for the scripture to acknowledge this, for many of you know exactly what I am saying—that actual damage is done to the inner places of your being. A good part of the Psalms is in fact a cry for God to heal this damage:

I will be glad and rejoice in your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul. You have not handed me over to the enemy but have set my feet in a spacious place. Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. (31:7-9)

My soul is in deep anguish. (6:3)

You get the idea—the heart and soul can be damaged in the same way that the physical body can be. As if I needed to tell you any of this. The glorious news is that God restores the soul:

The LORD is my shepherd...he makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. (23:1-3)

When you experience this for yourself, or minister this through prayer to another human being, there is nothing like it on earth. The search for wholeness compels every person, every hour of our lives, whether we know it or not. We ache to be made whole again. And only one person on earth can do this for the heart and soul he himself created.

Whatever the damage may be, in any realm of your inner being, the essence of healing prayer is always to facilitate the presence of Jesus into the specific places of damage. “Communion with God is the one need of the soul beyond all other need,” wrote George MacDonald. “Prayer is the beginning of that communion and some need is the motive of that prayer.” Whatever else might be involved, it always begins with, “Jesus, come into this and heal; restore my soul.”

As Leanne Payne so beautifully describes in her book, *The Healing Presence*, our soul is healed through union with Jesus. Seeking that union, praying for it, waiting upon it is a very good place to begin in the restoration of your soul. You have a soul. God has a soul, too (isn't that amazing?). “I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you.” “But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul” (Lev 26:11; 1 Samuel 2:35 NASB). Inviting the soul of God into union with your soul will bring about relief you did not know was possible. God promises to restore our soul, so let us *ask* for it!

Notice in Psalm 23 that two means are described there—stillness, and beauty. The soul needs stillness, and often; every day, really, if only for five minutes. Just give your soul some space to simply be, without asking it to do anything (don't pray, don't make lists in your mind of the things that need to be done, don't worry about others). Just give your soul some space to be still.

The soul is also healed through beauty (green pastures, still waters). Just yesterday I took a walk along a tiny stream that runs in the hills behind our house. Simply being there, listening to its musical little sounds, touching the cool water with the palm of my hand—it was so healing. We need beauty, every day, whether in music or photographs you love, or the natural world around you. Sunlight. A flower. Grass. The clouds. Stillness and beauty, combined with inviting the presence of God into your soul, will do great good for you.

“Jesus—restore my soul.”

Offered in love,



John

*Killing Lions* is the best possible graduation gift for the young men in your life. As a special bonus, Sam and I will autograph each copy ordered at [RansomedHeart.com](http://RansomedHeart.com) through May 16th. See the insert for more details on this exclusive offer.