

# RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

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May 2012

Friends,

Jesus put me in a wonderful bind this morning.

I was praying about this letter. Rather than just winging off on this thought or that, I try and ask him what you need each month, what he wants to talk to us about. This morning he replied, *Hope*.

For the next thirty minutes I sat looking at a blank screen.

The beautiful bind is this – I’m in need of some hope myself. Don’t get me wrong; I’m not in despair; I’m not hopeless. Those days have come this year but I am not there right now. However, when Jesus raised the subject of hope, I almost wanted to laugh out loud because I knew my heart was... I dunno. Tired. Just sorta worn down by life. You know exactly what I mean. Life on this weary planet has a way of simply wearing you down. Not exactly bouncing around with hope over here.

And Jesus says, *Write about hope*. I love him for that.

Then – to illustrate his playfulness and his insistence – I recall the bumper sticker I saw yesterday: “Got Hope?” A friend sends me a text about... hope. I’m distracted from writing this letter by a call from Blaine and I need to find something for him. On my knees, rummaging around in his room my eyes are arrested by a book – *Great Expectations*. O, Jesus, you are too funny and too good. Okay, okay then – hope.

Let’s begin here – how is your hope? Where is your heart with hope in this season? Brimming with hope? Kinda lost track of hope? Haven’t even thought about for awhile? Given up on hope? When I saw *Great Expectations* I immediately thought, *Am I living right now with great expectations?* (That would be a terrific test for hope.) I chuckled and shook my head. Ummm...no. Not exactly Great. Maybe Mild expectations; maybe Set-Aside expectations.

And you?

We need hope more than we know. I remember Gabriel Marcel saying that hope is to the soul as breathing is to the body. A beautiful illustration, helping us to realize that hope is not exactly optional to living. Our hearts crave hope, breathe hope, need hope.

And I think the enemy is not so much despair, or hopelessness – though Lord knows they get in and they are devastating. But they are, at least, obvious. Far more common, and subtle, and therefore pernicious would be resignation. We just give up on hope and settle into surviving. Getting by. Getting things done.

You know you're in resignation if you don't really find yourself looking forward to anything. If your heart feels kind of dull and lifeless. If you are content to have that fourth cookie or third glass. If your prayers don't include any of your dreams and desires. Sound familiar?

So after sitting at my desk looking at the blank screen, wondering what in the world do I – a man in need of hope – have to say about hope, I got up and walked away and prayed. And what I found myself praying was this:

*Jesus, awaken hope in me. Restore my hope.*

You see, this is not about bucking up or generating some hope for ourselves. What we need is for Jesus to breathe hope into us. As Paul prayed, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

Yes, that's it – hope is a gift of the Spirit, a grace given to us.

And like faith, hope is not so much in an object or in an expected outcome as it is in a Person. We don't have faith in faith, that's silly; we have faith in God. We trust because there is God. So it is with hope – this begins not with regenerating some hope that your marriage will improve or your children will get better or that a job will come or a friend will call. What we begin with is putting our hope *in God*. There is a reason to hope because there is God. Don't start with outcomes; start with God.

But this is still words on a page until we get the Spirit working. So let's pray:

*Jesus, I ask you for your hope. Come, Lord, and rescue me from resignation; rescue me from every form of cynicism or hopelessness or defeat. Show me where I have lost hope; show me where I have made agreements with resignation or worse.*

Pause here, and listen. Let him show you. And as you realize the agreement or the shutdown, renounce it. Break the agreements you have made. Then continue on:

*Jesus, I ask you to breathe hope into me, right here, in the places that have lost hope. Restore hope. Give me your hope. Spirit, help me; I pray to overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. I renounce resignation, cynicism and defeat; I renounce hopelessness. Come and restore my heart here, Lord. I put my hope not in an object or an outcome but in Jesus Christ. I put my hope in you, Jesus. Come and breathe your hope in me, and keep breathing it into me, breathing it into me, breathing it into me. I welcome hope; I receive hope. Because of you, Jesus; because you are here. In your name I pray.*

Offered from a fellow traveler, who is already feeling a renewed sense of hope,

  
John