

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

Late July, 2019

Dear Friends,

Warm summer greetings to you! (Maybe a bit too warm in some places!) I hope this letter finds you well, enjoying some of the glories of summer. Evenings on the porch. A walk in the park or woods. Popsicles. Fireflies. Pool time.

What's on my heart this month...is the care of our hearts.

You know we regularly circle back around to the heart. That's because nothing in this world encourages you to care for your heart. The world has gone mad, and so someone has to be that voice in the wilderness. I'm happy to. But more importantly, I feel God's heart for you, his deep concern for your wholeheartedness.

I'm just hearing too many stories of solid lovers of God who suddenly seem to unravel. Divorces in mature couples, anxiety disorders popping up out of nowhere, heartache, and way too many suicides. I lost a dear friend to that darkness last week. A terrible reminder that it is dangerous to leave unhealed places in your soul unattended, especially in this hour.

I think this is one of the reasons we were given the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. The story is told in Matthew and Luke, but let me remind you of the basics: Following his baptism, at the start of his three-year public mission, Jesus is led into the wilderness for forty days of fasting. Satan comes looking for an angle on him, some vulnerability, some point of access. Given what he tries, he seems to have some idea of what might work with this man Jesus—Do miracles; reveal yourself; rule the world. Things Jesus is poised to do, but only in the Father's timing and way. So the testing doesn't work, but I think we miss a critical piece of the story at the end. It reports that afterwards, angels came and ministered to Jesus:

“Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.” (Matthew 4:11)

Jesus needed ministering to. Now, this is the Son of the Living God. The Prince of Life. Majestic. Powerful beyond description. He created all angelic beings. Satan is no match for him. But being tested by the enemy was so awful, Jesus needed help afterwards. Wow.

It helps us realize—to be tested by the enemy is a really awful thing.

Jesus passed the test, because as he later says in John, the enemy has “no hold on me,” or in another translation, “he has nothing in me” (John 14:30 NIV, NASB). Jesus is wholehearted, and therefore the enemy can't find any access to trap, snare, deceive, or take him out.

The rest of us, however, are broken people, at various points in our healing journey. Our humanity has many rifts in it, sometimes very deep rifts, and those provide the enemy with access. Through testing, and cunning observation of us, he finds those chinks, those cracks, and he strikes there.

Now remember—to be tested is awful without the rift in the soul. With the rift, it's brutal and often results in some serious collapse. This explains the high-level ministry scandals we are all familiar with. It also helps to explain the breakdown of otherwise very good people.

Jesus insists we take our restoration and wholeheartedness seriously because we are all unfinished men and women; we each have rifts in the soul, and those areas are where the enemy aims his most brutal attacks. We want to get to the place, through the healing ministry of Jesus in us and our ongoing discipleship to him, that we are strong and well whatever comes our way. “Like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither” (Psalm 1:3). I long to be that flourishing tree. I know you do, too, so let me ask...

What are you currently doing to pursue wholeheartedness, your internal restoration?

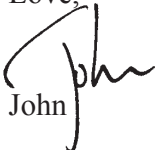
If you don't have a fresh answer, ask Jesus what he has for you this summer in the direction of wholeheartedness. Personally, he told Stasi and me to use our vacation time for very simple soul care—daily walks, quiet rest, prayer, good books, and beauty. Still waters and quiet meadows, so he may restore our souls (Psalm 23:2-3). We have to participate in the process.

Just about everything we do at Ransomed Heart is designed to help you, God's dear friends, towards wholeheartedness—through intimacy with Jesus and life in his Kingdom. (I hope you had a chance to hear our recent podcasts—the Warfare series in May; Rest, Suffering, and Play in June; and now Hearing God in July!) Thousands upon thousands of people around the globe are reporting stories of breathtaking rescue. Despite the dark hour, lives are being healed, saved, restored.

I'm hoping you might be able to help us carry on with this glorious mission. A few times a year, I reach out and remind you that we are a nonprofit, and it is your gifts that help us bring the ministry of Jesus to so many precious souls. Our reach continues to expand across the world because of your love and generosity. Would you be able to make a gift this month? Large or small, every measure of support helps! You can give online at www.ransomedheart.com, or use the enclosed envelope.

There just aren't that many voices in this mad world guiding people gently into intimacy with Jesus, reminding them how much their hearts matter, showing the way towards wholeheartedness and lives of restored resilience. Thank you for being our allies and partners, for helping us carry on!

And do take care of the treasure of your heart this summer. Follow Jesus into what he has specifically for you.

Love,

John