

Heart to Heart

*Bringing our hearts to Him,
Receiving His Heart for us!*

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Joyce fought Lupus and abuse and won.

Dear Steve,

Up here in the Blue Ridge, you see things from a different perspective--one that is naturally just a few thousand feet of elevation closer to heaven!

Fog in the Valley

And the view from above...

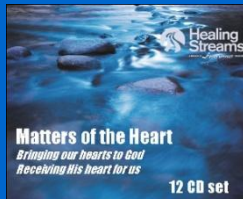
Come with me up onto this highland ridge in the NC mountains and you will see a wonderful sight. Each morning the awakening dawn reveals verdant valleys far below engulfed in billowing seas of fog. It looks for all the world as if clouds have fallen from the sky! Yet it is the rainforest itself which is generating these dense morning mists. One dawn the mists overflowed our ridge and captured us in a perfect white out. The light of the rising sun was getting in-but no light was getting out! I couldn't see past the back porch. ***It is altogether marvelous!***

Not so marvelous are the kinds of fog that confusion generates in our lives. The Lord says that His people are carried into captivity, even destroyed, for lack of knowledge (Isaiah 5:13; Hosea 4:6). ***What we don't know*** about this new life in Christ that we are being offered not only can keep us from entering into blessing, it also opens doors for the enemy to prey upon us. In the spiritual life ignorance is not bliss-it quickly becomes bondage!

For a remedy Jesus invites us to seek truth. He says that if we will do this-if we will take pains to pursue a true knowledge of God and His ways-He personally guarantees that we will become so liberated that we will truly enjoy our lives (John 6:32 very loosely paraphrased by me). The truth-if it is His truth (and not your own version of it) really will set you free-but it won't drop into your lap without some effort of seeking on your part. ***Grace is good, but it's not that good.***

Sure, we all get a lot of things given to us "for free" from our incredibly generous God-grace is very good. I have watched my incomparable daughter Alisha tending to the needs of her daughter Kaitlyn. "For free" she will steer KT away from dangerous pursuits; for free she will distract her when bad attitudes threaten to emerge; for free she will set

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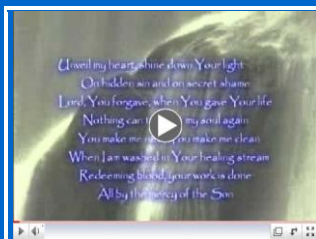
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Mercy of the Son with
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pleasant pursuits before KT to help her wait until meal time without falling into impatience. You get the picture. Ali does all of this for free because she loves KT AND because KT is only 3 years old! **Eventually our beloved KT will have to learn how to do these and a host of other things for herself or she will never enter into her maturity as a free person.** That means that Alisha and all of us will have to be careful not to spoil KT by "cushioning" her experience of her own life too much. "For free" we will have to take pains to back off and give her space to learn and grow by trial and error. **That too is a gift of grace.** I suspect we all know how onerous it feels when someone doesn't give us the space we need to grow on our own.

Sound familiar? Our loving God is the perfect Parent! **The Lord is not about to spoil His children by doing everything for us.** That's why I say grace is good, but it's not that good-because we might tend to think that God "cushions us" by doing all kinds of things for us (which He actually says in His Word are things for us to do). Or that He "cushions us" from experiencing just what it means to live in a real world with true freedom of will. No, this God of ALL grace wants us to grow up into our maturity and experience something truly worth even painful growth through all the times of trial and error-**the glorious liberty of the children of God** (Romans 8:21).

All of us will enter into that glorious liberty once we arrive in heaven. That's a done deal-Jesus declared the work for that great gift of grace "finished" at the cross (John 19:30). **What I want to know is this: How many of us will make it into those glorious heights this side of heaven?** Don't you yearn for this? Isn't this the secret thought that captures your heart: there MUST BE a way to live free. Gloriously free. Free like a child is free (Matthew 18:2-3). Free to love, to laugh, to explore, to wonder, to pursue.

Near the end of the movie Braveheart, William Wallace is being tortured to death by the British for leading the fight for Scottish liberty. At the very brink of death it appears he wants to speak. The torturer/executioner draws bends low to hear. Summoning all his final reserves of strength, **Wallace bellows forth one word: "Freedom!"** That word takes wings. It sails out over the once jeering, now silenced crowds. It rings a death toll in the ears of an affrighted tyrant. It flies out to Bannockburn and leads a rousing charge to victory. Even in the writing of this the Holy Spirit is all over me-so great is His own yearning for your freedom and mine!

To gain this kind of freedom we will have to become determine to climb the heights of true knowledge and live by faith alone. That means embracing the new way of living by believing Truth above all else. This new life is entered into whenever we choose to put our faith and trust in the grace that is being offered to us, promised to us, and poured out upon us every second of the day. We are saved by grace through faith. **You have to know what grace is really offering you. You have to know that no one can do the believing for you. You have to use the keys to freedom!**

As young believers most of us enjoyed a "honeymoon" with the Lord-by His grace He was making everything easy for us, like Ali with KT. But since then the going got hard. Grace seemed scarce at times. It wasn't. **It is ALWAYS either our knowledge or our believing that is deficient-never is His grace in short supply!** If you are living in the fog, it just may be time-high time!-to climb out of those valleys of confusion towards the fabled heights. Sure the climb is difficult and tiring. Believing truth is hard work! Jesus says, however, that this is the work we are intended to do (John 6:28-29). We have to labor diligently to enter this place of freedom rest (Hebrews 4:11), so great is the

adversary's work against us. **But God will give us victories if we don't quit!** I happen to be on the ridge now (not always) and I promise you the view was worth the climb! If I get knocked down, I WILL start climbing again...

Costly Confusion

I was visiting at a friend's church recently. He gave a tremendous sermon on forgiving; afterwards we all went to Sunday School for an hour's discussion. People had lots of questions! This was great because you love it as a preacher/teacher when people get hooked in to what the Lord has given you to share with them. I felt very happy for my friend, but I came away grieved for the condition of the people. Please don't get me wrong-these are great people, committed believers who want to do the right thing and have a solid track record of faithfulness. I'm sure what I was seeing was a thing that could have been played out before me in congregations all across the country. But what I was seeing vexed my spirit, then broke my heart.

I was so vexed with the enemy because it seemed that so many believers are bound up by veils of confusion regarding some of the most basic and fundamental things. **It broke my heart for the Lord and for His people** to see believers thwarted in their growth towards freedom by such simple stumbling blocks. I believe God was giving me a glimpse of what I have been missing. I have been working since 2005 with people coming through our ministry and with the full time students in addiction recovery at the Old Savannah City Mission. In both cases I fully expect to have to teach fundamentals and love doing it. Apparently, a myth had begun growing in my mind that somehow people in regular church life were further along than the often very broken people who cross our path.

Fortunately, I was only stunned by two stumbling blocks I saw:

1) First, and foremost, there seemed to be a real interest in forgiving, but almost total confusion about what it involves, what it requires, does it set earthly justice aside, does correction never come, do we just say "Oh, well" to injustice. If I go on my blood pressure might go up, and I've never had a problem with high blood pressure. The general tenor seemed to be an exploration of whether or not we actually ought to do it in certain tricky situations (always different with each individual-personal histories no doubt being very much in mind). **That is not where the discussion needs to begin!** Jesus has commanded us quite categorically that we MUST forgive everyone and anyone who has ever sinned against us in any way (Mark 11:25). We should at least know that. **To forgive or not to forgive is not the question!** (I'm rereading Hamlet-don't ask me why.) But this only shows how well the enemy has done his work about blinding us to the very thing that is most liberating for us!

2) The second area of confusion has to do with the Old Testament-this came out in related issues that had to do with God's wrath, God's hard dealings, His command of *harem* (total annihilation), the conflict of OT laws for Israel with our own sense of mercy and justice (stoning rebellious children for example). **It is evident that many are hampered by the mistaken belief that all scripture is equally weighted and fully revealing of God at a surface level.** Luther said that you have to read the whole of scripture through the lens of the gospel. I have found that to be true and had to go back and reread much of the Bible when as a semi-mature Christian I came in to a far

greater revelation of grace that what I had been walking in previously. In addition ***there is a HUGE difference between the old covenant and the one we have been given-the new and better Covenant.*** You cannot read the OT without keeping this firmly in mind. Here is something I wrote on it a few years back:

Why do we follow some Old Testament commands when we don't follow others? As faithful Christians, we are certainly not free before God to set any portion of scripture aside, unless the scriptures themselves show us why we should. Are there principles in the Bible that do just that?

As noted above, according to New Testament revelation, the Law's punishments for sin have been set aside. Civil law may or may not require consequences of its own and sin itself carries its own consequences, but God's justice has been satisfied through the death of His Son. *The dietary laws* have also been set aside by New Testament revelation (see Mark 7:14-23; Acts 10:9-16; Acts 11:1-12; Galatians 2:11-15). *The ceremonial laws* touching on ritual cleanliness, the offering of sacrifices, the prescribed festivals, etc. have all been set aside now that the Temple is within us and the one Sacrifice towards which they all pointed has been made. Likewise, the civil laws of Israel do not apply to New Covenant believers, whose King and Kingdom are not of this world as the kingdom of Israel and her kings were. *Even the Sabbath* has been transformed through Christ from being one day of rest each week, to an endless rest of faith (Heb. 4:1-10).

To be sure these sections of the Law continue to be deeply instructive of the inward life with Christ, but the outward form is only still required (by the scriptures themselves) of Jewish believers who have not embraced the New Covenant. *Much of what Israel experienced was a "shadow" or "type" of the new reality that has come through Christ and faith.* What was outward and material for them is now inward and spiritual for us (1 Cor. 10:1-11; Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:4-6; Heb. 10: 1-2). What does this leave us to obey out of all the commands of the Old Testament? *The moral law.*

This is the heart of my anguish: we have to know what truth is in order to be liberated by it. ***Not knowing truth is just as grace-killing as not believing it.*** So I am putting this out there in case these truths will help you move your own believing in liberating directions!

From We to Thee

We are at it again!

The Book. How I covet your prayers for this time in the mountains seeking to find the inspiration of the Spirit in order to finish this project--the book I am calling "***Escape from Hell.***"

In John's Revelation we are told that one of the three things which gave the saints their victory and brought down the enemy's strangle hold over the earth was "***the word of their testimony.***" This is definitely a testimony which has the potential of doing some major damage to the enemy's kingdom and could surely bring advance of the Lord's into many lives.



But, boy oh boy, is it being contested! I am walking through so much adversity right now of every sort at all kinds of levels--no doubt intended to throw me off base and out of focus. That's not going to happen--the Lord is such a strong tower. Whatever the enemy cooks up Jesus finds ways to turn it into a victory feast with Him--making every promise of scripture fresh and delectable! I am not the least bit troubled by all this spiritual adversity--what I am asking your prayers for is **the anointing that breaks the yoke** upon every word I will be writing!! Our God is a magnificent bondage breaker, but (how well I know) it is not my feeble or presumed powers or might, but my His Spirit that all is accomplished. Let's pray for that!!!

Thank you and God bless,

Steve and Eunice

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Sincerely,

Steve and Eunice Evans

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