

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

January 2013

Dear Friends,

And so the new year is upon us. Given all that is unfolding – or unraveling – in the world, one wonders what this year may bring. I want with all my heart to offer you a source of strength and resilience. It comes from a rather surprising direction, so let us come in by a side door...

The first chapter of Hosseini's novel *Kite Runner* begins with an arresting sentence:

I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975.

It is the beginning of a confession. He continues:

I remember the precise moment, crouching behind a crumbling mud wall, peeking into the alley near the frozen creek. That was a long time ago, but it's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it. Because the past claws its way out. Looking back now, I realize I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years.

One day last summer, my friend Rahim Khan called from Pakistan. He asked me to come see him. Standing in the kitchen with the receiver to my ear, I knew it wasn't just Rahim Khan on the line. It was my past of unatoned sins...

O my. What if your past sins called you on the phone one day? How would you feel? What would you say?

I sat on a park bench near a willow tree. I thought about something Rahim Khan said just before he hung up, almost as an afterthought. *There is a way to be good again.*

It is my favorite line in the entire novel: There is a way to be good again.

Whether you are aware of it or not, you crave goodness. In the depths of your being, you ache for goodness; we all do. We are made for goodness like we are made to breathe, like we are made to love. Goodness is the strength of our condition. Friends – you are going to need a deep and profound goodness for all that is coming at you like a freight train. And there is a way to be good again.

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)

God has plans for us. He wants to make us whole and holy, by his love. To make *you* whole and holy, by his love. Whole, and holy – this is what you ache for. At least, you ache for the wholeness part. The “holy” part seems to most of us...optional. But you will soon discover why it is not.

This week we release my new book, *The Utter Relief of Holiness - How God's Goodness Frees us from Everything that Plagues Us*.

I know what you're thinking: *Holiness is an utter relief?* Look at this way: Ask the anorexic young girl how she would feel if she no longer struggled with food, diet, exercise – if she simply never even gave it another thought. Ask the man consumed with jealousy how he would feel if he woke one day to discover it gone. Ask the raging person what it would be like to be free of rage, or the alcoholic what it would be like to be completely free from addiction. Take the things you struggle with and ask yourself, “What would life be like if I never even struggled with this again?”

It would be a relief. An absolute utter relief.

Exactly. Now, in order to get there, you need both wholeness and holiness. I know if we could recover a vision of what holiness really is, we would be absolutely captured by it. So think of it this way – all that stunning goodness you see in Jesus, that's holiness. The kindness, trueness, integrity, love – all his captivating character. And he wants to share that goodness with you.

God disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness...it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet so that the limb which is lame is not put out of joint, but rather is healed. (Hebrews 12:10-13)

Holiness, friends, is the healing of your humanity and the strength of your condition.

We are entering a period of great trial upon the earth. You've seen the news; you've watched your friends suffering. The spiritual war is heating up; wickedness is raging like a nuclear meltdown. It is going to take a supernatural life to withstand these trials. Whatever else your goals and hopes are for this year, seek the strengthening of your soul. Seek that shimmering goodness and trueness you see in Jesus. There is a way to be good again.

To help you get there, we're offering *The Utter Relief of Holiness* in a “buy one, give one” offer. Two books for the price of one, so that you can share this goodness with someone you care about. I think you're going to love it; I think you'll find yourself utterly relieved.

Fondly,

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

John