



JEFFREY ROSARIO
speaker

WHY CAN'T I FEEL MY FAITH?

I'VE BEEN REFLECTING ON a recent conversation with a friend about the difficulty we have in feeling our faith amid the dark moments of life. "I just don't *feel* like I love God," he said. He believes in God. He understands His faith intellectually and accepts the evidence and logical proof. It's the emotional part that's missing. He struggles to *feel* it.

"Don't trust your feelings" is the warning we often hear. And the warning is true, no doubt. But that doesn't mean we should ignore the emotional aspect. Desiring and pursuing an emotional connection with God does not necessarily equate to trusting in our emotions. It's simply acknowledging that the emotional factor is part of who we are.

The reality of Jesus should impact our minds *and* our hearts. The gospel should affect us intellectually *and* emotionally.

I CAN'T INITIATE, BUT I CAN RESPOND

If we don't feel that we love God, we can't really muster up that love. It can't be fabricated. The way to

experience love for God is spelled out in this simple verse:

"We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

That's a beautiful concept. Love for God is felt in your heart to the degree in which you personally encounter *His* love for *you*.

The way God feels about me is the very thing that inspires the way I feel about Him. I can't initiate love for God, I can only respond to His love for me.

YOU FEEL WHAT YOU THINK

If the simplicity of John's statement is true, then the more respond points I have, the more opportunities I have for God to engage my heart. Consider the formula: "Thoughts produce feelings, feelings produce actions, actions produce habits, habits determine character." It all starts with what we think about. Our feelings and emotions are determined by the thoughts we

entertain. If we dwell on doubts, discouragements, and negativity, that's where our feelings will follow.

So why not saturate our thoughts with the love of Jesus and all that heaven has invested in us? When we actually realize that Jesus did not

"THE DEEPER THESE SUBLIME CONCEPTS ARE ENTERTAINED IN THE MIND, THE MORE THEY WILL TRANSITION INTO THE EMOTIONAL SPHERE."

merely give Himself 'to the world,' but rather *to me*—that's when it takes on real significance and moves my heart. Not a mere theory or a logical argument, but a personal reality. The idea that God knows me personally is a thrilling one.

What if we meditated on God's overwhelming interest in us?

"The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son" (Steps to Christ, p. 100).

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TY GIBSON
co-director

SETTING THE CAPTIVES FREE

A POWERFUL MINISTRY TO prison inmates is under way in Kenya.

A group called the King’s Messengers, sponsored by the East-Central Africa Division, recently paid a series of visits to a prison in Nairobi housing 3,500 men. Rather than merely preach, the King’s Messengers conducted free medical check-ups and offered treatments for the sick. Seven hundred inmates were treated in conjunction with nursing and medical staff from the Adventist University of Eastern Africa Baraton, based in Kenya. Benson Obolla, one of the leaders of the ministry, said, “We were the first outsiders ever to be allowed to conduct a medical camp in the prison and the authorities were very excited with the results.”

Once the ministry of healing hands softened the hearts of the

inmates, the King’s Messengers offered the King’s message by placing in each inmate’s hands, a Bible and a set of study guides provided by Light Bearers. As a result, says Obolla, “we baptized 213 prisoners.”

Those men in Nairobi are behind bars for a reason, and the reason reaches deeper than their deeds. There is a more fundamental bondage that lies behind their physical bondage.

Incarceration is the native condition of all human beings. The apostle Paul says all of us are “slaves of sin” (Romans 6:6).

At the core of our bondage is a deep-seated “enmity [hostility] against God” and His “law” of other-centered love (Romans 8:7; 13:10). And that enmity is rooted

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in the fact that we have believed lies about God, which in turn arouses mistrust and rebellion in our hearts (Genesis 3:1-11). This *internal* bondage—ingrained in our mental, emotional and spiritual natures—is the root cause of all the *external* actions that bring us into social, relational, and physical bondage.

But freedom may be ours, by one powerful and empowering means.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

“The enemy is within the gates; it is with our own luxury, our own folly, our own criminality that we have to contend.”

- Marcus Tullius Cicero

THE RESCUER

“His heart went out in tender sympathy to the children of men. He took man’s nature, that He might reach man’s wants. The poorest and humblest were not afraid to approach Him. Even little children were attracted to Him. They loved to climb upon His knees, and gaze into that pensive face, benignant with love.”

- Ellen White

PARDONING LOVE

“Nothing reaches so fully down to the deepest motives of conduct as a sense of the pardoning love of Christ.”

- Ellen White

There is something very specific that every human being needs in order to be set free from bondage to sin. Jesus pinpointed the catalyst of

“BY LOVING HER WITHOUT CONDEMNATION, JESUS SET HER FREE INTERNALLY. THEN, IN THE ILLUMINATING LIGHT OF HIS FORGIVENESS, HE EMPOWERED HER TO BE FREE EXTERNALLY, ON THE BEHAVIORAL LEVEL.”

our liberation in these words: “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

But what truth, precisely? Lots of things are true, but they do not necessarily constitute “*the* truth” of which Jesus speaks. Fortunately, we don’t need to guess what Jesus had in mind because, in the immediate foregoing context, He clearly revealed *the* truth that sets us free. In fact, He actively applied that truth to someone’s heart and she was, indeed, set free.

I speak, of course, of the Savior’s epic encounter with the woman caught in adultery, recorded in the earlier verses of John 8. Like all of us, she was in a condition of *internal* bondage to a false conception of God. As a result, she was also in *external* bondage to a life of sin. As she lay there on the ground in tears before Him, weighed down with her shame, Jesus spoke the

truth that set her free: “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (John 8:11). By loving her without condemnation,

Jesus set her free *internally*.

Then, in the illuminating light of his forgiveness,

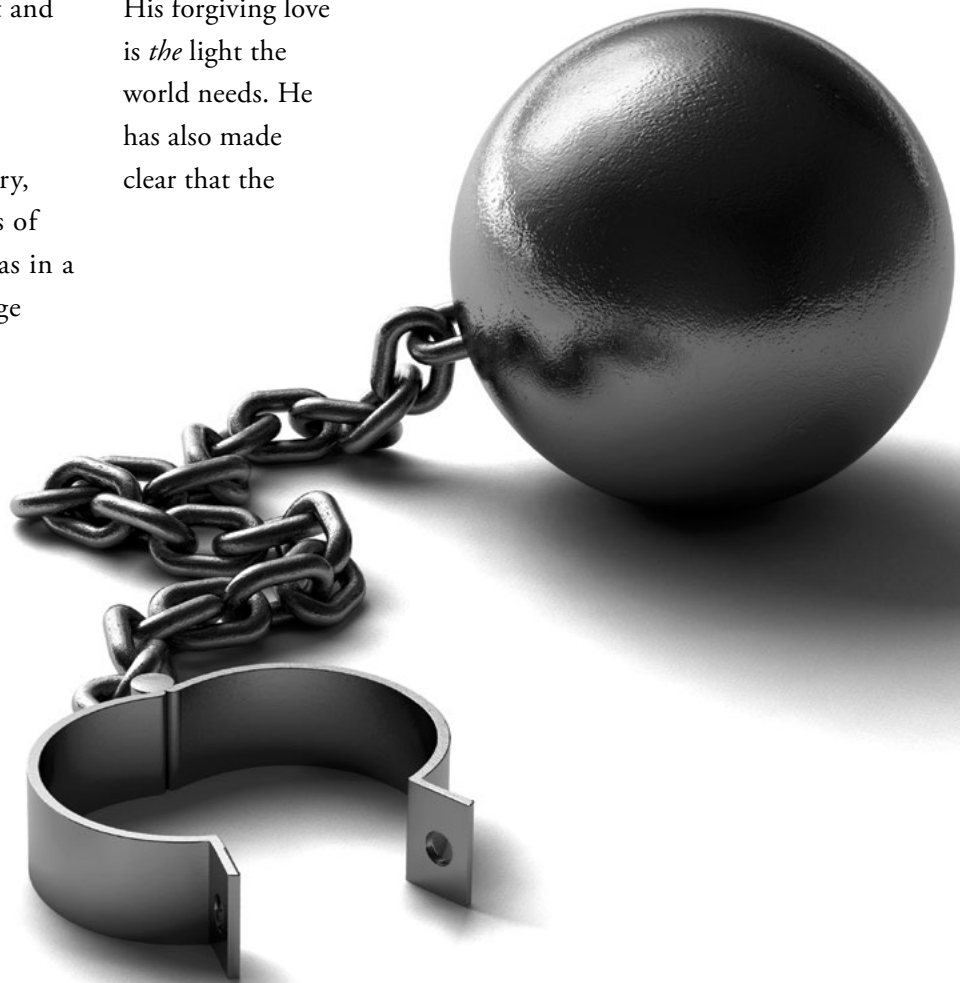
He empowered her to be free *externally*, on the behavioral level.

A crowd had gathered by now to witness this woman’s encounter with God in the flesh. Once she had been liberated by the power of His love, He turned to the people and said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have *the* light of life” (John 8:12).

Jesus is telling them that His forgiving love is *the* light the world needs. He has also made clear that the

condemnation projected upon the woman in God’s name, holding her in bondage to sin, is the darkness we all need liberation from. It is in this context that Jesus spoke His famous words, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Clearly, then, the truth that sets us free is the truth of God’s non-condemning love revealed in Christ.

That’s what those inmates in Nairobi encountered as loving hands sought to bring healing to their bodies and the light of truth was then delivered into their minds by the agency of gospel literature.



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... WHY CAN'T I FEEL MY FAITH? *(continued from page 1)*

What if we regularly thought about Jesus' heartfelt words to His disciples?

"The very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30).

What if we spent even a few moments each day reflecting on the commitment Christ has made to us in Gethsemane and on Calvary's cross? What if we stopped paying attention to the thorns, and focused more on the roses? The deeper these sublime concepts are entertained in the mind, the more they will transition into the emotional sphere.

May God help us to enthrone Jesus in our thoughts and give Him

more access to our heart. May we use "our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ . . . clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience into maturity" (2 Corinthians 10:5-6, The Message).

And may we have the joy of marveling like the disciples: "Did not our heart burn within us" (Luke 24:32)?

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JULY 2-6, 2013

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