



Fuel for the Broken Heart

Joe White

I came from South Texas. I grew up playing a very stupid game. I had some really hardnosed coaches. They taught you if you were hurt, you were just babying yourself. "Get off the ground buddy, you girl." They called you all kinds of names. "Rub some dirt on it." So, when I started having these heart attacks, I just thought it would be fine; it's just a minor wound. They just kept happening. It's not smart to ignore those. I just need to tell you. Ladies, if he starts having a tight chest and his arm starts tingling, kick him out of the house and tell him to get his person down to the ER and do something about that. Are any of you ladies besides my wife, married to just an absolute, heart-headed, knuckle-headed guy? Anyway, there are a lot of reasons why women live longer than men, but that's one of them. We just don't listen very much to those things that are happening. There are other reasons men live longer than men. A lot of times, we just don't think.

We just do all kinds of funny things. We love machines; they can carry stuff. We don't read signs very well. That's contaminated area there. Look at that guy. Take this picture; "Look at me." That's the last time that boy ever used a screwdriver in his whole life.

We think backhoes can do anything, literally. I used to watch Sanford and Son a little bit. Y'all are too young; you don't know it. It used have the "biggie." About every two weeks, he had the "biggie." Now I know what was happening when he has the "biggie." He would argue with his son and when he wasn't wining, he would have the "biggie." He would say, "I never had pain like this before! Oh, this is the worst one I ever had son. Oh, this is the big one; I'm dying. You hear that, Elizabeth? I'm coming to join you honey."

Do you know what's great about pain and agony in those things that we go through in this life? You can look back at it. When you're in the middle of it, it's not any fun. A lot of people in here understand that. But, when you look back at it, you can see, with 20/20 vision, God's hand in everything. Now, I can even laugh at what all happen. I look back and wonder how we got through it. I'll tell you how I got through it. I had a wife... Boy, do I have a wife. I've been married to this incredible woman for 43 years. If you know her, you know she is unbelievable. She sat with me for 28 days or so and put up with my whining and suffering.

One night, we were changing hospitals. It was a pretty rough night and they stuck us in the emergency room of our second hospital. That dear lady, after sitting up with me for two weeks... They just left us there for hours. She was over there on three wooden chairs, trying to lie down. I think she may have had a towel on the chairs. In 28 days, she never complained one word.

Even better than her being there, the Holy Spirit was there in those long dark nights. For those of you who have had heart attacks and not just the kind where they open your chest, but the kind where your husband breaks your heart. The kind where your wife breaks your heart. The kind where your father broke your heart. The kind where your mother breaks your heart. The kind where your parents wound you. The kind where your children wound you.

I will tell you, from my most recent experience, that Psalms 139 is absolutely true every single day of your life. He says, "When I ascend to heaven, God, you're there." And we know that. When we're feeling great and our days are fantastic and the sun is up like it is today, he feels there. He says, "When I make my bed in Sheol, even there you are." He said, "When I take the wings of the dawn..." You wake up on a day like this and you take the wings of the dawn. He said, "You'll be there."

David also said, "When I dwell in the remotest part of the sea." Darker than any other scuba divers have ever been, where there is no oxygen and no light, it's just desperate and you can't even breathe. Things are so hurtful either emotionally or physically or both. He said, "Even there, thy hand will lead me and thy right hand will lay hold of me. If I say surely the darkness will overwhelm me and the light around will be night - even the darkness is not dark to thee and the night is bright as day." Even in the darkness, I found my redeemer lives. Amen.

At age 88, my daddy would say "I'm glad to be anywhere" and I really am glad to be with you. It's been a crazy spring. Life is great isn't it, y'all? I know there is a lot of hurt in this church with funerals and divorces and disappointments and sadness and addictions and disappointing experiences. I know I'm not the only who has had heart surgery and I hope somehow that an old man can be a comfort to you this morning. It was comforting to me in those dark, lonely days just to hear the words of Jesus echoing in that little room that I was in. I kept hearing him say, "In this world, you'll have tribulation." John 16 says, "But in me you'll have peace." I kept thinking about that. He said, "Take courage because I will become the world."

Then to see his example. He's our Savior, our Lord, our Friend, our Creator, and he's our Dad. It's kind of dialing back to 1 Peter and that dear passage in the second chapter where it says, "We were called for this purpose to walk in his steps." It talks about the steps we get to walk in as we begin to get to carry a cross. One of the most comforting things to me when I felt like they were putting a hatchet in my chest night after night and my leg was on fire with all the stuff that had to do with removing arteries and veins... I just kept seeing that cross and knowing that whatever I was going through was just a fraction, just a tiny little fraction, just a sliver of what he went through on the cross. First Peter would say, "While being reviled, he did not revile in return, and while suffering, he uttered no threats." But, people who are suffering in this church, he said, "But he kept entrusting himself to the One who Judges righteously."

Suffering friends, I remembered that 40 years before, I heard someone say in one of our little camp church services, that faith (FAITH) was an acronym for Father All In Thy Hands. I kept thinking about that. And then, I saw him on Friday and those six long grueling hours where he was impeccable. The way he performed and the way he lived and the way he died, without flaw. He's up there on the cross and at first, he takes care of his mom. "John, take care of Mary." Can you imagine thinking like that when you've been shredded by the Roman whip and then nailed to a cross? "John, take care of mom."

The eye witnesses recalled that he would say, “Mom, take care of John. Y'all be together and take care of each other.” Then he takes care of the thief on the cross next to him, the guy who had been pretty much worthless his whole life, probably a fatherless guy like me.

It was in this church this morning. Some guy was out there peddling himself in crime and literally dying in a pool of his own failure. Jesus looks over there and adopts him because he had one tiny sliver of faith. That's probably all that many of us bring this morning to this church – one little sliver of God's grace and faith in him.

Then, men and women, this hit me this winter. In fact, I've never really thought about it before, but it just hit me this winter. As a dad, He loved you with his whole heart. Don't dodge it anymore, folks. This church is not for a congregation; this church is for you. Jesus saved the world, but like the precious little single mom I watched drive her daughter over to Branson Elementary School one day... There was a dented bumper on her car and, bless her heart, she was taking her kids to school and then going to work and taking her kids to school and going to work. She is an unsung hero. There was a bumper sticker on her car that said *Jesus loves the whole world, but I'm his favorite.*

I know as a dad... When Debbie Jo brought little Jamie home from the hospital, I loved her with my whole heart. Everything in me was loving that little girl. And then Courtney came along and I started loving her with my whole heart. Parents, you know it's like your heart doubles. And then Brady comes along and I love Brady with my whole heart and still do. And then Cooper comes along and Debbie Jo looks at me and says, “It's your fault.” And then she said “One more kid, one more wife.” But I love Cooper with my whole heart. It just crash landed in my heart this winter that as a dad, if I can do that with just an earthly little heart, as pathetic as it is, imagine what God can do. I am positive with that thought in mind, if you're the only little girl on this whole planet, because I love each of mine with my whole heart, He would have died for you just like that because he loves you with his whole heart. You are Daddy's little girl, you fatherless ladies.

If women need that emotional touch, men need it just as bad or maybe even worse. He loves you with his whole heart. If he was impeccable on Friday, he was astonishing on Thursday night. On Thursday night, there were his 12 guys and then there was 11 when one guy betrays. There are 11 guys that he is everything to. They've left it all. And all the prophecies are coming to light in the One they have loved and followed. His virgin birth and his Bethlehem birth and all the things that he fulfilled. Then the prophecies become real with his crucifixion. I can just see them.

I was driving to church this morning visualizing as Isaiah comes crashing into their broken world. “And he'll be scourged and he'll be slaughter like a lamb.” The proverbs of David where he'll be pierced... Now they are realizing their hero is going to be crucified according to Roman law. Can you imagine how they felt that night?

He knew. First, he washes their feet, then he comforts their fears, and then he gives them hope beyond the cross. My prayer this morning is that I will, by God's grace and with his spirit guiding me, be able to take you to that room and that the Holy Spirit will give you hope beyond your cross. Then he gives them

courage for the battles that lie ahead because everybody in here, probably starting with the oldest of us, has crosses ahead of us, and I'm okay with that.

I've been on the brink of death a couple of times before, but I've never been over the edge. Well, I'll tell you I was over the edge and he was there. I want to take you to the upper room today. I want you to go up there with Jesus in the magic of your imagination and I want you to listen to his words. Let me pray for you.

Lord Jesus, there are a lot of crosses in this room this morning; a lot in our future and a lot in our past, but I thank you, Jesus, that you are sufficient. Jesus, I pray for the hurting heart this morning out there in this congregation and the wounds that have been covered up from past hurts and, yes, the wounds of the future. I pray that your words to your family of followers would come true in this sanctuary today. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray... Amen.

So there he is, men and women, around that table. He has washed their feet and now he's beginning to speak courage into those guys' hearts. He says, "Fellas, I'm going to ask the Father and he's going to give you another helper." You have to understand that in the vernacular of that day, the word *another* means the exact duplicate copy of. He said, "I'm going to give you me. Not a different helper; I'm going to give you the same helper. The one who has been walking with you is going to walk in you." He said that the helper, the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the One who walks alongside, the One who speaks in the darkness of that hospital room, the One who speaks in the darkness of the courtroom, the One who speaks in the darkness of the mysterious is going to be with you forever. He said in that day when the Holy Spirit comes... He came to you the day you believe. Romans 8 is clear on that. The day you trusted Christ, the spirit of Christ came into your heart. He said, "And he'll be with you forever." He said, "You'll be in me and I'll be in you and I'll be in your Father. In that day, you'll know that I am in the father and you in me and I in you."

I was thinking about that the other day. It's the most comforting understanding I believe in all of life. I believe it's the most meaningful understanding in all of life that the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Christ, the spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, whatever you want to call the third person of the Trinity, comes in you.

He says in Ephesians twice that he not only comes in you, but that he is sealed in you by the Holy Spirit. Don't ever question that he leaves you and comes back again and then leaves you. He did that in the Old Testament, but not in the New Testament. He comes in and he is sealed. "And that you'll be in me. I'll be in you and then you'll be in me. Then I'll be in the Father. You in me, me in you, and me in the father, sealed by the spirit of God." That is the gospel.

I don't over dramatize, but I just need to identify with some of you in here this morning. For 28 nights, God allowed me to stay awake. Sleep just wasn't a part of the experience and I'm thankful. That little dark room was like a sanctuary. Debbie Jo will tell you I didn't want any television, didn't want any music, didn't want any guests. It was just Jesus. Do you know what it got down to for me, men and women, was his Thursday night became my Thursday night. It got down to the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. It got down to the simplest of the truths of the faith. And that was enough.

There wasn't any big theology in that room. It was just the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lay down in green pastures.

I recalled the story that I first heard from Dr. Adrian Rogers, an old hero of mine years ago. Adrian told a story about a little gathering in Hollywood. There were seven or eight actors. One of them brought a guest. An unknown fella came in with him and they were sitting around the dinner table. They were each sharing famous lines that they had shared in movies where they had won Oscar awards. Then they got to the last of the actors and although he had also been famous and had lines, he just began to share the 23rd Psalm. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lay down in green pastures and leads me beside still water."

It was a little uncomfortable at first and when he finished they clapped their little tea party hands a little bit. Then it came to the guest. He paused, closed his eyes, began to think deeply, and tears began to roll down his cheeks. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I want for nothing. He makes me lay down in green pastures." Well, they had just heard that a minute ago and it was a little uncomfortable, but he went on. "He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul." He began to weep. "Yay, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Jesus, you're with me." He finished the 23rd Psalm and there wasn't a sound, just silence in the room. Everybody got him.

His buddy looked at him and whispered in his ear, "You know, I knew the Psalms, but you know the Shepherd."

That happens in open-heart surgery, whether it's emotional today or whether it's physical. That's what happens. You know the Shepherd and that's enough, that's all you need.

Then Jesus says to the fellas in John 16. He said, "He's going to be your guide." He calls him the Spirit of Truth two or three times in John 14, 15, 16. He refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth. He said, "He will guide you into all truth" like a cave guide through a dark cavern, like a scuba diver in a dark coral reef, like a football coach guiding you through plays in a football game. He'll guide you into truth and there are a lot of reasons why he says that I believe. One of them I think he's going to say this morning. He knows, psychologically, as I know as a Christian counselor. With over 40 years of looking into men and women and students' hearts, I know that when there's pain, when there's hurt, when your mom wounds you or your dad wounds you or your spouse wounds you or your boss wounds you or your children wound you or your parent wound you, there's this cavity that is built, this void and the wound builds hurt in your heart.

Unfortunately, without the filling of the Holy Spirit in that void, mistakenly, the enemy begins to speak to you and you begin to fill the void with porn, you begin to fill that void with alcohol, you begin to fill that void with drugs, you begin to fill that void with illicit relationships or just hatred, trying to anesthetize the pain. He said he will guide you into truth and, men and women, I see it in crusades that I do over and over again. Some nights, with these students, by the hundreds, I watch the Holy Spirit fill that void and empty out all that junk.

I'll never forget one event. It was a college in the south and I encountered this young man at the cross. Then he wrote me this letter. I think it's appropriate to read it because porn is such a beast. It is probably fighting many men and probably many women in here today. It's the worst addiction I believe in all the addictions of drugs that there is. Listen to his words and maybe they'll be comforting to you today.

Porn controlled me; I was numb. I had lost all my feelings. That's what Satan does. He beats you down and then he just kicks you on the ground, doesn't he? I hadn't cried for five years. Every night, I would wait until everyone was asleep and go to my bedroom for one more hit. That's what sin does. Porn controlled me all day long. This kid was a fantastic, big, handsome athlete. He was actually a leader in his Christian group on the campus. He didn't look like somebody who was out there running with prostitutes. I totally devalued all women. I couldn't have a friendship with a girl; it was all about sex. Hear me men, porn ruins your life. There is no normality. I even put a picture of myself on a website to attract more girls for sex. I look back at that and I'm so ashamed; it was disgusting. Then came the night of the cross. I hope and I pray that this day becomes the day at the cross for many people in this church. It was a night of delivery; it was a night of complete transformation. That's what the Holy Spirit does. There wasn't a paper in that huge room for me to write all my sins on. There weren't enough nails to pound all my sins to that cross. But, I finally saw the love of God. I saw God's grace. It all begins with God's grace. I realized I was forgiven and I said, "Lord, heal me." The Holy Spirit broke all my chains. Like the snap of my fingers, it was gone. I knew I was forgiven for all of it. That was two and a half years ago and I've never gone back.

The Holy Spirit is not a temporary experience; he takes your life forever. He fills that void completely if you will let him.

I was counseling one of our female staff members. She was one of our summer staff members, not a year round staff member. She started struggling with alcohol and then she started binge drinking. Alcohol had become the viper that Proverbs talks about and it bit her. She began to binge drink and she couldn't shake it. She was a fantastic lady; one of the finest young ladies I've ever met, but as we began to counsel, it all came down to a wound. It was her mom. Her mom had wounded her. I don't know what had happened, but her heart had been seriously wounded by her mom, as many of us in here have experienced a mother wound or a father wound. It created the cavity, the void. She began to fill the void with alcohol, thinking it would somehow take the pain away.

Then, in our counseling, the Holy Spirit filled her. Her void was filled with Jesus and she forgave her mom. She put her sword back in the sheath. In fact, I handed her a sword and a sheath and she put the sword back in the sheath. She not only walked away from bitterness, but as the Holy Spirit filled that place, she put away her alcohol and now she lives in freedom. He said he would guide you in truth if you'll listen to him.

Not only that, Jesus said this in 2 Corinthians 1: 4. This may be my favorite. He gives you a backstage pass in the hearts of other people who are struggling with the same thing that happened to you.

I was sexually abused when I was six or eight (I don't remember my age) by a strange man. As I look back at it, I'm so thankful as girls come up to me after messages I'm giving in high school environments. They'll talk about their abuse and I can say I've been there and I understand that Jesus healed me and he can heal them completely. He will heal you. Understand that.

You get to go places with people. I get to go with people with cancer and now my heart. I get to go with people with broken hearts. It's worth it all just for that one thing. You get to understand and you get to minister to another person in the way the Holy Spirit has ministered to you.

I have a friend. I say a new friend. I met him in 2004 at a Promise Keepers down in Memphis. He was a firefighter from 9/11. His job was to walk in the rubble and find, prayerfully, survivors. Then it became just identifying the dead. His name is Tom. In the process of it, Tom fell and broke his back and his wrist and injured his lungs. He got lesions in the brain and went through this horrible aftermath. Then his son, Ben, got brain cancer. I met him in Memphis because he was at St. Jude's where Ben was being treated for his brain tumors. Then over the next two years, he watched his little boy die in his arm. He said to Ben, as he was suffering to death, "Ben, if you see Jesus, run to him, buddy."

I said, "Tom, how do you do it. How do you survive all the lung surgeries, Ben's memories? How do you survive?"

He said, "God has given me a purpose. I get to meet with men that come back from Afghanistan going through post-traumatic stress syndrome. They'll meet with me because I've been there and I understand post-traumatic stress syndrome. I'm a pastor to the soldier who returns from the Middle East."

Then Jesus says something really cool in John 16. He says to his followers and he says to you today, "He will glorify me." I think one of the most thrilling ministries of the Holy Spirit is I get to see it prayerfully in the mirror, but mostly in the lives of people like at this church. He makes you like Jesus. For a wife or a husband, for a parent or a student, I think that's the most encouraging thing in the world that over the years, the Holy Spirit's job, his ministry is to glorify Jesus. That means he makes you like Jesus.

For 43 years, I've watched my wife quietly, humbly, without any fanfare, become more like Jesus every day. I watched her for 28 days being like Jesus to me. As she pours herself in the word of God, day after day, he makes her more and more like Jesus. My children almost idolize their mom. Not because she's anything in the flesh, but because Jesus, all these years, has made her like himself. That's why this church is so special. I love our pastor. It's the best one I've ever been with. I love our worship leader and the band. Best ones I've ever been with in my life. And it's the people out front with "Hello there." The people in this church are so authentic. I walk through Critter Street and I see these people becoming more and more like Jesus as they serve our children and our grandchildren. They just look so much like Jesus. And they will be more so as the years go by.

Not only did he say he will make you more like Jesus, but Paul even gets the point. He says, "Thanks be to God for the indescribable gift." You can't even describe how joyful and how healing even in the darkest nights he is. That's why Paul exhorts us in Ephesians 5: 18 to be filled with the spirit.

I was thinking last night... Excuse me for the sidetrack. One time, I hired this backhoe operator back in the early 70s. We were pinching pennies, trying to build a camp. I hired this backhoe operator and I had a lot of jobs for him to do. I was in a hurry because I knew it was costing me a lot of money. He was this dear hillbilly man. He had a red beard and chewed tobacco all day long. He was just a fantastic local guy. I just love our local folks around here. Finally, at the end of the day, I had forgotten to ask how much he charges. I looked up there at him and I was just a young camp director, naive as all get out. I said, "How much do you charge?"

He spits the tobacco, it drains down over his beard, and he says, "All I can get."

Why wouldn't you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? In Ephesians 5: 18, Paul says get all you can get. He comes in person. He's there. He doesn't come in parts; he comes in person. As you empty yourself of you... Romans 8 says you if walk in the flesh, you die, but if you walk in the spirit, you live. If you walk in the flesh, you can't please God. If you walk in the spirit, you live to please God. Be filled with the spirit, Paul says. Men and women, don't let anybody tell you it's a one-time fantastic experience and then it's all over. The word filled is a present perfect tense of that verb in the Greek. It means, "Be ye continually filled." Being filled with the Spirit literally means to be controlled and empowered by the Spirit.

Bill Bright, one of my old heroes, a good friend for years that started Campus Crusades. He said, "You've got to walk in the Spirit and Spiritual breathing. Paul says in Galatians 5, "Walk in the spirit." Bill says if you exhale every time lust, every time bitterness, every time hatred... Scripture says when Satan is at the threshold of your mind, when you first recognize that old bitter thought, when you first recognize that revengeful idea, when you first recognize the need for a substance, he said. "Exhale right then, "Lord, forgive me." Then inhale "Lord, fill me." The first thing is "Lord, forgive me for that." Then "Lord, fill me with your Spirit." Lord forgive me. Lord, fill me.

Then, as you walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh, think what kind of a husband you can be. Is there anything better than that, men and women? Think what kind of a dad you'll be. Imagine what kind of a wife you'll be. As you release your husband from control and trying to manipulate, as you release your wife from trying to serve you all day long... To be yourself, to be Jesus' little girl because the Spirit fills you with everything that you need. And all those vices, idols, and crutches begin to fall from you like rain.

Can I close with you today by taking you on a imagination journey? Ride with me further than you've ever imagined riding. Go with me 104 light years to the Milky Way Galaxy. Go out there a long ways off. Yet, go closer that you ever imagined, even to the closeness of a roaring lion on a safari. This morning, go with me further. Go out 2.5 million light years away to the Andromeda Galaxy, beautiful as it is. Then, go closer even to the touch of the soft white fur of the lamb.

Then go out 11 million light years away to the Cigar Galaxy, beautiful as the Hubble has shown us that it is. Yet, go closer to a white dove flutter off your finger where you can feel the wind of its wings fluttering against your face. Yet, travel further with me 21 million light years away to the beautiful Pinwheel Galaxy. Yet, go closer, under 400 power under a compound microscope to see the human cell

of which you were made. Travel further with me 31 million light years away to the beautiful Whirlpool Galaxy. Yet, come closer even to the DNA under an electron microscope of every cell in your body.

I challenge you today to go further even to the edge of infinity. Yet, go closer, even as close as the skin of your body, and meet Jesus. Further than you've ever dreamed, even eternity and yet closer than you've ever dreamed to the fullness of your heart.

Today, I invite you to go further than you've ever dreamed imaginable. Some of y'all in here have been sitting in that same old anger issue your daddy gave you your whole life. I ask you today to travel out of that forever. Some of y'all have been sitting in those control issues that you've been putting on your wife or husband your whole marriage just because you learned it from your mom. I invite you today to travel out of that permanently. Some of y'all are living in rebellion and you think you are a rebel for the rest of your life. Before you ruin your life and everybody's around you, today I invite you to travel.

Some of y'all have been living in bitterness for so long. Today, I invite you to travel into the realm of forgiveness. So many of us in here have been living in heart surgery of personal guilt and failure. Today, men and women of Woodland Hills, I invite you to travel. Zoom out of it. Leave it at the cross today. Let the power of the cross change it forever. You are forgiven.

Some of y'all have been sitting around, knowing you're perishing, watching Christians give their lives to Jesus and for some reason of a prideful, hard heart, saying, "It's not going to happen to me." Today, let it happen. Today, run from whatever it was to what it can be. Ask the Spirit to fill your heart and run to the cross. Run to Jesus today and the power of the cross.