



Psalm 57: 10  
Create in me a pure heart,  
O God, and renew a  
steadfast spirit within me.

*Velvet Crazy Quilt hand made by Pearl Smyer, the writer's mother*

**Purity of Heart**



**Dear Opal,**

**One spring morning driving through the Somerset Hills in route to visit an account in Basking Ridge, New Jersey, there was such an effluence of rebirth being proclaimed by the surrounding woods that it was obvious the sap had begun to stir, so much that it was detectable for a mile away. Each tree dressed in spring green foliage had appeared to put out feelers by which the senses would be certain to apprehend the news that winter had finally relaxed making way for spring.**

**Furthermore, if per chance all those entering the beautiful little village of Basking Ridge that had been settled since 1720 still did not comprehend the message of the countryside upon approach, trees covered in an array of breathtaking pastel spring blossoms that literally dripped with their sweet perfumed fragrance abounded from the yards and along streets dramatically waiting to proclaim a cheerful warm welcome to both friends and strangers alike.**

**Thus, pausing for several minutes allowing the senses to be bathed in the elegant allure that created a spa treatment only nature could provide, the tower bells from a local church suddenly chimed in with voiceless words so magnificent that their accompanying sounds served as a perfect companion for offering joy and calm to the souls of all that would pause and listen.**

**Opal, thinking it could not get any better than this and deeply engrossed in the present, no one could have been prepared for what transpired next. Suddenly from a distance, without fanfare, the clearest achingly pure soprano operatic voice suddenly broke forth singing the words to "Ava Maria"; strains that sounded so inspiring and emotional that only an unencumbered child of God possessing a pure heart could have sung with such matchless sound. Drawn to the sweet unaffected optimistic notes that seemed to be approaching from afar, without reservation, I quickly exited my vehicle filled with an intense desire to absorb more.**

**Therefore, standing outside my car in a state of mesmerized euphoria, the soloist suddenly came into view appearing to be unaffected or unconcerned by his surroundings and was looking skyward while holding his arms wide open toward God. He was simply singing because, like the birds, he had a song to sing on this beautiful spring morning in Basking Ridge, New Jersey.**

With tears streaming down my cheeks brought on by the preciousness of the moment, all I knew was that I appreciated the gift that God had bestowed on this middle-aged man that appeared to be special in every way.

Obviously, from taking in the reactions by individuals that passed him by wearing smiles of enjoyment acceptance and gentleness, one could easily surmise that what I was being honored to witness was a common occurrence as well as one they greatly valued. They did not view him as less than or strange but accepted him as one of God's precious children.

Interestingly, it was while conducting business with an account that I learned that he was her son; a special child that had been born who would need care all his life, yet loved by everyone and that the behavior he had just displayed was an everyday occurrence. In the course of our conversation, she expressed her concern over finding a suitable loving place for him to continue his life after her time on earth was finished.

Then, several years later, I learned that God had blessed her with locating a perfect home for him just one day before she journeyed to her celestial home.

Thinking back on this spring morning, it was obvious that abundant blessings provided by the Creator had touched the souls of Basking Ridge inhabitants who wrapped their arms around an individual that joyfully sang year after year as he walked around this quaint little village; all because these residents loved, showed grace, embraced and appreciated him as a child of God in every way. Thanks be to our Lord for people such as this who provided a valuable lesson to me on that spectacular day in those Somerset Hills of New Jersey that were alive with the sound of music and purity of heart.

Opal, given this recollection of such a memorable moment that still lives within my soul as a balm during troubled times, it is imperative to focus on how Scripture defines purity of heart; a process that required using numerous resources in order to get it exactly right. One would never imagine that such a simple straight forward Scripture used in the picture above could present such a difficult task. Certainly, looking at the list of synonyms offered for the word pure, listed as: unmixed, unadulterated, unalloyed, uncontaminated, untainted, unstained, undefiled, untarnished, immaculate, unpolluted, uncorrupted, modest virtuous,

and undefiled, there is not a human being in the past present or future that qualifies. I certainly don't meet the mark, do you?

However, continuing the exploration as to why we would be directed by Scripture to ask God to create one in us, the following commentary from Timothy Keller's book, "The Songs of Jesus" supplied an explanation that is noteworthy.



### **Psalm 51: 17**

**My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.**

Resting on the above Scripture from Psalm 51: 17, Keller used the following subtitle, "The Eloquence of Brokenness", that captured my attention, especially since he described brokenness as being eloquent.

However, the body of his commentary made it understandable and extremely poignant in a way that I had never heard before with the following words:

***"What is the broken and contrite heart God wants so much? It is a heart that knows how little it deserves yet how much it has received. To know only the first truth is to be self-loathing, to know only the second is to be self-satisfied---and both kinds of hearts will be self-absorbed. David is talking instead about hearts broken by costly, free grace---knowing both how lost and how loved we are. This gets us out of ourselves, freeing us from the need to be constantly looking at ourselves. When our lips are opened, we do not speak of ourselves but of God's praise."***

Opal, as I let the deep meaning of Keller's words sink into my entire being, an additional thought that came immediately to the forefront was from the same Scripture in Psalm 51: 11-13 that was a plea to God that read:

***"Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant***



***me a willing spirit to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways so that sinners will turn back to you.”***

Unfortunately, for our Lord to be able to honor this request, there are steps that need to be taken by man so that God can be given an opportunity to begin his work in our heart; that being to jealously guard our time alone with him; meaning to not only religiously set aside a time and place to meet with him, but clear the mind of the world’s noise and chaos so that his still small voice can be heard.

Thus, in so doing, when deciphering the sources attributing to the mind’s chaos, we must also remember that noisemakers can be defined as deafening silence, loneliness, fear, and worry; all of which need to be addressed. Otherwise, our cries for him to renew a steadfast spirit are not obtainable.

Then, in times of despair, rather than accusing God of not caring or hearing our cries, instead of thinking he has abandoned us, we will realize it is just the opposite; meaning we have strayed from him by not doing our part in the relationship.

In closing, the fact remains, if we desire the Lord to hold our hand and renew a steadfast spirit within us, then we must meet him half way. Building a relationship with another is a two-way proposition.

Certainly, in today’s world that has become filled with individuals that consistently tell untruths, show a lack of compassion toward others, and place no value on human life in order to obtain financial gain and power, it is easy to allow fear and dread to become constant companions in our thinking rather than faith that God is in charge.

So, rather than insulting God our Father who loves us so much that he sent his Son to die on the cross for our sin, let us follow the example of the man from Basking Ridge and sing for the glory of God with such unspeakable joy that our minds are open for receiving his daily manna from heaven. Then and only then will we have ***“a heart that knows how little it deserves yet how much it has received.”***



As the ending to our time together today, please note the joy and grace that Barney Elliot Warren intended as he penned the lyrics to this beautiful hymn titled "Joy Unspeakable". As I sang this old song this morning, I could hear clearly the saints that used to fill the pews of the little country church my dad pastored lifting their voices in praise. Their faces would glow with such radiance that all present could not help but be swept up in their love for our Savior.

### **JOY UNSPEAKABLE**



**1 I have found His grace is all complete,  
He supplieth every need;  
While I sit and learn at Jesus' feet,  
I am free, yes, free indeed.**



**Refrain:**

**It is joy unspeakable and full of glory,  
Full of glory, full of glory;  
It is joy unspeakable and full of glory,  
Oh, the half has never yet been told.**

**2 I have found the pleasure I once craved,  
It is joy and peace within;  
What a wondrous blessing, I am saved  
From the awful gulf of sin. [Refrain]**

**3 I have found that hope so bright and clear,  
Living in the realm of grace;  
Oh, the Savior's presence is so near,  
I can see His smiling face. [Refrain]**

**4 I have found the joy no tongue can tell,  
How its waves of glory roll;  
It is like a great o'erflowing well,  
Springing up within my soul. [Refrain]**

**Select Hymns, 1911 (Timeless Truths)**



*Love,  
Colene*