

Revive our Hearts
Give us a revived heart
Isaiah 57:15
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Over the last few years my laptop has been slowing down - every time I turn it on, it grinds away for 5 minutes before the password screen comes up!

Matters came to a crunch a few weeks ago: the laptop wouldn't load programs, the disk drive was whirring away in the background and so on.

But just when this crisis took place, my antivirus provider happened to send me an offer— a free 60 day Tune-Up! I took up the offer, tuned it up and the laptop has run much smoother and faster since!

Here's the funny thing, if this has ever happened to you, it's so easy to get used to a sluggish computer, to put up with the daily inconvenience —because it happens so gradually.

When I read up on it, I discovered that there are *many* reasons a computer slows down: running out of memory or being infected by a virus, are just two.

I could not help seeing in *these silicon woes* a parable for our times about *our own human hearts!*

First, there *many reasons* our hearts can become spiritually slow and lethargic:

A lack of corporate worship is one. The psalmist of Psalm 42 is downcast because he is separated from the fellowship and singing of God's people

"These things I remember as I pour out my soul; how I used to go with the multitude leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng." (Psalm 42:4)

Our hearts need to sing with other believers, to pray and to hear God's word all together.

Busyness is another reason our spiritual laptops slow down. Too busy to pray, too busy too read the Scriptures, too busy for fellowship, too busy for worship.

Unrepentant sin drains spiritual energy from the heart like the heat of summer drains away our physical strength, says Psalm 32, saps away our physical strength— and haven't we experienced that this week!

Bitterness towards someone else— or even towards God—poisons the heart

Self-centredness is dangerous to a heart that has been created by God to love others.

*Oh, I could go through life's troubles singing
Turning earth's night to day
If self were not so fast around me, clinging
To all I do or say*

Crushed by the weight of life's woes. Our hearts can become crushed by the weight of life's woes and troubles! Just as there are many reasons a laptop slows down, so there are many reasons our hearts can become spiritually dull.

(2) And just as it is easy to acclimatise to a sluggish laptop, it's *easy to get used to the ailments* of the heart, to overlook them, to do nothing about them (it's a dangerous strategy for the laptop will crash one day, but it is all too common for Christian folks to neglect problems of the heart)

(3) But here, the most marvellous parallel to our silicon valley tale: the *Lord offers to all his children a heavenly Tune-Up*. Here it is in Isaiah 57:15,

"For this is what the high and exalted One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isaiah 57:15)

Isiah 57:15, is one of Bibles go-to verses when our hearts need tuning up. Let's spend a few moments setting the scene and then outline God's medicine for needy hearts

The background to the Remedy

The original problem these words in Isaiah were written to cure was a heart burdened by the woes of life.

*And you/ye, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
and hear the angels sing!*

That's exactly how the people Isiah spoke to felt! Isaiah was speaking to Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel at a momentous time in their story, when three crushing burdens weighed upon their shoulders:

(1) *The destruction of the northern kingdom, Israel*. The northern kingdom had been overrun by the Assyrians and taken off into exile. How could God's special people be attacked and displaced like that? It was a 9/11 moment.

(2) *Judah now had enemies on their northern border*. Second, the destruction of Israel put ruthless enemies on Judah's northern border.

(3) *Isaiah predicted Judah would also go into exile because of her sin!* Thirdly, Isaiah was predicting that because of wickedness in the nation of Judah, she too would go into exile! The godly remnant in the nation would suffer because of the wicked majority!

The hearts of God's people were filled with fear and uncertainty and *anxiety under life's crushing load*, but God, through the prophet Isiah, brought them this message of bright hope:

"For this is what the high and exalted One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isaiah 57:15)

And this message of hope is written for every heart *"beneath life's crushing load"* today.

God's medicine for a burdened heart

So burdened hearts are you listening?! Here is God's prescription for a burdened heart:

1. God *promises* to revive your soul
2. God reminds you *who is making this promise*
3. God issues only one condition—humility

(1) God promises to revive your soul

"For this is what the high and exalted One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isa57:15)

That Hebrew word "revive" means to *keep alive* that which seems to be weak and dying, or to *bring back to life* that which seems to have died. This is God's promise to every burdened heart: "I *will* keep you alive, I *will not allow* you to die!"

What a wonderful promise! And so in keeping with the gentle concern the Lord has towards all those who are broken hearted:

"A bruised reed he will not break and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out." (Isiah 42:3)

"The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18)

"He is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy" (Jude 1:24)

Crushed hearts are you listening? God makes a promise to you: I will not let you die, I will revive you! Take the medicine: Believe the promise! Hold on to the promise! Pray the promise!

And *since* troubled hearts are often deafened by life's load, God says it twice, "I will revive your spirit" "I will revive your heart".

And *since* burdened hearts often think of themselves as poor believers whom the Lord would not be much concerned about, the Lord says,

"I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite (or in the Hebrew crushed) and lowly in spirit."

Where does God choose to live on earth? We know he lives in the high and holy heavens, but what is his favourite place on earth? Not with kings and princes, but with those who are crushed by life's load!

"The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34: 18)

Isn't it wonderful that God feels most at home, most comfortable, with the broken-hearted! *"My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant... he has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble."*

The first truth a burdened soul needs to hear is that God promises to revive you, to keep you alive, to keep you going! You will not fall!

(2) God reminds you who is making this promise

I don't use paper money much these days, but on each plastic note are the words, "I promise to pay the bearer..." A promise is only as good as the one making it, right? If the one who makes the promise is fickle, unreliable, unfaithful, well, the promise is worthless. But if the one who promises is mighty, faithful, reliable, then the promise is secure.

The promise on this note is secure, *the paper is worth £5* because behind it is the reliable Bank of England.

Who's behind the promise to revive burdened hearts? *"For this is what the high and exalted One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place..."*

The God who makes this reviving promise is not a fickle human being but

- ...the one who is *High and exalted One*
- ...the one who *lives forever* (literally *the one who inhabits eternity*: who rises above the fickle changefulness of time and lives in the past and the present and the future
- ...the one *whose name is holy*, the root idea behind the word holy is "separate", God is separate from sinners, he does not lie, he does not change his mind, he does not make promises he will not keep.

This is the Power behind the Promise! And it's the second truth every "weak and heavy laden" soul needs to hear!

Elders can't revive your heart, your Christian friends can't revive your heart, but ...

"God the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no-one has seen or can see. To whom be honour and might forever" well, he can!

(1 Timothy 6:15-16)

"Lord please give to burdened hearts a greater vision of your greatness and power!"

Summary

1. Burdened souls *God promises* to keep you alive
2. Burdened souls, the God who makes this promise is the *high and exalted one* who inhabits eternity, and whose name is holy
3. And finally, burdened souls, *God issues only one condition* for a renewed heart, and that is humility, contriteness, lowliness

(3) God issues only one condition—humility

"For this is what the high and exalted One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isaiah 57:15)

In among all the original Hebrew words translated lowly and contrite and humble are the words "dust," and "crushed" The only condition for receiving and enjoying the divine medicine of a renewed heart is *humility*.

Perhaps that's where you are at this very moment!

Crushed, down in the dust! Good news! You don't have to do anything then, just believe the promise, claim the promise, ask God to revive your heart, according to his promise: "Revive us, and we will call upon Your name" (Psalm 80:18) "revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You (Psalm 85:8)

Perhaps you need to humble yourself

Perhaps you know your heart needs restoring, but you don't meet this condition, you don't have a humble and lowly and contrite heart!

You lack the key that unlocks not only the blessing of renewal but in fact unlocks every spiritual blessing!

What must you do?

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." (1 Peter 5:6) In the OT they humbled themselves by fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting uncomfortable ashes on their skin! To bring themselves down!

If the proud sincerely humble themselves under God's mighty hand, says Peter, and confess, "Lord I am needy Lord I am weak, Lord I am helpless" he will lift them up.

Summary

To all those whose hearts are crushed beneath life's heavy load:

1. God *promises* to revive your soul
2. God reminds you *who is making this promise*
3. God issues only one condition—humility

Conclusion

The heart-healing God of Isaiah 57 is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Physician, so let us close singing his praises in response to his Word:

*1 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
in a believer's ear!
It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds,
and drives away our fear.*

*2 It makes the wounded spirit whole
and calms the troubled breast;
'tis manna to the hungry soul,
and to the weary, rest.*