

A CHANGE¹ OF HEART

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I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you.

—Ezekiel 36:26

I'm told on good authority that my baby sister, Jane, and I were first-class brats. We're only fifteen months apart in age. As young children growing up in Roanoke, Virginia, we found it only natural to connive and scheme together in our ongoing search for mischief. With typical motherly love, Mama told us in later years that she couldn't remember how naughty we had been. But a number of witnesses have been more than glad to share their memories with us. We were two ornery girls!

Some Sunday evenings when Daddy and Mama were too sick to attend service, Jane and I enjoyed walking a few blocks to Uncle Lewis's and Aunt Hallie's little Fallon Park Wesleyan Church. Because of our mischievous reputations, we were surprised that they asked us to sing on some of those occasions. Sometimes we got tickled and couldn't finish our "special music" selections. Yet they continued to ask us to sing! I guess it was the "cute little kids" factor at work.

Daddy, Mama, and our older sister, Bobbi, gave their hearts to the Lord a couple of years before I was born. Thus, Jane and I experienced a Christian home and family our entire growing-up years. We were truly blessed.

In the fall of 1951, Mama became critically ill with severe anemia and was hospitalized for almost two weeks. She received several blood transfusions, and when she came home she had lost a lot of weight and was very pale and weak.

Daddy had tried to keep up with his job working for the railroad as a night watchman. Then, a few weeks after Mama came home,

Daddy suffered a heart attack. Suddenly our days and nights were filled with uncertainty. Life became very serious. Bobbi was married with four small children of her own, so I was suddenly in charge—a huge challenge for a third-grader.

I learned to cook. I should rather say I learned to open cans and heat the contents in a pot. I did learn to peel potatoes and usually got them to the table without ruining them. We were so blessed when First Church of the Nazarene, our home church, had a “pounding” for our family and brought over bags of food. I remember how excited Jane and I were as we opened each bag. It was like Christmas in October!

Mama and Daddy were both very weak, and Daddy’s doctor told him his prognosis was not good. His heart, weakened from years of smoking prior to becoming a Christian, had been severely damaged. The future for our family seemed grim. *What were we going to do?*

Then something very extraordinary happened. Our pastor, C. William Ellwanger, came calling. Jane and I brought him cookies and a glass of iced tea, which he bravely ate and drank. He sat in our living room and encouraged all four of us and read some scripture.

Then he said, “Brother and Sister Bain, do you believe the Lord can touch both of you?” Mama nodded, and Daddy said, “Oh, I know He’s a great miracle-worker. Yes, I believe He can!”

Then Pastor Ellwanger had us gather ‘round. He laid his hands on Daddy’s shoulders and prayed for him, asking for the Great Physician’s touch. Daddy told us later that he felt a sensation like a tiny bolt of lightning tingle through his body. Suddenly he felt much stronger. Then our pastor put his hand on Mama’s shoulder and prayed for her. We felt such a sense of God’s presence in that room. Daddy and Mama wiped their tears as they walked our pastor to the door.

Daddy went for a follow-up visit the next day. The doctor pulled out his stethoscope and moved it around, listening intently. Then he listened to Daddy’s back. Puzzled, he said, “I don’t understand this. Your heartbeat is good, and the rhythm is normal.” Once again, tears filled Daddy’s eyes as he shared what had happened with our

crusty old family physician. The doctor sat there amazed. Then he exclaimed, “I believe we have a miracle! Your heart was severely damaged. Now it is sounds quite normal.”

As Daddy slipped on his shirt and headed out the door, he whispered over and over, “Praise the Lord!” And we rejoiced together around the dinner table that evening as we ate Mama’s good home cooking once again.

That fall of 1951 changed our family—especially Jane and me. We were no longer the “mischievous Bain girls.” Oh, we weren’t perfect, but it’s true that no one is ever quite the same after witnessing the touch of the Great Physician.

The next time we sang in church, Jane and I didn’t get the giggles. We held hands, joyfully singing our thanksgiving. We had reason to praise the Lord!

Daddy’s heart wasn’t the only one that had been changed.

PRAYER: *Father, thank you for giving me a change of heart.*

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: It is the heart that experiences God (Blaise Pascal).