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A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

More and more these days I am encountering an air of hope and expectancy here in Shreveport and Bossier. I am asked by all sorts of folks at the various organizations which I address one question which reveals this growing sense of confidence that something can be done to stop the decay and to transform our circumstances.

“Do you really think Shreveport and Bossier can change?” I am asked. “Yes, I believe it with all of my heart.” I answer. And then comes the question which I expect. I have watched the people as they have watched me. They have looked intently at my face and manner while I spoke of the strategies of Shreveport Community Renewal to their group. They searched me with eyes wanting to believe that we have a chance to win for our children and for our children’s children. And so they ask the question I expect.

“Do you really think that you are going to change Shreveport and Bossier?” And I want to share with each of you reading these words my answer. I want to share it with you because I want you to know that it is the most deeply held conviction of my life. It is the conviction which awakens me every single morning with renewed eagerness to be about the mission. It is the conviction which takes me through each day’s own set of challenges as we work together to rebuild the caring connectedness so critical to stem the tide of societal decay. And it is this central conviction which enables me to ease into the night’s rest with the trust that forces are gathering which will break the bondage of fear for our cities.

“Do you really think that you are going to change Shreveport and Bossier?” My answer is, “No, I am sure that I can’t. Because I can’t even change me. But, I am certain that the love of God can! And I am sure that the love of God will change us, as we become willing partners in loving one another.” Now I want you to know that I believe this with all of my heart. It is the central conviction of my life. All that I am and all that I do seeks to circulate around this central core truth.

You and I know that a conviction is a deeply held belief which motivates action and critically judges the data of life in its own light for the people who are anchored by its weight. A central conviction arrives at its exalted position in a person’s life gradually. The slower it marches into the throne room of a person’s conscious assent the more powerful it becomes. Mastering convictions were first entertained as party guests to be played with. Then they come as overnight visitors. Then we invited them to stay awhile as house guests. And finally we turn over our whole residence to them to be the overseers and keepers of the ground of our being. Deep convictions take years to arrive. But when they do arrive, they find a yielded will ready for use in the service of the conviction’s thrust of truth.

I am certain that the love of God can change all of us here in Shreveport and Bossier. And I am sure that the love of God will change us, as we become willing partners in loving one another. This is the central conviction of my life. It took a long time for this conviction to move from a Sunday school playmate to the mastering and controlling truth of my whole existence. This belief is nothing more than a window revealing the Presence of the One

who made us and who loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love. And it took years to take me.

My conviction about the transforming and winning power of God's love is chiseled so deeply into my consciousness that nothing will scrape it away in this life. In the formative years of awakening intellect, I ridiculed this unwanted visitor. I studied philosophy to rid the universe of reality from its Creator and I thought I had succeeded. But the conviction only moved deeper into me after waiting in the foyer while I played the mind games of a stupid arrogance which assumed that our poor brains were the last word in intelligence in this huge scheme. I can love any atheist because I was one. Then, in Fosdick's words I began to doubt my doubts. And I found a universe based on the truth that it was "irreducibly complex" as only a Designer could make it.

I am certain that God's love will win because I know what it is like to rebel against it. I have had so many up hills and downs. I have had so many wash outs in the Spring. I have had so many dark nights of the soul that I found myself lashing out at the conviction which had entered my house and which I could not drive away. There is such truth to C.S. Lewis' autobiography of the relentlessly seeking love of God checking him in every move he made, checking him, checking him, until Lewis acknowledged "Checkmate!" And he knelt down in his study at Magdaline College in Oxford and yielded to the inexorable and inexpressible love of God. Then he stood up, changed forever. I must show any rebel mercy because I have been given mercy and forgiveness from all of those whom I have wounded so deeply in my self centered uprisings.

I am sure that God's love will change Shreveport and Bossier because I have experienced the incredible power of that love in friends and friendships which have changed me. We cannot create power, we as human beings can only appropriate the power that has been created from the foundations of the universe. The simple logical syllogism teaches us this truth; "Two things equal to the same thing are equal to each other." God is Power. God is Love. Therefore, Love is Power. Only love can change a person into a loving person. This is something that we who have been born self-seeking and addictively self centered cannot do for ourselves. And only loving people can be used to change Shreveport and Bossier.

We have a strategy which we are following so that we can appropriate the love of God and partner in that power by application day by day here in Shreveport and Bossier. I know this will work!

It is the deepest conviction of my life. And this conviction is backed by the entire collateral of the universe: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." (I. Corinthians 13: 4-8)

Is this your deepest conviction? If it is, come join us in the adventure of seeing it through. If it is not, then come join with us at SCR and you will have the wonderful surprise which you have only dared to hope for: the absolute triumph of God's love on earth as it is in Heaven.

