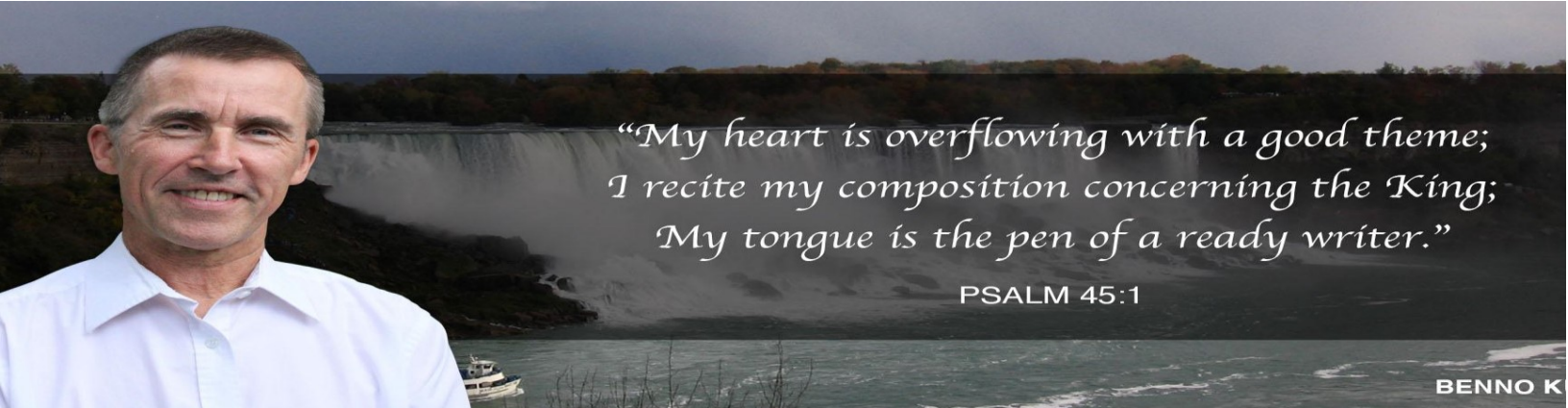


NEWSLETTER #3

November 26, 2020

“Reading stimulates the mind and writing clarifies thought.”
(Andrew Le Peau)



*“My heart is overflowing with a good theme;
I recite my composition concerning the King;
My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.”*

PSALM 45:1

BENNO K

Reading and Bleeding

It's been a while since I last thrust a newsletter upon you. I speak as if it were the compost bucket placed delicately by the door and you dare to wonder what it's there for. Okay, I have my fears like all of us; and I fear writing when I have nothing new to say. Hence, my sporadic newsletters.

But please indulge me today, for I wish to commend to you the benefits of the ancient practice of bloodletting. I've recently experienced it firsthand.

You've heard it said, "It's not personal, it's business." But when you've poured your soul into writing a story, it is personal. It's you. You bring all your life's experience and knowledge and emotions into it. How do you separate your work from your person?

Just this week, I finished reading yet another good book on the craft of writing. It was Andrew Le Peau's *Write Better*. In it, he states:

Blessed are the wounds of a friend – prior to publication. How much better to get criticism from one in private than from a thousand in public!

It was time for me to lay my fiction manuscript on the operating table of a professional editor and let him cut it open and pronounce his diagnosis. Well, I bled. And bled. And bled.

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I did what Le Peau recommended, even before I read his recommendation: “we tend to protect, guard, defend what we’ve written or maybe just keep it under wraps indefinitely. At some point, however, we must separate ourselves from what we have created.”

But he knows, I’m sure from his own personal experience, that “when our writing is criticized, do we not hurt? When it is cut, do we not bleed?” We do. And oh, how we bleed!

Reading my editor’s comments on my work, with all his *professional* candidness, I felt like my heart was cut out, thrown onto the butcher’s table, and diced into a thousand little pieces. And then I read Le Peau’s understated advice: “not taking criticism personally is one of the hardest parts of writing.” Ya think!?

But after I somehow survived the experience --- I kind of dreaded that online meeting with him on Tuesday to discuss the diagnosis --- here I am. The meeting actually went well. I’m still alive. And better for it.

They say that ancient bloodletting was meant to accomplish several things for the patient, depending upon which culture you belonged to. Some said that patients were bled to release demons and bad energy. Okay, I can see that. I feel somewhat exorcised now. Others said they were bled to restore the body’s balance of fluids, which maybe included the idea of reducing inflammation. Okay, maybe I had some swelling of the brain and now the pressure’s been released. I do feel better. Thank you.

So, where am I now? I’m in that recovery phase. I’m reassessing where I go from here now that the operation is over. Le Peau quotes Al Hsu: “authors may need to readjust their expectations and discern whether they are truly called to a particular writing ministry.” For me, that consideration has to do with fiction. I may or may not have what it takes. I’ve discovered, if nothing else, that fiction writing is a considerably different animal from non-fiction. But either way, all is not lost. A greater self-awareness is always a good thing. And some skills obtained in one area (fiction) are transferable to others (non-fiction).

Thank you for listening. May you have a bleeding good day.