

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

March/April 1999

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A Holy Aloneness

When God had completed the prodigious labor of the creation of the heavens and the earth, He saw that something was lacking: there was no one to work the ground. So He formed a man. The method is surprising—this creature, made in the image of God, was made out of *dust*, and into his nostrils God breathed the breath of life. This living being was placed in a beautiful garden with a river to water it, and gold, aromatic resin, and onyx to enrich it. He put the man there to work the garden and take care of it. I wonder, as Adam went about his task, how conscious he was of the presence of God. Did he walk and talk with Him (in what language?), commune silently or aloud, listen to His voice? Was he aware at all that anything was lacking? God was aware. “It is not good for the man to be alone,” said God, “I will make a helper suitable for him.” Eve was created, God’s gift to allay Adam’s loneliness. But when he capitulated to her ungodly counsel sin was born.

The world is full of noise. It is “too much with us,” as Wordsworth said. “Late and soon, getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.” Might we not learn, perhaps during this Easter season, silence, stillness, solitude? It will not be easy to come by. It must be arranged. The Lord Jesus, available to people much of the time, left them, sometimes a great while before day, to go up to the hills where He could commune in solitude with His Father. Job, enduring his friends’ tiresome lectures and accusations, was very much alone on his ash heap, but it was there that he came to know God as never before. When God called Paul to preach the gospel he did not consult anyone. He went into Arabia. The old apostle John when exiled to Patmos must surely have known a *holy aloneness* through which he received the book of Revelation.

Someone may complain that he has no one to talk to. Then thank God! Talk to Him. When my husband Jim Elliot died in Ecuador I was blessed to have my ten-month-old baby and many dear Quichua friends, but we lived deep in the jungle and I longed at times for in-depth conversation in my own language. The Quichuas were very solicitous—they had loved Jim as their pastor, teacher, and friend. All of us were bereaved, but it was my job to be cheerful and to try to strengthen and encourage the Indians, who had very little Scripture as yet in their language and were accustomed to heathen howling when someone died.

We can always talk to God, remembering that God has called us into fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:9). Do we consciously arrange time to receive His fellowship? When is the last time we offered Him ours? It is a strong temptation to run to the phone when we need advice or help of any kind, forgetting to seek *first* the living Word of God, whose ear is always open to our cry. Try the simple reminder of 2 Peter 2:9, “The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials,” or Psalm 57:1, “Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.”

Be patient. Is God not fast enough? Are His answers too tough? A quick sympathy from a friend may suggest that you simply drop out, be good to yourself, get away from it all. Someone else will be sure to say, “You need counsel.” Are you sure? One hour at the foot of the Cross may obviate the necessity of professional counseling (no such thing existed until the twentieth century—what did folks do before then?). When Christian, in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, reached the hill of Calvary, “his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble; and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the Sepulchre,

Speak, Lord, In Stillness

QUIETUDE. 6.5.6.5. H. Green.

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| <p>1. Speak, Lord, in the stillness,
While I wait on Thee;
Hush'd my heart to listen,
In expectancy.</p> | <p>3. For the words Thou speakest,
They are life indeed;
Living bread from heaven,
Now my spirit feed!</p> | <p>5. Speak, Thy servant heareth,
Be not silent, Lord;
Waits my soul upon Thee
For the quickening word.</p> | <p>7. Like a watered garden,
Full of fragrance rare,
Lingering in Thy presence,
Let my life appear.</p> |
| <p>2. Speak, O blessed Master,
In this quiet hour;
Let me see Thy face, Lord,
Feel Thy touch of power.</p> | <p>4. All to Thee is yielded,
I am not my own;
Blissful, glad surrender,
I am Thine alone.</p> | <p>6. Fill me with the knowledge
Of Thy glorious will;
All Thine own good pleasure
In Thy child fulfill.</p> | <p><i>E. M. Grimes</i></p> |

where it fell in.” The Bible teaches us that there is a Wonderful Counselor. Let your loneliness be transformed into a holy aloneness. Sit still before the Lord. Remember Naomi’s word to Ruth: “Sit still, my daughter, until you see how the matter will fall.”

Miguel de Molinos (1640-97) wrote, “In time of trouble go not out of yourself to seek for aid; for the whole benefit of trial consists in silence, patience, rest, and resignation. In this condition divine strength is found for the hard warfare, because God Himself fights for the soul.”

The Cross of Christ

“Christ touches us more nearly and deeply than our pain does, or our guilt. What in us harrows the heart, in Him ‘harrowed hell.’ ... He revolutionizes the eternal foundations of our moral world. But it means also that He came from a region in the moral reality of God deeper than sin or grief could shake. It signifies the very heart and Godhead of

God, the holy reality of God, an eternal act of the whole God, one drawing on the whole Trinity, therefore a final act in the heavenliest places in Christ. In being ‘made sin,’ treated as sin (though not as a sinner), Christ experienced sin as God does, while he experienced its effects as man does.”

P.T. Forsyth, *The Cruciality of the Cross*

Unconditional Self-Abandonment

The glory of the Resurrection followed the shame of the Crucifixion. Christ abandoned Himself, became subject to death, went to Gehenna, for love of us. Therefore He was raised in power, death could not hold Him, and He opened Paradise for us.

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We can enter only as He entered—the road to glory is always the road of self-abandonment. When we see this as a mere theory we have not yet understood. It is in the opportunities of every day, with real people (i.e., real sinners), that we (sinners too) are called to His companionship: Give up your rights, abandon yourself, follow Me—follow Me to the place where death cannot possibly hold you, where animosities and offenses are vanquished, and Life springs victorious.

What do we long for above all else? Is it not *Life*? Jesus came so that we could have it—but the only life He can give us is Resurrection Life. That kind comes as the result of a glad surrender.

The Comforter, the Holy Spirit

“In all places and at all times, we can have that familiar friendship, we can have Him with us; and there may be through the day a constant interchange of private words, of little offerings, too small to have any name attached to them—by which the bonds of that familiar friendship grow closer and more real, until it comes to that special personal intimacy which we call sanctity.”

Janet Erskine Stuart (1857-1914)

Sonnet on Prayer

Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make;
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take;
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!
We kneel—when all around us seems to lower;
We rise—and all, the distant and the near
Stands forth in sunny outline brave and clear;
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others, that we are not always strong;
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious and troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?

Richard Chevenix Trench (1807-86)

What God Asks of Us

“Holiness consists in one thing alone, namely, fidelity to God’s plan. This fidelity is equally within everyone’s capacity in both its active and passive practice.

“The active practice consists in accomplishing the duties imposed upon us by the general laws of God and the Church, and by the particular state of life which we have embraced. Passive fidelity consists in the loving acceptance of all that God sends us at every moment. Which of these two requirements of holiness is beyond our strength? ... This is all that God demands of the soul in the work of its sanctification. He demands it from the high and the low, from the strong and the weak; in a word, from all, always and everywhere....

“The passive part of holiness is even more easy, for it consists merely in accepting what most frequently cannot be avoided, and in suffering with love, that is to say with resignation and sweetness, what is too often endured with weariness and discontent.

“Perfection does not consist in understanding God’s designs but in submitting to them.... They are God working in the soul to make it like Himself.... The whole essence of the spiritual life consists in recognizing the designs of God for us at the present moment.”

Jean-Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751)

Another Widow

In the January/February issue Marj Saint Van Der Puy and Olive Fleming Liefeld, two whose husbands were killed by Aucas in 1956, wrote of their present circumstances. Marilou McCully, whose husband Ed was also killed, lives in Bonney Lake, Washington. She writes:

“To answer the questions concerning my sons: I have three sons and none of them has ever expressed any difficulty in accepting their father’s death as God’s will and plan—for Ed, and for us as his family. They all feel proud to be Ed’s sons. None of them have gone to the mission field but all three have many opportunities in their jobs

and churches to serve the Lord.

“For my part, after forty-three years, I have to say that God’s leading and care for me has far surpassed my expectations. Through the years He has opened doors and led me in ways I could never have anticipated. The opportunity to return to Ecuador and manage a children’s home was the first evidence of exceptional provision. I was able to spend the first six years as a single mother running a home for my three boys along with a number of other missionary children. It was a good and happy experience for all of us. After all three boys were in school, God led me here—to be close to family and a caring fellowship of Christians and a good job. In the fall of 1995 I retired and moved into an apartment in the home of my son Steve and his wife Ellie. It has been a very enjoyable time for me, and I thank the Lord for it. I can say with the hymn writer, ‘*All I have needed (and so much more) Thy hand hath provided. Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*’”

Prayer

Almighty God, we bless and praise Thee that we have wakened to the light of another earthly day; and now we will think of what a day should be. Our days are Thine, let them be spent for Thee. Our days are few, let them be spent with care. There are dark days behind us, forgive their sinfulness; there may be dark days before us, strengthen us for their trials. We pray Thee to shine on this day—the day which we may call our own. Lord, we go to our daily work; help us to take pleasure therein. Show us clearly what our

Travel Schedule March–May 1999

March 19, 20 Snellville, Ga., First Baptist women’s ministry, (770)978-5754.

April 4 EASTER.

April 24 New York City, Redeemer Church retreat, Dawn Owens, (212)353-7887.

April 29, 30 Columbus, Ga., Columbus Convention and Trade Center, (706)327-2971.

May 1 Auburn, Ala., Lakeview Baptist Church college and young adults, (334)887-7094.

May 3 Greenville, S.C., Edwards Road Baptist Church, (864)244-2975.

May 14, 15 Mountlake Terrace, Wash., Calvary Fellowship, (425)775-1509, or Cathy Taylor, (206)368-0960.

May 25 Flagstaff, Ariz., School of Tomorrow, David Logan, (927)315-1776, ext. 344.

duty is; help us to be faithful in doing it. Let all we do be well done, fit for Thine eye to see. Give us strength to do, patience to bear; let our courage never fail. When we cannot love our work, let us think of it as Thy task; and, by our true love to Thee, make unlovely things shine in the light of Thy great love. Amen.

George Dawson (1821-76)

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