

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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Response Is What Matters

What do we really want in life? I am surprised at how few of us have a ready answer. Oh, we can come up with quite a long list of things, but is there one thing above all others that we desire? "One thing I have desired of the Lord," said David, "that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life..." (Psalm 27:4, NKJV). To the rich young man who wanted eternal life Jesus said, "One thing you lack. Go, sell everything" (Mark 10:21, NIV). In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus tells us that the seed that is choked by thorns has fallen into a heart full of the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things. The apostle Paul said, "One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14, NIV).

A quiet heart is content with what God gives. It is enough. All is grace. One morning my computer simply would not obey me. What a nuisance. I had my work laid out, my timing figured, my mind all set. My work was delayed, my timing thrown off, my thinking interrupted. Then I remembered. It was not for nothing. This was part of the Plan (not mine, His). "Lord, You have assigned me my portion and my cup."

Now if the interruption had been a human being instead of an infuriating mechanism, it would not have been so hard to see it as the most important part of the work of the day. But *all* is under my Father's control: yes, recalcitrant computers, faulty transmissions, drawbridges that happen to be *up* when I am in a hurry. My portion. My cup. My lot is secure. My heart can be at

peace. My Father is in charge. How simple!

My assignment entails my willing acceptance of my portion in matters far beyond comparison with the trivialities just mentioned, such as the death of a precious baby. A mother wrote to me of losing her son when he was just one month old. A widow wrote of the long agony of watching her husband die. The number of years given them in marriage seemed too few. We can know only that Eternal Love is wiser than we, and we bow in adoration of that loving wisdom.

Response is what matters. Remember that our forefathers all were guided by the pillar of cloud, all passed through the sea, all ate and drank the same spiritual food and drink, but God was not pleased with most of them. Their response was all wrong. Bitter about the portions allotted to them, they indulged in idolatry, gluttony, and sexual sin. And God killed them by snakes and by a destroying angel.

The same almighty God apportioned their experiences. All events serve His will. Some responded in faith. Most did not.

Think of that promise and keep a quiet heart! Our enemy delights in disquieting us. Our Savior and Helper delights in quieting us. "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you" is His promise (Isaiah 66:13, NIV). The choice is ours. It depends on our willingness to see everything in God, receive all from His hand, accept with gratitude just the portion and the cup He offers. Shall I charge Him with a mistake in His measurements or with misjudging the sphere in which I can best learn to trust Him? Has He misplaced me? Is He ignorant of things or people which, in my view, hinder my doing His will?

God came down and lived in this same world as a man. He showed us how to live in this world, subject to its vicissitudes and necessities, that we might be changed, not into angels or storybook princesses, not wafted into another world, but changed into saints in this world. The secret is *Christ in me*, not me in a different set of circumstances.

Peace of Mind

“The basis of all peace of mind, and what must be obtained before we get that peace, is a cessation of the conflict of two wills—His and ours.”

Charles G. Gordon

Nothing Is Lost

A pastor’s wife asked, “When one witnesses a work he has poured his whole life into ‘go up in flames’ (especially if he is not culpable), is it the work of Satan or the hand of God?”

Often it is the former, always it is under the control of the latter. In the biographies of the Bible we find men whose work for God seemed to be a flop at the time—Moses’ repeated efforts to persuade Pharaoh, Jeremiah’s pleas for repentance, the good king Josiah’s reforms, rewarded in the end by his being slain by a pagan king. Sin had plenty to do with the seeming failures, but God was then, as He is now, the “Blessed Controller of All Things” (1 Timothy 6:15, PHILLIPS). He has granted to us human beings responsibility to make choices and to live with the consequences. This means that everybody suffers—sometimes for his own sins, sometimes for those of others.

There are paradoxes here that we cannot plumb. But we can always look at the experiences of our own lives in the light of the life of our Lord Jesus. How shall we learn to “abide” (live our lives) in Christ, enter into the fellowship of His sufferings, let Him transform our own? There is only one way. It is by living each event, including having

things “go up in flames,” as Christ lived: in the peace of the Father’s will. Did His earthly work appear to be a thundering success? He met with argument, unbelief, scorn in Pharisees and others. Crowds followed Him—not because they wanted His truth but because they liked handouts such as bread and fish and physical healing. His own disciples were “fools and slow of heart to believe.” (Why didn’t Jesus *make* them believe? For the reason given above.) These men who had lived intimately with Him, heard His teaching for three years, watched His life and miracles, still had little idea what He was talking about on the evening before His death. Judas betrayed Him. The rest of them went to sleep when He asked them to stay awake. In the end, they all forsook Him and fled. Peter repented with tears and later saw clearly what had taken place. In his sermon to the Jews of Jerusalem (Acts 2:23-24, PHILLIPS), he said, “This man, who was put into your power by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed up and murdered. . . . But God would not allow the bitter pains of death to touch him. He raised him to life again—and indeed there was nothing by which death could hold such a man.”

There is nothing by which death can hold any of His faithful servants, either. Settle it, once for all—**YOU CAN NEVER LOSE WHAT YOU HAVE OFFERED TO CHRIST.** It is the man who tries to save himself (or his reputation or his work or his dreams of success or fulfillment) who loses. Jesus gave us His word that if we’d lose our lives for His sake, we’d find them.

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Laying Down Our Rights

In society today, it's natural for people to demand their rights. But followers of Jesus surrender their rights to Him, enjoying only the privileges He, in loving sovereignty, allows. What are some of the rights Jesus' disciples must surrender?

- the right to take revenge (Romans 12:19-20)
- the right to have a comfortable, secure home (Luke 9:57-58)
- the right to a good reputation (Matthew 5:11)
- the right to spend money however we please (Matthew 6:19-21)
- the right to hate an enemy (Matthew 5:43-47)
- the right to be honored and served (Mark 10:42-47)
- the right to understand God's plan before we obey (Hebrews 11:8)
- the right to live by our own rules (John 14:23-24)
- the right to hold a grudge (Colossians 3:13)
- the right to "fit into" society (Romans 12:2; Galatians 1:10)
- the right to do whatever feels good (Galatians 5:16-17; 1 Peter 4:2)
- the right to complain (Philippians 2:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- the right to put self first (Philippians 2:3-4)
- the right to express one's sexuality freely (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)
- the right to rebel against authority (1 Peter 2:13-15)
- the right to sue another believer (1 Corinthians 6:1-8)
- the right to end a disappointing marriage (Matthew 5:31-32)

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8, NRSV).

"I Am Going to Escort You"

Miss Mabel Shaw, one of the first two women missionaries sent out to Rhodesia by the London Missionary Society in 1915, wrote:

"They told me a lion had been about.... At last I rose to go, and was just about to mount my bicycle when out of one of the little houses came the old leper headman. He held a spear between the stumps that once were hands, and he went hobbling along the path in front of me. I called to him, and he stopped and looked around.

"Where are you going?"

"I am going to escort you to Mbereshi village. You can't go alone with lions about."

"I smiled on him, 'but on my bicycle I'll be there in a minute.'

"He would not have it. It was not fitting for me to go alone. I looked at him, a feeble old man, handless, feet half-eaten, his whole body covered with marks of disease, and his face most pitiful. I said to him, half-banteringly, and with a smile, 'Now what could you do if a lion came?'

"He drew himself up, and with a quiet dignity said, 'Have I not a life to give?' I was silent, seeing a Cross. I followed him to the village, thanked him, and came home, having met with God face-to-face."

(from *God's Candlelight*, 1943,
as quoted by Neal and Carol Brinneman in
Keys of the Kingdom newsletter, March 2001)

Praise and Thankfulness

“Before you go out into the world, wash your face in the clear crystal of praise. Bury each yesterday in the fine linen and spices of thankfulness.”

Charles Spurgeon

Secretary of Thy Praise

Of all the creatures both in sea and land,
Only to man thou hast made known thy ways,
And put the pen alone into his hand,
And made him secretary of thy praise.

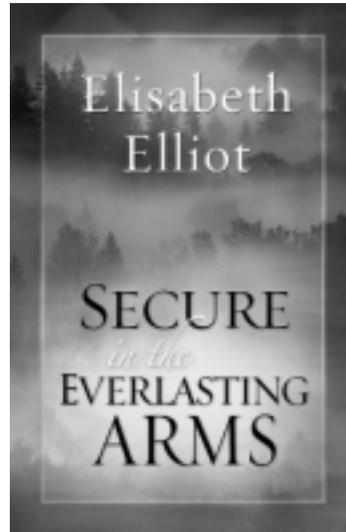
from “Providence,”
George Herbert (1593-1633)

New Book

Many of you have my book *Keep a Quiet Heart*, published in 1995, which is a collection of lead articles from this newsletter. Now it is being joined by a beautiful companion volume called *Secure in the Everlasting Arms*, comprised of newsletter articles that have appeared since 1995.

The little essays are grouped into categories such as “Daily Faith,” “Joy and Sorrow,” “Finding Contentment,” “Do the Next Thing,” “Marriage and Singleness,” and “Missionary Stories.” As you

can tell if you’ve been listening to my radio program or reading my books over the years, these are themes that have come to characterize the message of my life.



Note from Lars: The cover looks nice, and I hope you’ll enjoy the interior even more. *Secure in the Everlasting Arms* is available at your bookstore for \$11.99 (why they don’t make it an even \$12.00, I don’t understand)—or you can order it from me at \$9.00, which will include postage. For

the first two months, I’ll ask Elisabeth to sign each copy of the book. Order from me directly at 10 Strawberry Cove, Magnolia, MA 01930, and make checks payable to Lars Gren.

Women’s Conference

September 27, 28

Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, Alabama.
Call 251-342-3456.

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