

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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Hope as an Anchor

“I *hope* it doesn’t snow tomorrow,” we say, thinking of our plans to visit family or friends. Or, “We’re just *hoping* they finish the road repairs in front of the church before the wedding,” “I sure *hope* Susie calls after her plane lands.”

This kind of hope is wishful thinking, sometimes even foolish optimism, and it is not true hope. We’ve used the word this way so long that we’ve pretty much emptied it of meaning by the time we read Hebrews 6:19, “We have this *hope* as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.”

Is your hope an anchor for your soul? Has your wishful hope been converted at the foot of the cross to true hope? Job’s well-tested hope was enlivened by true faith in God—“Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.” That’s quite a lot different from merely hoping for the most comfortable outcome!

Could it be that our suffering, even that which we bring upon ourselves, provides us with the raw material for true hope? Hosea thought so. Speaking for God, he wrote, “I will make the Valley of Achor [which means “trouble”] a door of hope” (Hosea 2:15). I find it interesting that Achor and anchor are so similar in spelling.

The Valley of Achor, near Jericho, was named by Joshua after Achan brought sin into the camp. Achan’s name meant “trouble.” By stealing some of the spoils from the victory at Jericho, he had incurred the defeat in the battle of Ai. He and his family were stoned to death to purge the curse from the midst of the people. After his demise, the fighting men of Israel mounted a second attack and defeated Ai in a stroke. Joshua commemorated the day by naming the valley Achor, so the people would remember what had happened *before* the victory.

This is the same obscure valley that, six centuries later, the prophet Hosea declared God would make a “door of hope.”

“I will lead her [Israel] into the desert and speak tenderly to her. . . . I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord” (Hosea 2:14, 19-20).

Today, twenty-seven centuries after Hosea prophesied those words of hope, we can look at them with the aid of the Light that has come into the world. Whatever our lot, He can do it. He can walk into our valley of trouble and convert all our false hope to true hope, where we can be anchored securely.

With His sustaining help, we can dwell in the reality of 1 Corinthians 13: “Faith, *hope*, love abide, these three.”

God’s Gifts

What we are is a gift, and, like other gifts, chosen by the Giver alone. We are not presented with an array of options. What would you like to be? How tall? What color? What temperament would you prefer? Which parents would you choose as forebears?

One lady in her sixties still declares that she does not have what Paul calls the gift of single life. She has lived these sixty years without it, for God has assured her, she assures me, that He has a husband for her somewhere. She has only to wait for him to appear. She may be right that God has a husband for her. I think she’s wrong in saying she hasn’t the gift of single life. She has had it all her life. God may yet give her the gift of marriage, for many of His gifts may be given for only a part of a lifetime. I know of three Christians who had for a short time the gift of healing other people and then it was

withdrawn. Why should He not give single life for most of a lifetime and then give marriage? Or may He not give marriage and then, sometimes early in life, widowhood? Single life may be only a stage of a life's journey, but even a stage is a gift. God may replace it with another gift, but the receiver accepts His gifts with thanksgiving.

**From chapters 9 and 10 of
my book *Let Me Be a Woman***

From the Cove: Our Neighbor

The clean Teflon pan sat on the kitchen counter after my afternoon walk until time to wash the supper dishes. Our neighbor had had it since the previous week, when Elisabeth had delivered a meatloaf in it. Now Elisabeth was out of town and had suggested I stop in and get it.

He had been in his usual spot, leaning on the kitchen sink, glancing at the newspaper spread across it. He didn't see me until I tapped on the window. Slowly he came away from the sink and made his way to the door. When he opened the door, he placed his hands on his knees and stood in his bowed way, trying to breathe easier. He was in treatment again for cancer and suffering from emphysema. We exchanged a few words—the normal pleasantries. He said the meatloaf was very good and that Elisabeth could do it again for him anytime.

A week before the meatloaf, the pan had held one of four loaves of bread that I had baked. I had wrapped one up in plastic and had given it to Tom.

As I finished the few dishes, I thought, *the pan looks clean, but I'll just make sure*. When I put it into the soapy water, I thought I could smell something and my eyes seemed to burn. As I rubbed the rag around, it became yellow, and I realized I was removing a coating of nicotine. Both Tom and his son are heavy smokers. *Well*, I said to myself, *when Elisabeth next prepares a meatloaf, we'll present it in foil, not in the pan*. Figuring the best would be an overnight soak in ammonia water, I left it on the counter and went to my evening work and then off to bed.

If I have a thought that's deeper than the surface it generally occurs, as it did that night, at 2:00 A.M. or thereabouts. Lying waiting for sleep to overtake me, I thought of Tom and our Teflon pan, which is used almost exclusively for bread making. Why is it easier to offer him a loaf of bread than to offer him the Bread of Life? Oh, I've mentioned prayer to him, that we remember him at times in that way. He thanked me. I said something about God's help. He uses the Deity as an oath sprinkled in his conversation.

In the stillness of the night so many good approaches pop in and out of mind, but my tongue is tied when standing beside a person. Then I look at myself—clean on the outside—but the inside is another matter. Like the pan, a true cleaning is needed. Not just from sins of the past, never forgotten and humanly speaking impossible to make amends for, but the very thoughts and deeds of today, the feelings offended, the unkind reply, the shading of the truth. God's grace is what I need and it is what Tom needs. There is a difference though—whereas Tom may only have heard of that need a time or two, I have heard and known of it all my life.

I desire to speak of the “grace that is greater than all our sin,” but what is the approach? Is it not, “Here is what the Word says and here is what it means for me”? Has grace entered my being or is it only in my head? Suffering will continue, but there can be comfort and a hope that is beyond understanding. “Taste and see.”

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” “So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn, and He will come to us as the spring rain, watering the earth.” I've seen the truth of it in

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others. Is the reality in me? The question Jesus asked long ago is ever relevant: “Have I been so long a time with you and do you not yet know Me?”

What could be simpler than the offering of a loaf of bread and then “Let me mention to you a better bread, the Bread of Life”?

So often a comment can be an entry into a deeper spiritual realm, and I stand mute, as occurred recently on a trip south. The conversation got on to life, retirement or some such, and went to a Swedish proverb about three things a person needs to be happy. I can’t remember the first two, but the third was “something to look forward to.” Immediately my mind went to “if it is only of this world, then what?” I could have just said, “And after that, then what?” and it could have been a worthwhile coffee time. How does one bring the thought into the real situation?

Back to Tom. I think of him now, for he is no longer my neighbor. He died some weeks ago. It had to be the Lord that kept urging me to go and visit with him when he was in the rehab unit. Twice we chatted at length, he going over the old ground of difficult doctors who would not cooperate with each other, or the utter waste of being there instead of at home, especially since he was paying for the utilities for no one’s use. In between I spoke of a loving God in the midst of suffering and our need of Him. Tom had the all-too-common replies to that. He had lived a good life, been good to his family, and what about the bad folks who have it so good, etc.

The last time I saw him he was once again my neighbor. He had received the word that nothing more could be done. He sat hunched on the porch drawing in oxygen from the portable tank and said, “It’s just a bad roll of the dice. I thought we had it licked but not so.”

I said, “Tom, beyond the ‘dice’ there is a God who cares and to whom we can come in a time like this.” He appreciated our prayers for him but that’s where it stopped.

In two days we were leaving town. I had a constant urge to see him once more. By the time I was free it was evening and too late. *When I get back I’ll visit Tom at once.*

We returned in the late afternoon, and I noticed the nurse’s car was not there. I checked with my

other neighbor. “How are things at Tom’s?”

“The funeral was last Saturday. Family was with him the last few days. His son said that the last Tom said was about the mess the various doctors caused him.”

So here I sit, sensing failure and sadness for not having been able to lay before Tom the only hope for any of us: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Why should I write about this? I can’t give a bunch of reasons other than I had the urge to do so, perhaps only to see for myself what a “day” brought or perhaps to help me in sharing God’s offer of Life to the next “Tom” in my path. Then again there may be some of you who have had similar experiences and now know that you’re not alone.

Humility

The stamp of the saint is not the metallic rapping out of a testimony to sanctification, but the true humility which shows the fierce purity of God in ordinary human flesh.

Amy Carmichael

Notes on Getting Organized

It’s depressing to live in a mess, and God surely does not mean for us to do so. He is not “the author of confusion,” the Bible says. Of course no one can organize somebody else, because only the owner knows what can be discarded. But for what they’re worth, here are a few suggestions:

- Start small. One bureau drawer, one closet, the trunk of the car.
- Anything you have not used for a year, you do not need to keep. Don’t think, “But I might need it later!” If you made it through last year without it, throw it away—or give it to the Salvation Army for somebody who needs it worse than you do.

- Use small boxes (stationery boxes, check book boxes) to organize drawers. Shoe boxes are great for socks and underwear. Don't use the lids.
- Make sure you assign a place for everything and put everything in its place—scotch tape in *one* place (or two if absolutely needed in two); rubber bands and paper clips in a tuna fish can; plastic containers in one section of the kitchen. (Throw away containers that have lost their lids.)
- When you've got one drawer under control go to the next one—aim to finish only one room at a time. It is hopeless when you get distracted and start working on another room before finishing the first. Finish the job.
- Have manila folders or hanging files for papers that must be kept. Clean out these files every year—80 percent of things filed never get used.
- Always put things in their places right away after you've used them.
- Shut cupboard doors, turn off lights, hang towels straight, put shoes away, throw away the magazines and newspapers.

If all of this is too much, try to accomplish it in one room only. Just having *one* room that is beautifully neat and orderly will do wonderful things for your psyche!

Jabez

In light of the current interest in the prayer of the obscure man Jabez, here, for your interest, is an excerpt from the December 3, 1950, entry in my husband Jim's journal, written when he was in the States praying for further guidance about going to Ecuador as a missionary.

"Jabez, the *more honorable*, conceived in sorrow, prayed a prayer I, too, have prayed this morning. 'He called on the God of Israel saying, Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my border, and that thy hand might be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it be not to my sorrow' (1 Chron. 4:10). 'And God granted him that which he requested' (v. 11).

"Bereans, *more noble* than the Thessalonians, showed their honor by searching the Scriptures to see if the things they heard were so (Acts 17:11). Grant me this *nobility*, Lord, to be as Jabez who *asked* and as Berea who *examined*."

February-March 2003 Travel Schedule

February 14-15 Paris, Tex., East Paris Baptist Church, Gency Fortenberry, (903) 785-1300.

March 14-15 Santa Clarita, Calif., Grace Baptist Church.

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