

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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## Why Did Jesus Die?

His popularity with the multitudes aroused jealousy in the teachers of the law. There was much muttering. "He is baptizing and everyone is going to him." Some said He was a good man. No, said others, He is leading people astray. How come He speaks with such wisdom when He has never studied? Could this possibly be the Christ? Surely He is not from God—He has a demon. He is mad. He speaks blasphemously.

A meeting of the Sanhedrin was called.

"What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place<sup>1</sup> and our nation."

The crowd that had seen Lazarus walk out of the tomb had spread far and wide the word about a miracle worker. This was the last straw. "See," said the Pharisees, "this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

This man Jesus was not to be tolerated.

That much is not surprising. We understand politics, which certainly had a part in His death. But politics was not the real and inescapable cause. There was something far deeper, unimaginably deeper, which we may spend our lives seeking to fathom. It is revealed in Jesus' words to His disciples at the Last Supper: "This is my body given for you."

For us. For us who so desperately need redemption Jesus gave his body. No one could have taken His life from Him. He laid it down of His own volition, to redeem us, for we had sinned. In the person of Adam we had made a declaration of independence—to "do our own thing"—and thus had fallen away from God, "in the terrible, literal sense of the word, towards the negative nothingness of sin, destruction, death, senselessness and the abyss. God's mysterious grace could not leave man in such forlornness; it desired to help him home—in a manner of such sacred magnanimity and power,

<sup>1</sup> temple

that once revealed to us, it is impossible to conceive of any other: in the manner of *love*" (abridged, from Romano Guardini, *The Lord*).

*He wanted to help us home! Why?* There are at least sixteen specific expressions of that divine compassion. I list them in the order in which they are found in Scripture:

1. that we might not perish, but have eternal life
2. to justify us
3. to establish His lordship
4. that we might cease to live for ourselves
5. to rescue us out of this present age of wickedness
6. in order that we might attain the status of sons
7. that we might live in company with Him
8. to save sinners
9. to win freedom for all
10. to make us a pure people, marked out for His own
11. that we might cease to live for sin
12. to bring us to God
13. to do away with sin
14. to undo the devil's work
15. to bring us life
16. as the remedy for the defilement of sin

Ezra the prophet, writing four centuries before Christ, knew nothing, of course, of the Cross, but prayed, "Our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved. Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence." Nor can we. We have a far greater revelation, in the New Testament, of the enormity of our sin, and we know about the Cross. What shall we do about it?

Matthew and Mark tell us that the two criminals who hung on crosses beside Jesus heaped insults on Him at first. One of them said, "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other, with new insight, recognizing the justice of his own punishment and the innocence of Jesus, asked to be remembered in the kingdom. "Today," Jesus said, "you will be with me in paradise."

How shall we respond to this inconceivable sacrifice of love?

In 1949, when Jim Elliot was a senior in college, he wrote,

I set My love upon thee, child,  
I knew thee far away.  
I wept to see thee wandering wild,  
I yearned till thou didst pray.

One of a rebel, hateful band,  
Strong in thy lust for sin,  
A furtive, fitful, fiery soul—  
I loved, I called thee in.  
I stripped thee of thy grimy pride,  
Laid bare thy secret want—  
Poor vagabond of empty ways!  
I sent My Spirit to haunt.

Now, desert son, the choice is thine;  
My love thou canst forget  
And go to roaming wasteland paths.  
Wilt, willful, wander yet?

Jesus asks us to take up the cross—to take it up *daily*. What does this mean? Surely it is the quiet acceptance of disappointments; the willing performance of some hard task we'd prefer to avoid, or of some small duty which is distasteful to us. It is forgiveness to that one who has deeply wronged us and has not apologized (the Lord tells us to forgive those who *trespass*, not only those who apologize!). The cross is offered to us every day in some form, at times comparatively trivial, at other times real suffering, but it is always something which slashes straight across our human nature, for the cross was an instrument of torture. Paul knew far more about crosses than most of us will ever know. In addition to the floggings, imprisonments, and shipwrecks, he mentioned, "When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth."

It was he who said, "I have been crucified with Christ....The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

At this season we are not only reminded of Him who took up gladly a real cross of real wood and real nails, "a worm, and not a man"—we are also bidden to sing of the Resurrection:

He closed the yawning gates of hell,  
The bars from Heaven's high portals fell,  
Let hymns of praise His triumph tell!  
Alleluia!

Lord! by the stripes which wounded Thee,  
From death's dread sting Thy servants free  
That we may live and sing to Thee,  
Alleluia!

Latin, 1675

## *A Plea to Old Folks*

I often wonder how many old Christians are paying serious attention to the injunctions of Titus 2:1-5. There seem to be few, although many are blessed with God-given wisdom and time and strength. You've read about our beloved Mrs. Kershaw, a poor, totally deaf, hunchbacked widow in her seventies who came to our home every day to do whatever needed to be done—an angel of cheerfulness, humility, and love. Are there still some like her around? I am sure there are. Now hear this:

Jim and Shelley Hendry, parents of four children (including triplets), are asking if there is an older lady out there who is fed up with "senior citizen" activities which are wholly unrelated to the cause of Christ, and would like to come to their home. Shelley says, "The days are so full and the joyful work of these children could keep several women *happily* busy. We have room and could bring joy to her life. We would *love* to provide a home for a widow or elderly couple with no little ones to love. And—to be honest—we do need lots of help here with our home, and we *welcome* advice and criticism. If they are not very well, perhaps they could read to the children, pray for us, and help in small ways. We would gladly take care of them." Address: The Happy Hendry Home, P.O. Box 1151, Clarksville, VA 23927; phone (804)372-5565.

## *Effects of Feminism*

When the feminist movement began rapidly gaining ground in the early seventies, I was alarmed, and said so. I dreaded to think of its effects on society, in the church, the home, and on the deepest

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level of the personality. "Oh well, that's Elisabeth Elliot," said some, "she's an alarmist."

Two letters reveal some of the effects:

"Oh, how I wish I had heard your biblical counsel years ago. I was so deceived by what the world was saying: Have a career. Use birth control. I feel that I have contributed to my husband's lack of leadership. I took on the responsibility of providing for the family. I was going to have the perfectly spaced family, but in trying to do that almost ruined our chances for more children. My husband would like more children, but at my age that may be more difficult."

This, from a man: "It appears to me that Christian women *say* they are not affiliated with the feminist movement, but take no stand against it, while quietly enjoying the preferential dealings it provides....One thing it does do to a man such as myself—it stops me still, kindling inner befuddlement. Prayerfully, I have to wonder now: Shall I hold the door open? Or shall I say, 'O.K., ma'am—there's the door. You want it opened? Go open it.' Sadly, women aren't as much fun to be around anymore."

A timid suggestion from E.E.—Can we not be *women*, true women for the glory of God? Should we not be asking Him to help us to be humbly and thankfully *feminine* (a word feminists seem to leave out of their vocabulary)?

## *A Baby or Disposable Tissue?*

I was surprised and glad to find a feminist author, Naomi Wolff, with the courage to make the following observation in *The New Republic*:

"Pictures [of violent fetal death] are not polemical in themselves: they are biological facts. We know this.... So what will it be: *Wanted* fetuses are charming, complex little beings whose profile on the sonogram looks just like Daddy, but *unwanted* ones are mere 'uterine material'? How can we charge that it is vile and repulsive for pro-lifers to brandish vile and repulsive images if the images are real?"

## *Prayer*

"O Thou Hope of all holy and humble men of heart, and the Savior of them that trust in Thee in time of trouble, give us not over as captives, in spiritual chains; but recover us, that we may awake to

do Thy will. Lord, Thou knowest all our desire, and our secret sighing is not hidden from Thee. Into Thy hands I commend my soul and my prayer: give what Thou seest fit, and fit us for what Thou givest. Give us wisdom to abound, or patience to suffer need; and where the Master placed us, there to be content. Let all our work be done well before we come to die; and let us be gathered into Thine arms, as the harvesters gather a shock in full season. Let our death be happy; and our happiness beyond the power of death. Amen."

**Rowland Williams, 1818-1870**

When you pray the above for yourself, would you also pray it for Lars and me? We are thankful for the immense privileges we are given, for God's utter faithfulness in giving us strength and excellent health, in guiding our decisions and keeping us in His own peace.

Thank Him, please, for the great privilege our grandson Walter Shepard III, nearly nineteen, has had in being in Peru for six months with his great-uncle Bert Elliot, Jim's older brother, who has been a missionary there for over forty-five years. Both Bert and his wife Colleen have battled cancer, but continue cheerfully and faithfully in the work God has given them, though way past "retirement" age. I know of no godlier couple under whose influence I would rather see my beloved grandchildren. Walter wants prayer for the Lord's guidance in choosing further training and pursuit of His call.

## *Letter from Peru*

Walter writes of a trip to a village where Uncle Bert did dental work. "I had great fun looking at and picking around in and digging into the gums with *needles* to give shots to the most gruesome dental-disaster-mouths you can imagine.... Got very motivated to floss very well. After a huge luncheon of chicken, rice, and pintos we drove homeward. It being a big old diesel truck and Uncle near to sleep, I asked if I could drive. So I did for a while, and having gone down the road a piece behind a slow jalopy of a bus, the doctor told me to go on and pass. It seemed like an all right sort of thing to do, so I took her outta gear and was shifting down, when I was suddenly left sitting with my left hand on the wheel and my right hand freely waving and swinging the gear shift lever around the cab. I thought, 'What fun! But really, people shouldn't

have long heavy pieces of metal free in a truck, someone might get hurt!' and then, 'Oh, how disconcerting—the stick has come loose!' Like a good missionary, I jerry-rigged it with bailing wire and a nut and bolt of opposing dimensions, and we got home. I assessed the situation: the truck was a good F-350, but the transmission seemed kinda funny.... Uncle Bert says, 'Let's take it to our welder.' I was unsure of this because the rest of the truck had just about the wildest welding you've ever seen, and upon pointing this out, I get, 'Well, our welder, he's half-blind' (making me sure now that he's not anybody else's welder), but I got to do a little directing in the process, so it's pretty O.K."

That's what in our family we would have called G.M.T.—good missionary training!

## A Useful Resource

Karen Khamis: *The Best Christian Children's Books, 1942-1992*, a bibliography of books for preschool through high school. Ephemeron Press, Box 1037, RR 10, Oswego, NY 13126. Price: \$6.00 (New York state residents, add 4% sales tax). Shipping and handling: Add \$1.50 for first book, \$.50 for each additional book.

### Keep in Touch

Are you moving? Getting married? Leaving school? Don't forget to send us your change of address. The post office DOES NOT FORWARD third class mail like the Newsletter. Please remove your address label below and send it with your new address to: The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter, Post Office Box 7711, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7711.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## Travel Schedule March–May 1996

**March 9** Waterloo, Ia., KNWS Radio, Betty Brandhorst, (319)296-1975.

**March 12** Simi Valley, Calif., Calvary Chapel, Pamela Lee, (805)527-0199.

**March 14** Grass Valley, Calif., Calvary Chapel, Vicki Sullivan, (916)272-1308.

**March 16** Marin County, Calif., Kathy Lewis, (415)479-5837.

**March 23** Norwell, Mass., Calvary Chapel and Boston Women's Luncheon. Preregistration required: Mary Marley, (617)335-4672.

**March 30** Kansas City, Mo., radio rally KLTC, John Hayden, (816) 331-8700 or (800) 466-KLTC

**April 7** EASTER

**April 13** Montreal, Quebec, Associated Gospel Churches, Russell Fisher, (514)769-2693.

**April 19-21** Lake Louise, Alberta, Baptist Women's Association, Mrs. Natalie MacDonald, (403)556-2428.

**April 24** Vancouver, British Columbia, St. John's Anglican Church, Pastor William Lovell, (604)731-4966.

**May 3** Birmingham, Ala., Samford University Auxiliary Luncheon, Marla Cortis, (205)969-0350.

(**May 3, 4** Marietta, Ga., First United Methodist Church, cancelled by the church.)

**May 11** Haverhill, Mass., Crisis Pregnancy Center, Charles Barton, (508)373-5700.

**May 16** Rutland, Vt., banquet for Rutland Area Christian School, Nancy Zins, (802)459-2140.

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