

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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Injustice

What to do when you've been hurt and feel sure you didn't "deserve" it?

Any who long for holiness must learn that that quality cannot be merely "bestowed" on us. Holiness is a lifetime process which requires suffering. Our human response is to avoid it in any way we can.

James, "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ," writes in his epistle (James 1:2-4): "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

If you think of those who have most deeply influenced your spiritual life, you will discover that every one of them has suffered, often in ways which seem greatly "undeserved." If it is accident or illness we may label it merely "fate," but if it is wrong done to them by a human being it seems highly "unfair." Were you to ask them what they had learned in the deep waters and the hot fires (see Isaiah 43:2), they would tell you that they had recognized the testing of their *faith*, which had produced, through the grace of God, perseverance. That process is necessary for all of us. Christ Himself experienced far more hurts, injustice, and pure hatred than you and I will ever know. "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he *learned obedience from what he suffered*, and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:7-9).

Dare we suppose that we do not need the lessons of suffering? Shall we refuse to take up the cross and follow our Lord and Master? My friend Arlita Winston, who teaches a group of pastors' wives, gave me what she calls "the Balm of Gilead," four simple (not *easy!*) steps toward peace when we have been wronged—perhaps even outraged—and are convinced we didn't deserve it:

1. *Confess* (my anger, hatred, desire for revenge, self-pity....). Both I and the one who wronged me now need the same Cross—the Cross on which our sinless Savior suffered.
2. *Repent*. This is a 180-degree turn-around.
3. *Pray*, "Wash me with Your blood, cleanse me."
4. *Bless* the one who hurt you. Forgive him and bless him!

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:12-13).

Suffering is a *gift*. "It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have" (Philippians 1:29). Fénelon (1651-1715) said, "Accustom yourself to unreasonableness and injustice. Abide in peace in the presence of God, who sees all these evils more clearly than you do, and who permits them. Be content with doing with calmness the little which depends upon yourself, and let all else be to you as if it were not."

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:17-18).

Jesus told us that if we *want* to be His disciples, we must *deny ourselves* (give up all right to ourselves), *take up the cross* (which is "no great action done once for all; it consists in the continual practice of small duties which are distasteful to us"—J.H. Newman), and we must *follow* Him. May He grant to us the grace to do these painful but wonderfully liberating things! And may we never forget the *JOY* which follows obedience. Trust and obey—there's no other way to be happy.

As I look back over a long life I can see that whenever I have disobeyed, it has led sooner or later to misery. Whenever I have obeyed, it has led to peace and joy, even though the path of obedience has sometimes entailed suffering.

"O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago" (Isaiah 25:1).

Miss Andy

When the Tamiami Champion pulled into the Orlando railroad station one hot day in September 1941, a very tall, slim, dark-eyed lady in white was waiting for a new pupil of Hampden DuBose Academy. She picked me out at once—a tall, very shy blonde girl of fourteen, wearing—of all things in *Florida in September*—a beige felt hat (we all wore hats in those days when we went anywhere), a blue wool dress, and brown suede pumps.

"Hello!" said the lady. "You're Betty Howard and I'm Miss Andy. We're so glad you're here!"

She took my suitcase, led me to a station wagon, and drove me to the seedy old hotel in which the academy was then housed. This was the beginning of three years of boarding school—a school the like of which no one would believe. There were about a hundred students, one third of whom were m.k.'s (missionary kids), one-third p.k.'s (preachers' kids), and one-third o.k.'s (ordinary kids). I was one of the last category. The school had been founded by Pierre Wilds DuBose, who had been a missionary kid in China and had a heart for those like him who were separated, often at an early age, from their parents. They made a home for all of us. All the teachers, I found, were unsalaried—living day and night in the dormitories during the school year, in cabins at a camp in North Carolina in the summer. Perhaps some occasionally were allowed a short visit home.

Miss Andy lived in the dormitory with us girls. Daily we saw lived out the high principle of Jesus' words in Matthew 25:40, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." She, like the other teachers, showed us the meaning of sacrifice. She laid down her life for us. Love always means sacrifice.

Miss Andy was a woman with a gentle and quiet spirit, a radiant smile, total selflessness. She not only taught school. She planned the menus, did the shopping and countless other errands. When the school lost its only two paid employees, the cooks, it was Miss Andy who took over the task—not neglecting her teaching responsibilities. How was it possible? God knows.

In 1950, Dr. DuBose asked me to come to teach public speaking, taking the place for one semester of another teacher, his daughter, who was having a baby. I was Miss Andy's roommate during those months and was allowed to call her Jane. Far more intimately than I had had

opportunity to observe before, I now saw, in humblest ways, what true sacrifice means. Jane was available to any and all who needed her, at any time of the day or night. She and Dottie (Miss Hill) were often working on whatever needed to be worked on. If the phone rang at 3:00 A.M., it was Jane who answered it. If someone needed to be driven somewhere, Jane was the chauffeur. She had to be up and dressed by 7:00 A.M. or earlier, seven days a week.

She taught Bible classes not only to students but to Mrs. DuBose's church women. She prepared their elegant teas and the Christmas buffet supper—a lavish affair to which friends of the school were invited and students were trained (severely, beforehand) to serve.

Jane was—will always be—to me an icon of lovingkindness and quiet, hidden selflessness. On the last day of her life she taught school as she had done for fifty-nine years, and then cooked dinner. Like the woman who poured perfume on Jesus' head, she did what she could. As I review the life of my beloved Jane it seems to me that she did what she couldn't! But we know from whence came her help—the Lord who made heaven and earth, the Lord who promised, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Letter from Australia

A young man writes, "I have found it immensely helpful over the past few years to listen to old saints pray—Christians from a world before mine, before the 'instant blessing syndrome,' a world of rural labor, struggle and sweat, faithfulness in the mundane things of life. There is such sweetness in their quiet thanksgiving for God's goodness, and I find myself longing to imbibe something of their humility and steadfastness and contentment. Committing Paul's prayers to heart has helped nurture some calmness and contentment in hard times and good." Why not follow this man's example? Try, for example, Ephesians 3:14-21.

One Secret Act

"One secret act of self-denial is worth all the mere good thoughts, warm feelings, passionate prayers, in which idle people indulge themselves" (J.H. Newman).

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How May I Serve Christ Today?

A hymn by John Keble (1822) has been a great help to me as I seek to make all that I do an offering to the Lord. A day here at home always holds housework, correspondence, and some ways in which I can serve my husband. This hymn has enriched my understanding of Paul's rules for Christian households, found in Colossians 3:18-24. He speaks to wives, husbands, children, fathers, and slaves. The work of a slave was surely the most menial and thankless, but what a changed aspect that work would hold if he saw it as service to the Lord Himself!

"Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

All work, if offered to Him, is transformed. It is not secular but sacred, sanctified in the glad offering. There was once an anchoress (a female hermit) in England who had renounced the world in order to live in seclusion. She was enclosed for life inside a little cell built into the church wall. There was a very small window opening to the street where passersby often paused, asking for her prayer and counsel. This, most of us would agree, was "spiritual" work. But it came to pass that the route of the main thoroughfare was changed and few came by to seek her help. The neighborhood children, however, found her and began to bring their broken toys. Gladly she mended the toys, seeing this as the Lord's new assignment—sanctified as was her former work.

Is there not a very important lesson for all of us here? In the very place where God has put us, whatever its limitations, whatever kind of work it may be, we may indeed serve the Lord Christ. The following are a few of the stanzas of Keble's hymn. Think about them while you peel a carrot, drive a truck, listen to a bore, receive criticism, or do any other task which seems odious:

New every morning is the love
Our waking and uprising prove,
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life and power and thought.

If on our daily course our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves—a road
To bring us daily nearer God.

Pray for India

In May we were invited to Pollachi for the annual conference of the Women's Prayer Fellowship of South India. Four hundred women sitting cross-legged on a cement floor for hours at a time, backs straight, faces lifted heavenward, is a scene which will be always with me. They were, one and all, dressed in saris, that most beautifully feminine of all women's costumes. (They asked me to wear one when I spoke. It took fifteen minutes of expert winding, pleating, and wrapping to dress me. A sari is one piece of fabric, eighteen feet long.) They were there for four days, sleeping on a cement floor, the day beginning with a prayer meeting at 4:30 A.M. and continuing until 10:00 or 11:00 P.M. when supper was served (on the days they did not fast). I spoke, of course, by interpretation, marveling that they did not seem bored or restless but gazed at this pale-faced stranger with eager smiles and warm sympathy. Our two hostesses throughout the trip were Princess, who is 27, and Daisy, 26—both missionaries to tribespeople in the north. One of those groups, the Malto, numbers 100,000, and there are 35,000 Christians. I was astounded to learn that there are 4,635 different tribes or "people groups" in India, forty of which still practice human sacrifice. There are 1,652 languages in India, only forty-nine of which have the whole Bible; forty-six have the New Testament. Do pray for them, and for precious little Princess and Daisy, whose lifestyle is perhaps the most sacrificial I have ever heard of in missionary work.

Recommended Reading

His Thoughts Said ... His Father Said ... by Amy Carmichael, (available from Christian Literature Crusade, 215-542-1240, \$4.50). These are dialogues between a Christian (you will easily identify with "the son") and his God. Here's a sample:

#43 "Is It My Custom to Forget?"—In the late evening the son looked back over the day and was discouraged. But as one whom his mother comforteth, so did his Father comfort him. He said to him, "Didst thou not in the early morning bear upon thy heart thy beloved ones, as Aaron bore the jewels on his breast? Didst thou not offer to Me every hour of the day, every touch on other lives, every letter to be written, everything to be done?"

As the hours passed over thee perhaps thou didst forget,
but is it My custom to forget?"

#88 "There Will Not Be the Torment of Uncertainty"—
The son thought of one who seemed to be needed in
two places at the same time. Whatever the decision,
part of himself must be rent. But most racking of all
was the torment of uncertainty.

His Father said, "Would an earthly father leave a
willing child in doubt about his wishes? How much less
would thy heavenly Father do so unkind a thing? Must
the decision be made today? Then there shall be a sign
from Me today. Can the matter be deferred? Then there
shall be a going on in quietness. Before action must be
taken, I will cause something to happen which will
show the way of My choice. Though part of himself be
rent, there will be peace which not even that rending
can hurt. There will not be the torment of uncertainty."

And the son recalled the peaceful story of the Cloud.
Whether it were two days, or a month, or a year that the
Cloud tarried, the people journeyed not; but when it
was taken up, they journeyed.

Correction

In a recent Newsletter I said that the biography of
Watchman Nee was out of print. It isn't. The title is
Against the Tide, by Angus Kinnear, available also from
Christian Literature Crusade for \$5.95.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Travel Schedule September - November 1997

September 6 Milwaukee, Wis., VCY America Inc., Jim
Schneider, (414)935-3000; (800)729-9829.

September 13 Naples, Me., Cornerstone Gospel Church,
Myra Marsteller, (207)693-6102.

September 21 Dallas, Tex., Prestonwood Baptist
Church, singles' classes, (972)387-4475.

September 23 Dallas, Tex., First Baptist Church ladies'
banquet, Patty Lovvorn, (214)824-5579.

October 1 San Diego, Calif., North American Baptist
Women's Union, phone/fax (703)893-2710.

October 4 Hermosa Beach, Calif., Hope Chapel, Vicky
Ramirez, (310)374-4673.

October 10 Danvers, Mass., National Christian Home
Education Leadership Conference, Michael Farris,
(540)338-7600.

October 16 Albany, Ga., First Baptist Church, (912)883-
8000.

October 17, 18 Shreveport, La., Springs of Grace Baptist
Church, Jennifer Weimer, (318)227-3732.

October 18 Shreveport, La., First Assembly of
God, (318)686-8376 or 668-4825.

October 31 Gaithersburg, Md., Covenant Life Church,
Carolyn Mahaney, (301)869-2800.

November 1 Gaithersburg (same as above)

November 2 Edgewood, Md., Assembly of God, Rev.
Thomas Twigg, 809 Edgewood Rd., 21040; (410)676-
4455.

November 17-21 Willingen, Germany, Dept. of the
Army, Protestant Women of the Chapel, Maj. Harry E.
Colter, chaplain, 49-6221-577119.

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