

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

January/February 1985

Our Share of Suffering

Most of us know next to nothing about real persecution or what it's like to be in chains. When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians, they were being severely persecuted, and he himself was actually chained between two guards in a Roman prison, somewhere between 61 and 63 A.D. Even though we may not know the first thing about that kind of suffering, what the apostle has to say about the subject applies to our kind, too, whatever it may be. For, you see, we have been given two gifts: the privilege of believing in Christ, and (here's that mystery again) the privilege of suffering. Amy Carmichael, missionary to India, told of how God had impressed on her mind those two phrases from Philippians 1:29, "not only . . . but also." She was in anguish over some matter which she did not reveal, but she was given eyes to see this truth: that everyone who believes must also suffer for Christ.

"For Him?" you say, "But this thing I'm going through—what has that got to do with what Paul meant? I'm not in prison for speaking the truth. I'm not being 'persecuted for Christ's sake.'" Not all are given those privileges, of course, but it seems to me that any kind of suffering, if accepted for Christ and from Christ, may be seen as our *share*. In Colossians 1:24 there is a hint that there is some sort of "quota" of suffering that must be endured, and each of us may bear a part of that if we're willing to take it from Christ's hand. "It is now my happiness to suffer for you," Paul wrote. "This is my way of helping to complete, in my poor human flesh, the full tale of Christ's afflictions still to be endured, for the sake of His body which is the Church." It isn't that we add to the *redemptive* work of Christ. Not that at all. But in

some unexplained way we are allowed to "fill up" His suffering on behalf of His Body. I don't pretend to understand it. It's enough for me to know that suffering is a part of belonging to Christ, part of what it means to be a true believer, and a high privilege to be received with joy because, in ways we can't even imagine now, it *matters* to all the rest of the glorious company of God's people.

Hints for Quiet Time

Having a quiet time with the Lord every day is absolutely essential if you expect to grow spiritually. But you have to plan it. It won't "just happen." We're all much too busy. Early morning is best, and there are plenty of scriptural precedents for that (Jesus rose "a great while before day"; the psalmist said, "In the morning shalt Thou hear my voice"). If you meet the Lord before you meet anybody else, you'll be "pointed in the right direction" for whatever comes. God knows how difficult it is for some to do this, and if you have a reason you can offer *Him* why early morning won't work, I'm sure He'll help you to find another time. Sometimes the children's afternoon nap time can be quiet time for a mother. At any rate, plan the time. Make up your mind to stick with it. Make it short to begin with—fifteen minutes or so, perhaps. You'll be surprised at how soon you'll be wanting more.

Take a single book of the Bible. If you're new at this, start with the Gospel of Mark. Pray, first, for the Holy Spirit's teaching. Read a few verses, a paragraph, or a chapter. Then ask, What does this passage teach me about: (1) God; (2) Jesus Christ;

(3) the Holy Spirit; (4) myself; (5) sins to confess or avoid; (6) commands to obey; (7) what Christian love is?

Keep a notebook. Write down some of your special prayer requests with the date. Record the answer when it comes. Note, also, some of the answers you've found to the above questions, or anything else you've learned. Tell your children, your spouse, your friends some of these things. That will help you to remember them. You'll be amazed at what a difference a quiet time will make in your life.

A Word for Fathers

While at Columbia Bible College in South Carolina last summer I found a little book called *Father and Son* in the library, written by my grandfather, Philip E. Howard. He writes:

"Do you remember that encouraging word of Thomas Fuller's, a chaplain of Oliver Cromwell's time? It's a good passage for a father in all humility and gratitude to tuck away in his memory treasures:

"Lord, I find the genealogy of my Savior strangely checkered with four remarkable changes in four immediate generations. (1) Rehoboam begat Abijah; that is, a bad father begat a bad son. (2) Abijah begat Asa; that is, a bad father begat a good son. (3) Asa begat Jehoshaphat; that is, a good father a good son. (4) Jehoshaphat begat Joram; that is, a good father a bad son. I see, Lord, from hence that my father's piety cannot be entailed; that is bad news for me. But I see also that actual impiety is not always hereditary; that is good news for my son."

In another chapter Grandpa Howard tells this story.

"A sensitive, timid little boy, long years ago, was accustomed to lie down to sleep in a low 'trundle-bed,' which was rolled under his parents' bed by day and was brought out for his use by night. As he lay there by himself in the darkness, he could hear the voices of his parents, in their lighted sitting-room across the hallway, on the other side of the house. It seemed to him that his parents never slept; for he left them awake when he was put to bed at night, and he found them

awake when he left his bed in the morning. So far this thought was a cause of cheer to him, as his mind was busy with imaginings in the weird darkness of his lonely room.

"After loving good-night words and kisses had been given him by both his parents, and he had nestled down to rest, this little boy was accustomed, night after night, to rouse up once more, and to call out from his trundle-bed to his strong-armed father, in the room from which the light gleamed out, beyond the shadowy hallway, 'Are you there, papa?' And the answer would come back cheerily, 'Yes, my child, I am here.' 'You'll take care of me tonight, papa, won't you?' was then the question. 'Yes, I'll take care of you, my child,' was the comforting response. 'Go to sleep now. Good night.' And the little fellow would fall asleep restfully, in the thought of those assuring good-night words.

"A little matter that was to the loving father; but it was a great matter to the sensitive son. It helped to shape the son's life. It gave the father an added hold on him; and it opened up the way for his clearer understanding of his dependence on the loving watchfulness of the All-Father. And to this day when that son, himself a father and a grandfather, lies down to sleep at night, he is accustomed, out of the memories of that lesson of long ago, to look up through the shadows of his earthly sleeping place into the far-off light of his Father's presence, and to call out, in the same spirit of childlike trust and helplessness as so long ago, 'Father, you'll take care of me tonight, won't you?' And he hears the assuring answer come back, 'He that keepeth thee will not slumber. The Lord shall keep thee from all evil. He shall keep thy soul. Sleep, my child, in peace.' And so he realizes the twofold blessing of a father's goodnight words."

That story, says Grandpa, came from his own father-in-law, my great-grandfather, Henry Clay Trumbull. I have a hunch that Trumbull was that little boy, and the father my great-great-grandfather.

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Letters

"I must admit I feel a lot of pressure with two children under two years of age. I am committed to do it until they are in school, however, and feel it is God's will. At times like this—when I wonder if I will even be able to finish this letter with both of them screaming for something—or when I miss going to lunch or getting dressed up, everyday life seems a drudgery. I worked hard to get through college—to be a scrubwoman, ha!"

I understand this mother's cry. So does the Lord. He has given us this word: "No temptation has come your way that is too hard for flesh and blood to bear. But God can be trusted not to allow you to suffer any temptation beyond your powers of endurance. He will see to it that every temptation has a way out, so that it will never be impossible for you to bear it" (1 Cor 10:13, J.B. Phillips' translation).

"A 'way out?'" I can hear her say, "What mother has a way out?"

The New English Bible translation throws light on this: "a way out, by enabling you to sustain it." Think, too, of Jesus' words, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." He is willing to bear our burdens with us if only we will come to Him and share the yoke, His yoke.

I saw this principle in operation when I visited the Dohnavur Fellowship in India. There, day after day, year in and year out, Indian women (most of them single) care for little children, handicapped children, infirm adults, old folks. They don't go anywhere. They have none of our usual forms of amusement and diversion. They work with extremely primitive equipment—there is no running water, for example, no stoves but wood-burning ones, no washing machines. In one of the buildings I saw this text, "There they dwelt with the King for His work." That's the secret. They do it for Him. They ask for and receive His grace to do it. I saw the joy in their lovely faces.

"Just finished reading *Passion and Purity*. Thank you for writing this book. I am twenty-four years old, single, and was wondering if I was the only one out here 'floundering in the sea of permissiveness and self-indulgence,' and recently decided that the 'beacon of purity' I had been

searching for had vanished completely, maybe at the turn of the century." This girl goes on to tell me how the man she was absolutely positive was God's choice for her suddenly disappeared. She was "borderline suicidal," but the Lord set her feet on a Rock. Then she was asked to serve as hostess for this man's wedding. "You guessed it," she wrote, "the bride is one of my best friends. So here is my opportunity for selfless love and servitude that we Christians speak of so freely. . . . This is so you can tell them, Elisabeth, that there's living proof out here in America of life after death. . . . It's worth it all just to be conformed to His image, to know His abiding mercy and love."

And I would add, it's worth it to have written the book when somebody like that has had "ears to hear." Thank God.

Prayer Requests

- Pray for our new president, that God will give him wisdom, courage, humility, and a consciousness of his need to seek the help of the Lord.
- Pray for a young couple, recently married, who are suffering the agonies (both mental and physical) of chemotherapy for one of them. Pray for all couples who are tempted to question or even to give up when the realities of those solemn marriage vows ("for better or for worse, in sickness and in health") begin to hit them hard.
- Valerie is teaching two of her children in home school. Walter is in second grade; Elisabeth is in kindergarten. Don't ask me what Val does with the eight-month-old and the three-year-old during school time, but I'm sure she needs your prayers! So do all other mothers. What an all-consuming job it is, and how incalculably important.
- Pray for Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, January 20, an effort of the Christian Action Council to educate churches on the subjects of abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia which are being practiced in our nation's health-care facilities.

Why Not?

Some parents say, "We will not influence our children in making choices and decisions in matters of religion."

Why not?

The ads will, the press will, the radio will, the movies will, the neighbors will, the politicians will, television will, the devil will.

(From the *Manchester Union-Leader*)

Fetal Pain

Joseph Sobran, a well-known author and columnist, wrote in the *Human Life Review*, Spring 1984, "A woman can say, 'My stomach hurts.' She can't say, 'My fetus hurts.' The fetus feels its own pain. It has its own identity, its own nervous system, and therefore its own separate claim on our attention. Some abortion advocates say we must balance the rights of the mother against those of the fetus; and even though they are up to no good when they say that, they have at least come to acknowledge that the fetus *does* have rights of its own. The very admission that two parties are involved is a significant victory for the opponents of abortion."

Travel Schedule

January/February 1985

January 14-17 Kerrville, Texas, Laity Lodge Women's Retreat. Howard Hovde, 512-896-2505

January 17-18 Uvalde, Texas, Women of St. Philip's Church. Mrs. Phyllis McNelly, 512-278-5236

January 19-20 Burnaby, British Columbia, Mission Fest '85. Richard Dodding, 604-430-4154

February 19 San Jose, California, Bethel Church. Marylyn Drake, 408-246-6790

February 22-24 Sedona, Arizona, Women's Retreat. Mary Malouf, 602-840-0024

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