

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

July/August 1984

Does God Allow His Children to Be Poor?

God allows both Christians and non-Christians to experience every form of suffering known to the human race, just as He allows His blessings to fall on both. Poverty, like other forms of suffering, is relative, as Lars and I were reminded while we were in India. Our country's definition of the "poverty level" would mean unimaginable affluence to the girls we saw working next to our hotel. For nine hours a day they carried wet concrete in wooden basins on their heads, pouring it into the forms for the foundation of a large building. They were paid thirty cents a day.

On my list of scriptures which give clues to some of God's reasons for allowing His children to suffer is 2 Corinthians 8:2: "Somehow, in most difficult circumstances, their joy and the fact of being down to their last penny themselves, produced a magnificent concern for other people." It was the Macedonian churches that Paul was talking about, living proof that it is not poverty or riches that determine generosity, and sometimes those who suffer the most financially are the ones most ready to share what they have. "They simply begged us to accept their gifts and so let them share the honors of supporting their brothers in Christ."

Money holds terrible power when it is loved. It can blind us, shackle us, fill us with anxiety and fear, torment our days and nights with misery, wear us out with chasing it. The Macedonian Christians, possessing little of it, accepted their lot with faith and trust. Their eyes were opened to see past their own misery. They saw what mattered far more than a bank account, and, out of

"magnificent concern," contributed to the needs of their brothers.

If through losing what this world prizes we are enabled to gain what it despises—treasure in heaven, invisible and incorruptible—isn't it worth any kind of suffering? What is it worth to us to learn a little bit more of what the Cross means—life out of death, the transformation of earth's losses and heartbreaks and tragedies?

Poverty has not been my experience, but God has allowed in the lives of each of us some sort of loss, the withdrawal of something we valued, in order that we may learn to offer ourselves a little more willingly, to allow the touch of death on one more thing we have clutched so tightly, and thus know fullness and freedom and joy that much sooner. We're not naturally inclined to love God and seek His kingdom. Trouble may help to incline us—that is, it may tip us over, put some pressure on us, lean us in the right direction.

A New Grandchild

In the March/April Newsletter I asked for prayer for Valerie, for a safe delivery and a healthy child. Both requests were granted, as well as another: older brother Walter, who is seven, had been asking the Lord for a brother if that was all right with Him (two sisters were enough for a while). James Elliot Shepard was born on April 18 in Laurel, Mississippi, weighing nine pounds ten ounces. Elisabeth, who is nearly five, said "Yip-pee!" I don't know what Christiana said. She is two, and has a way of filling in the blanks between the words she can say with "hm-hm" as in, "Mama, Lolly hm-hm my teddy-bear." (Lolly

seems to be the best she can do to say Elisabeth. Nobody knows where she got that.)

For little James (I think he'll be Jimmy as was his grandfather until he reached high school) I pray the prayer of Jacob for his son Joseph, "By the power of the Strong One of Jacob, by the name of the Shepherd of Israel, by the God of your father—so may he help you, by God Almighty—so may he bless you with the blessings of heaven above." (Gn 49:24,25).

An Unaborted Gift

An African Christian wrote a friend in the U.S.: "We have six children. We had agreed to stop having other children. We even started family planning after the last born, but (and a big 'but') we found out that C. was pregnant. I don't know what really happened. My wife and I started crying because we did not know what to do. We have been asking God and telling Him that six children were enough for us. However we were later comforted by God Himself because He said that He will never leave us and will protect us with the young ones. I therefore ask you to pray for us. C. is expecting the child in about three months. Remember we were not ready for this baby. Pray that we will be able to joyfully receive the baby as a gift from the almighty God. It is my prayer that my wife will be able to bear all that burden and that the baby will be a blessing to us. You know we have two boys with sickle cells. Please pray with us that God will not give us such another child. Brethren, I have been suffering with these sick boys and we don't like another one of that type. It will just finish us. We have many sleepless nights every year because of these sons when they are in pains. . . . With all that I am happy to tell you that there is nothing which will separate me from the Love of God. . . . Pray, pray for us. God bless you all."

I don't know this man, but I have prayed for him, and for all others who, with what the world would call "good reasons for abortion," receive the child from Him who made it, and who said, "Whoever receives a little child in My name, receives Me."

Note: Readers might be interested in attending the first international convention of Concerned Women for America in Washington, D.C., September 14-15. Speakers include Bev and Tim La Haye, Dee Jepsen, and Mary C. Crowley. For information call 619-440-1267 or write: CWA, P.O. Box 5100, San Diego, CA 92105.

Lord of All Seasons

Last April I spoke to a group of women in Florida about Jesus Christ being "Lord of All Seasons." The topic was their choice, and I found myself, as usual, tested along the very lines on which I was going to speak. During the previous week, Lars and I had learned that all twenty-eight of the nice new (and very expensive) windows we had installed in our new house *leaked*. I was anxious about many things—my mother's health (she has had more falls lately, forgets things more), my coming grandchild, a new word processor, which I wasn't sure I was smart enough to learn to use, and (alas!) a tooth which seemed about to fall out. What a list of varied things to worry about.

But Jesus died for me! He's risen and coming again! He has given me an inheritance that nothing can "destroy or spoil or wither" (1 Pt 1:4) and a kingdom which is unshakable (Heb 12:28). That's the gospel. Has it anything to do with leaking windows, computers, grandchildren, teeth? Well, I told myself, if it hasn't, you've got no business getting up in front of those women and opening your mouth at all. If I can't give thanks, trust, and worship the Lord in every "season," in the face of any set of facts which may touch my life, I am not really a believer. It is here, in my corner (or your corner) of God's earth, that I am assigned my lessons in the School of Faith.

P.S. Later: They fixed the windows for us, but now we find that all four of the outside doors must be fixed. God isn't finished with us yet.

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"If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

—Martin Luther

Letters

"The Newsletter has more solid content per word than any other subscription publication we receive. I hope it will not be discontinued." (from a reader in Maryland).

The mother of a baby who may have Down's Syndrome writes: "We will receive the results of her chromosome study on Thursday at 10 A.M. Should God bring your minds to our need, please pray for us to respond in faith, not bitterness. Nothing will change that day. God will reveal the reality of His limits, but our destiny will remain the same: to be like Him. 1 Peter 1:23 says, 'For we are not just mortals but sons of God; the live, permanent Word of our living God has given us His own indestructible heredity.' We love Him and are committed to receive what He has for us. We have so much to be grateful for to Him!"

Recommended Reading

Herbert Schlossberg: *Idols for Destruction*, Thomas Nelson. A stunning treatment of the ways in which idolatry corrupts the modern Christian's thinking. Secularization connotes a turning away from Christian faith, but Schlossberg clearly shows what it is that we turn to as substitutes for God: nature, mankind, power, history, social or political systems. In his chapter, "Idols of Humanity," he writes: "In its refusal to acknowledge will and responsibility in those over whom it establishes its protection, humanitar-

ianism could be speaking of cocker spaniels or Chevrolets rather than people.

"This view of humanity is a twisted and deformed travesty. It is ironic that for humanitarians only poor people, minorities, and those who have run afoul of the law are assumed to be shaped by the iron grip of circumstance. If we look at the villains—the police, politicians, social workers, businessmen—instead of at the victims, we find that the humanitarians have given them free will. They do not speak about the industrialist's tyrannical father, the loan shark's miserable childhood in an orphan home, the politician's neurotic mother. Those people are responsible for their acts, and therefore are human. Humanism thus awards its enemies the status of human beings while taking that status from its wards." (p.83)

Prayer Requests

- Pray for families. They are being attacked on every side. This is not surprising, since the family is the only firm foundation for any society and is therefore the target of satanic weapons. Pray for faithfulness to the vows of husband and wife, for wisdom for parents, for strength to stand alone, for the love described in 1 Corinthians 13.
- Pray for Christian schools, that they may be allowed to continue without government interference.
- Pray for mothers of young children especially, that they may have the courage to stay home in spite of the criticism of those who wonder why they don't do something "important."
- Pray for ministers of the Gospel, that they may stick to the Word no matter whether it helps their popularity or not. (Popularity is not usually one of the "perks" for those who are faithful. See Jn 15:20.)
- Pray for the national convention of Concerned Women for America, to be held in Washington, D.C., September 14 and 15.

Questions and Answers

Can you share some ideas to help us learn how to teach obedience to our children?

Here are some which my parents used on the six of us, and which I found effective in teaching my only child:

1. Establish trust. Never make an empty threat or an empty promise. Carry through. Love is very patient, very kind, and very inexorable.
2. Speak in a normal tone of voice, and speak once. (Be sure you have the child's attention first—look straight at him, let him know he has your attention.) If you repeat every command two or three times, you are teaching him that he needn't listen the first time.
3. Obey the Bible and use a rod for correction (See Prov 13:24;20:30;23:13) If you start this soon enough (a small switch for a small child) you'll not need to use it often.
4. Following punishment, repentance, and the resultant obedience, assure the child of your love. Never argue with him. Explanations should follow, not precede the command when dealing with a small child. Training, as my mother used to say, comes before teaching.

Travel Schedule Aug.-Oct. 1984

August 15-17 Clearwater, Florida, Summer Missions Program of World Outreach Fellowship, Clearwater Christian College. Dr. Clifford Baird, 305-339-8184

August 30 Hanover, New Hampshire, Campus Crusade Staff Conference. Jan Gilliam, 806-792-9115

September 14-16 Escondido, California, women's retreat for Emmanuel Faith Community Church. Mrs. Mary Strauss, 619-747-0473

September 17 Dallas, Texas, Southern Methodist University. Kyle Talkington, 214-692-3353

September 22 Olathe, Kansas, Fall Festival for College Church Women's Ministries, 913-764-4575

September 29 Lexington, Massachusetts, Grace Chapel Singles Group

October 19 Bolton, Massachusetts, Missionary conference, Trinity Church, Congregational. Mrs. Clara May Dickerson, 617-779-2774

October 26-28 Amherst, Ohio, Women Anew Conference. Sharon Engram, 216-984-3100

October 29 Ft. Wayne, Indiana, Ft. Wayne Bible College. Mr. Robert V. Jones, 219-456-2111

October 30-31 Edina and Roseville, Minnesota, Grace Church Missions Festival. Woody Phillips 612-926-1884 or 633-6479

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