

Jim Elliot: A Fool for Jesus Christ and the Gospel

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[0:00] If you would take your Bibles and go to the book of Psalm, Psalms 100. If you're visiting with us, you can take that Bible, the black Bible in the chair in front of you, pull that out, and kind of go towards the middle, page 435.

435, Psalm 100. There's a reason why I chose this Psalm, these verses to read, and I'll explain that later on in the message.

Here's the title, Jim Elliot, A Fool for Jesus and the Gospel. Psalm 100.

Shout joyfully to the Lord, all of the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the Lord Himself is God.

It is He who made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.

[1:20] For the Lord is good. His loving kindness is everlasting. His faithfulness is to all generations. Jim Elliot, A Fool for Jesus and the Gospel.

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. That's the classic line from Jim Elliot.

He wrote that as a college student in 1949. Maybe some of you here might even remember, if some of you are old enough.

And, what is it, 1956? January 8th. Seven years later, after he wrote this statement, He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

Seven years later, he and his four missionary colleagues, friends, They were killed by the Alka people. Or what's known as Wairani people group.

[2:27] Yet it was his martyrdom that paved the way to saving the Alka people. They were headed to extinction because of their high murder rates.

The high murder rate of the tribe. There was polygamy. There was murder. There was incest relationships. They were on the brink of extinction.

And this martyrdom opened the door to both spiritual and physical salvation for the Alka people. It saved these people. Their language, even their culture was saved.

The deaths of these five men have brought a fruitful life to their wives, especially to Elizabeth Elliot, as was Christians gaining a heart for missions.

As most of you, if not all of you know, Elliot, Elizabeth Elliot, his wife, she died this past year, June 15th. Is that right? Yeah, June 15th. So this tells us something.

[3:38] It tells us God's gospel word, and the blood spilled for proclaiming that gospel word, will never come back void.

Never. Why do I do these messages? Why do I do these biography sermons? And I tell you this every year since 2006.

December of 2006 is when I began to do this. About nine years ago. The reason is that this message would awaken in us a deeper love for the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel.

Bringing a deeper love for others in Cottonwood, Jerome, the Verde Valley, Arizona, the U.S., and the world. That's why I do this.

To ignite in you a passion for Christ, for the gospel, for the truth. And it would do that because you see the life of a missionary, you see the life of these real people like you and me, so committed to the gospel.

[4:49] And it would spur you on. It would awaken your heart. It would wake us up. And really, I do these messages so it would bring about revival.

Revival within God's church. I asked Daniel, I said, hey, you know, I know you've read the book Shadow of the Almighty, which that's why I'll be kind of referring to almost all of it today.

Shadow of the Almighty. It's the life and testament of Jim Elliot by Elizabeth Elliot. I said, you know what, what are some things that maybe impacted you about Jim Elliot?

And he wrote some things. We saw some similarities between him and I. And then he said this, and I asked if I could quote him on this. He said, I think the fear of foolishly wasting our lives often holds us back from taking risks for the gospel.

That's very true. We fear that we're foolishly wasting our lives. And that's what holds us back.

[6:02] From taking risks for the gospel. From making myself vulnerable within a church. Or making myself vulnerable amongst those, my neighbors, a co-worker, a friend, a relative.

I don't want to do that because I'm fearing I'm going to waste my life. Well, he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

I guess if you think that, maybe you think Jim Elliot was a fool then. Here's a prayer from Jim. Jim Elliot said, quote, Lord, Lord, make my way prosperous, not that I achieve high station, but that my life may be an exhibit to the value of knowing God.

We know God only through the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the only way you can know God. So if you're here today and you don't know God, you must understand the only way you can know God is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not through some ritual, not through some lighting of candles, not through any of those things. But through Jesus Christ alone. You must turn from your sin and put your trust in Jesus alone.

[7:18] He's the only one that can save you. Nobody else, no other person, just Jesus alone. Repent and put your trust in Jesus. And God will save you.

The work that Jim Elliot desired to go to the Alkas, the Wairani people, it came to fruition in September of 1955. He was slaughtered by those people about four months later.

As I said earlier, June 8th, 1956, Elizabeth Elliot said, the men for whom Jim Elliot had prayed for six years, killed him and his four companions. It was actually during his first two years of college, he became conscious of the direct personal implications of the Lord Jesus' command to go and preach the gospel.

So he planned to go to the mission field while he was just in college. He believed God called him to Latin America, specifically to Ecuador. And he had tremendous fruit when he went there.

Three years after he was there, there was tremendous fruit. People coming to Christ. God was using him mightily. What I'm going to do is, I'm going to look at his life.

[8:34] I think I have it up here. Yes. We will glean seven major aspects of Jim Elliot's life from Elizabeth Elliot's life and testament of Jim Elliot.

We're going to glean seven. Now there's probably many more we can look at, but I just came up with seven for us. I'm not going to talk about the history events of his life kind of chronologically. I'm not going to do that. I mean, it's very simple. You can get a book and read through that on your own or Google his name or you'll get a good assessment of his life. But I want to look at his life in terms of his character.

What are some things that we can glean from Jim Elliot? Here's seven. Number one, he passionately loved the Lord Jesus. He passionately loved the Lord Jesus.

And as I give you these seven characteristics, I'm going to read for you, most of it is going to be from his own words. He would write in his journal or letters he would write to his brother or his parents or even to Elizabeth.

[9:36] A few of them will be from Elizabeth from her perspective. But most of it is going to be from Jim Elliot himself. But from someone else's perspective in reference to the fact he passionately loved the Lord Jesus Christ, his roommate from college, he spent time in prayer.

He has strong conviction. He walked close to the Lord. Jim Elliot said, fix my heart holy, Lord, to follow Thee. Lord Jesus, I thank Thee that Thou didst banish the very principal distance on that cross.

Thou what's forsaken, thrust away from God that Thou shouldst bring me near. Grace, all grace. O Christ, let me know Thee.

Let me catch glimpses of Thyself seated and expectant in glory. Let me rest there despite all wrongs surging around me. Lead me in the right path, I pray.

Again, he says, confession of pride suggested by David Brainer's diary yesterday must become an hourly thing with me. How vile and base my thoughts have been lately.

[10:49] Not just some kind of unsympathetic, but rotten, lewd thinking that cannot be overcome simply, but willingly, willing to be rid of them. Lord, rebuke my flesh and deliver my heart from evil.

He said. Another time, Lord, give me firmness without hardness, steadfastness without dogmatism, love without weakness.

He said, what good are Greek commentaries, insight, gift, and all the rest if there's no heart for Christ? Christ. Elizabeth said his commitment was to God alone.

There's a time when he was in Ecuador, his stuff got stolen. This is what he wrote. The Lord gave me a victory in the loss, reminding me to be thankful for the abundance of possessions I have had. God knows, and I believe he sent this, that I might be weaned more and more from things material, even good, legitimate things, and have my affection set more firmly on him whom to possess is to have everything.

[11:58] Who could ask for more? One other one. He says, God, I pray thee, light these idle sticks of my life and may I burn for thee.

Consume my life, my God, for it is thine. I seek not a long life, but a full one. Like you, Lord Jesus. He passionately loved the Lord Jesus Christ.

Number two. He passionately loved missions. Because of his great love for the Lord Jesus Christ, it led him straight into a heart for missions, proclaiming the gospel to others.

You need to understand this with Jim Elliot. His passion for Christ automatically pushed him into missions. I mean, they went together for him. It wasn't separated.

He says, almost prophesying of his own death. Listen. Father, take my life, yea, my blood, if thou wilt. He's in college writing this.

[13:02] And consume it with thine enveloping fire. I would not save it. It is not mine to save. Have it, Lord. Have it all. Pour out my life as an oblation for the world.

Blood is only of value as it flows before thine altar. He's writing this as a college student. He actually believed in some respects all were called to missions.

Listen to this. Graciously listen to this. Our young men are going into professional fields because they don't feel called to the mission field.

He says, we don't need a call. We need a kick in the pants. The tombs themselves are not colder than the churches. Yikes.

He says, I only hope that he will let me preach to those who have never heard that name Jesus. He said, Father, if thou wilt let me go to South America to labor with thee and to die, I pray that thou wilt let me go soon.

[14:12] Nevertheless, not my will. Almost prophesying again his own death. Here's the connection with Psalm 100. You will look at this psalm differently.

Especially where it says, we are the sheep of his pasture. And then enter his courts, excuse me, his gates with thanksgiving, his courts with praise. Listen to what Jim Elliot says.

Overcome anything in the confidence of your union with him, with Christ, so that contemplating trial, enduring persecution, or loneliness, you may know the blessedness of the joy set before.

For, we are the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and enter his courts with praise. And what are sheep doing going into the gates? What is their purpose inside those courts?

To bleat melodies and enjoy the company of the flock? No. Those sheep were destined for the altar. Their pasture feeding had been for one purpose.

[15:19] To test them and fatten them for bloody sacrifice. Which is why we read from Romans chapter 8. We're like the sheep to be slaughtered.

Interesting take on that, isn't it? He says, talking about those in Ecuador, he worked with the Kichwa people group.

He says, Romanism dominates their souls and intoxication their bodies. Oh, that God would plant his spirit in some of those families as he is so graciously in ours, that they might know the blessing and recompense of living for God.

His parents were somewhat against him going into the mission field. They wanted him to stay on stateside. He said this, this is nothing else than what the Lord Jesus warned us of when he told the disciples that they must become so infatuated with the kingdom and following him that all other allegiances must become as though they were not.

And he never excluded the family tie. In fact, those loves which we regard as closest, he told us, must become as hate in comparison with our desires to uphold his cause.

[16:39] Wow, strong words from Javelin. Passion for the gospel, a passion for Christ, a passion for missions. He said, 1950, Lord, send me to Ecuador.

Another place where he almost prophesied his own death. It is time to die. For I have had all that a young man can have, at least all this young man can have. If there were no further issue for my training, it would be well.

I am ready to meet Jesus. He was so committed to missions, nothing would stop him, not even marriage. He says, I cannot condition myself to think of marriage now, in spite of all the bells and rings, not to mention the abundance of marriageable women on the horizon.

Things are too unsettled with me and I do not feel it fair, either to the girl or to the work of the Lord, to tie myself up now with all that the relationship involves. Another place, he says, so long as I can do a work in teaching the primitive people better as a single man, I will stay single.

And that brings me to the other thing we've been digging around, Alcas, my God, who is sufficient for them? Marriage is not for me now, it simply is not the time. And he waited five years to get married.

[18:04] He loved Elizabeth, but he did not marry her for five years. October 8th, 1953 was when they wedded. And it was a civil wedding. They didn't have, he couldn't, he despised a scathing message about marriage and like, he says something about the, he's like, what's the purpose of the candle bearers?

You know, wow, just couldn't stand that stuff. So he had a civil wedding, which is him, Elizabeth, and there was, I guess, somebody, I don't remember who it was, who married them.

Oh, there was witnesses, his good friend Ed and Ed's wife. That's it. There was just the five of them. And they had a daughter, she was born February 1955, two years later.

He says this, Lord God, give me a faith that will take sufficient quiver out of me so that I can sing over the Alka's father I want to sing.

He says, oh pray, that God would give us souls for Christ from this jungle and that we may rejoice together in that day for men and women of this tribe who have believed through our word and your prayers.

[19:17] Nothing can change the heart of this people but the spirit of the life giver himself and it is to him we cry in our mute helplessness. Oh Christ, I want this speaking to a mountain faith, this faith that is bold publicly for God.

November 1955, he said, God sent me soon to the Alka's. Elizabeth knew that her husband would be leaving without her and they began to discuss the possibilities of his not returning.

He said this to her, if God wants it that way darling, I am ready to die for the salvation of the Alka's. He loved the Lord Jesus Christ.

He loved missions. It just directly pushed him right into that. Third, number three, he enjoyed missions work. He actually loved it.

When he was leaving the U.S., he says this, they, his parents, wept some. I do not understand how God has made me. I didn't even feel like weeping and don't even now.

[20:38] Joy, sheer joy and thanksgiving fill and encompass me. He had a letter to his parents. He wrote this, we have all things in a bound. So please, do not be telling such sad stories to the home folks that they will begin to pity us.

We are the happy ones and are feeling great joy in these days working with God here in the jungles. We long for both establishment and outreach in the work.

He loved it. He was in that case. He loved this. He says, we are very busy and happy desiring only a fuller experience of the power of Christ.

Fourth, he called other Christians to be missions minded. He called other Christians to be missions minded. As a matter of fact, he was committed, he said, everyone should be missions minded.

What now, today, the term is called missional. That's the cool term. He said this, there are too many good preachers beating people night after night about a lost world who have never faced the challenge of sacrificial foreign service themselves.

[21:55] Yikes. Another one. question. How long shall we sit analyzing, questioning, arguing, discussing before God lays hold on us with power to thrust us out to the billion and a half who have not yet heard?

Another quote. Take this one graciously. American believers have sold their lives to the service of mammon. And God has his rightful way of dealing with those who succumb to the spirit of Laodicea.

Ouch. He didn't mess around. Oh, that God would shake up some of those married couples around Portland. He lived in Portland, Oregon.

With their prim, unconcerned for souls and saints dabbling with building lots, houses, jobs, babies, silverware, while souls starve for what they know.

No. He wanted people to be missions minded. And to stop focusing upon themselves. One person, he wrote about how the person said, quote, the worship service is most satisfying to me as an individual.

[23 : 13] End quote. Jim Elliot responds like this. What in all eternity has that got to do with it? Have her personal likes and dislikes any right to dictate method in the Holy Church of God?

Yikes. Take this one graciously too. For all you young people, this is for you. Jim Elliot, you wonder why people choose feels away from the states when young people at home are drifting because no one wants to take time to listen to their problems.

I'll tell you why I left. Because those stateside young people have every opportunity to study, hear, and understand the word of God in their own language. And these Indians have no opportunity whatsoever.

those, those, the people of Ecuador. Those whimpering stateside young people will wake up on the day of judgment condemned to worse fates than these demon-fearing Indians because having a Bible, they were bored with it.

Well, these never heard of such a thing as writing. The people didn't even know how to write. They didn't have their own language in a writing style. He had a passion for missions.

[24 : 35] He had a passion for Christ, a passion for missions. He enjoyed missions. And he called other Christians to have a passion for missions. Number five, he had sound good doctrine.

I'll list them out for you and I'll give a few quotes. The gospel needed to proclaim it. Which you, I mean, I've quoted to you numerous times about the gospel when he mentions the gospel about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another one, he was against emotionalism. Elizabeth said this about him, he did not make a practice of asking members of the congregation to make an overt response to the gospel or to the message.

Feeling that if the Holy Spirit was at work in the mind and heart of the listener during the meeting, he would continue that work later. He did not call for an altar call. He didn't do that. The gospel against emotionalism.

He had a passion, a good solid doctrine, reference to holy living godliness. He said this, quote, in reading the scriptures I find a great moral power. Therein, the scriptures, I am made aware of two great forces for good in human experience.

[25 : 46] The fear of God and the grace of God. Without the fear of God, I would not stop at doing evil. The fear of God restrains. Without the grace of God, I would have no desire to approach positive goodness.

One is a deterrent from evil, the other is an encouragement to good. He believed in irresistible grace. God is the only one who can open the heart of sinners.

He says they, the Alcas, are utterly untouched and so far they are inaccessible. It would take a miracle to open the way to them and we are praying for that miracle.

that is the only way God can save a bunch of rotten sinners like us. Right? Him being gracious to us.

And he knew that about the Alcas. He says, I have been much impressed lately of the absolute necessity of God himself rousing the conscience. I do not know how, nor even where to begin to make a man think seriously about sin and judgment.

[26 : 52] I must look to the work of the Holy Spirit for the beginning move toward any hint of any such working. He says later, we can only pray that God will bring light to these sightless and hopeless souls.

One more. He believes strongly in the sovereignty of God. He said this, I love this line. I like the line, he was no fool.

I like that line too, but this one is really good from Jim Elliot. Remember, you are immortal until your work is done. I think he might be quoting from another Puritan at this point, but he says, remember, you're immortal until your work is done.

God is sovereign. You are immortal until God's done with you. He says this, thus may we all find it and know the truth of the word which says he will be our guide even until death.

One more. The will of God is always a bigger thing than we bargain for. Good, solid doctrine.

[28:04] Two more characteristics that we can take away from Jim Elliot. He was a determined leader. He was driven. He determined to speak the gospel to others.

Even when he was in high school, he was a pacifist, didn't believe in war, and he was in this club in high school, and to be part of this club he had to give a speech in front of everybody.

This is for free, I don't have this written now. He had to give a speech. Well, the president of the club said, Jim, can you give a speech? Well, if you would not give a speech, you would forfeit you being part of the club. So he said, I'm not going to give a speech because it was in reference to the political thing of the day.

He says, I'm not going to give a speech. And then the president says, Jim, you know that if you do not give a speech, you're going to forfeit your membership. He says, I'll be glad to come up and tell you why I'm not going to give a speech.

He was going to give the gospel. And the president totally backtracked. He said, no, that's okay, Jim, you're forfeited, you don't need to give a speech, that's opportunity he had, he would give you the gospel.

[29:17] He loved Christ, he loved the gospel. Oh, and his mentality, as a different term leader, he delegated responsibility to preach and teach to the Quechua natives.

This is what he would do. He wanted to proclaim the gospel, give them the gospel, and see them respond to the gospel, and then teach them and train them and disciple them. And then he would teach them and disciple them to be preaching and teaching themselves.

And then he would hand the work over to them, and then he wanted to go somewhere else and do the same thing. That was his mentality. Good biblical mentality. You go, you preach the gospel, church establish, establish them, move on.

That's the type of leader he was. Oh, here's another place too, I'll give you two more. Elizabeth was talking to him, she said, Jim, are you sure you're supposed to go that is to the Alcas?

I am called. One more.

[30:26] the last time she saw him, he's about to go out the little door of their little tent hut place there in the middle of the jungle.

She almost said this, but she didn't say it. She almost said, and she wrote that she thought it, she almost said, do you realize that might be the last time you go out that door? But she didn't say it. So he goes out the door and she describes, he goes out the door walking down the bamboo path with a determined gait.

I mean, he was just driven. That was the last time she saw him. He was a determined leader. And one more, he faced discouragement but cried out to God.

He faced discouragement but cried out to God. He says, discouragement is a satanic tool that seems to fit my disposition and the enemy knows it. I'm sure none of you experienced that.

Probably can't relate to any of this. Especially discouragement. I understand that. But humor me.

He faced major bouts of discouragement and depression a couple months before they took on what they call Operation Alka.

[31:48] They would go and minister and tried to proclaim the gospel to the Alka people. He wrote a note to Bob, his brother. He said, pray for my soul.

We need no funds, really, nor more workers. But we need a spiritual power and vigor in the soul.

Our enemy wields well his weapons and his, no less than ours, are spiritual weapons for the defense of those same strongholds which we are equipped to pull down.

Another place, he says, pray that we might see the hand of God working among this small group of Indians and that the Lord will protect us from the work of the enemy here. Because of many times where he faced bouts of depression and discouragement.

those are his seven characteristics you can take away from Jim Elliott. I'm going to end though, interesting ending with Elizabeth Elliott's statement that she makes in Through the Gates of Splendor, which I think is a great way for us to close off this message about Jim Elliott.

She says this, we are sinners and we are buffoons. It is not the level of our spirituality that we can depend on.

[33:17] It is God and nothing less than God. For the work is God's and the call is God's and everything is summoned by him and to his purposes.

The whole scene, the whole mess, the whole package. Can you relate to this? She says our bravery and our cowardice, our love and our selfishness, our strengths and our weaknesses. We see a guy like Jim Elliott, we say, wow, this guy is phenomenal, he's great, whoa. He was just like you and me. A Christian, the Lord God can use our weaknesses for his glory. for you to be used as an instrument of his to bring the good news. He can use us. Wouldn't it be grand, wouldn't it be grand that we would show ourselves to be so vitally, virtually, comparatively different from the world?

that we would be a people in this country who are ready and willing to proclaim the gospel, even to those Muslims who are coming into this country.

[34:51] If there's anything that they need, who do they need? They need the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. I mean, that's where there's peace.

That's where there's joy. Right? And he can use us. A little town. We're not going to be away from this, even though we live in Cottonwood.

I have a Muslim right across the street from me. They need to hear the gospel. Wouldn't it be grand that God would use us, our weaknesses, the whole nine yards, to proclaim the gospel to these people?

What's the reason for the message? That this message would awaken in us a deeper love for the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel. You're so enamored with his grace towards you.

And it will bring a deeper love for others in Cottonwood, the people of Jerome, the Verde Valley, Arizona, the United States, the world, a passion to us, a small little church here in Cottonwood, Arizona, called Cottonwood Bible Church.

[36:06] May God awaken that in you. Can I take a moment and pray? Thank you for the life of Jamelia, and we thank you for his death.

let us be ready to be the sheep. We are your sheep and we're getting fattened up so we can be laid on the altar as a sacrifice, which is not doing, not really a sacrifice.

We're just obeying orders. We pray, Father, because you've been so gracious to us, let us show that same grace and empower us because, as it said, it's who you are that drives us.

take a few moments, if you would, just ponder and think about what we've seen in God's word, about the life of Jim Elliot, and after a few moments we'll do our time of giving, sing our last two songs in our closing prayer.

Thank you.