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Date: Friday, September 17, 1999

Title: His Kingdom is Forever

Series: A Mighty Fortress

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His Kingdom is Forever

Lisa Barry: : All this week on *Gateway To Joy*, Elisabeth Elliot has been looking at the truth of a well-known hymn through the life of an unknown missionary. Her name is Hazel Peebles and her life is living proof that the God we serve is a mighty fortress. We've watched a World War unfold from her first hand experience. And we've seen the faith and trust that Hazel showed even in the mist of pain, disease, danger and discouragement. Elisabeth will wrap up this series today with the closing chapter of the diary. If you're experiencing a difficult time today, then I pray that you'll take courage and find hope from today's program. And now let's get started with this Friday edition of *Gateway To Joy*. Here's Elisabeth.

Elisabeth Elliot: "You are loved with an everlasting love." That's what the Bible says. "And underneath are the everlasting arms." This is your friend Elisabeth Elliot, continuing today my talk from Hazel Peebles Jackson's diary during World War Two. She was a missionary in what was then called French Indochina, now Vietnam. And I've been weaving in and out of her diary entries stanzas from Martin Luther's great hymn "A Mighty Fortress."

I do hope that some of you have gleaned the magnificent words of that hymn and have enjoyed Hazel's diary of her missionary family in Indochina. It's my hope always to link what God says in His holy Word with our down-to-earth needs. In case some of you were wondering why in the world did Elisabeth Elliot do something so complicated. You know, we've got this great hymn and then we've got this diary and I don't get any connection.

Well, I'm always trying to make the connections between the great principles of the spiritual life and the ordinary stuff of everyday that we have to do. Going to work, getting out of bed, sweeping a room, visiting a neighbor, reprimanding a child--these are the things which some people would feel take them completely away from the spiritual things that they really are interested in.

But you know, there has to be a link between God and us--not just on Sundays, not just during a quiet time--but day by day, as we offer up ourselves and all the work that God has given us to do.

You know, I want my life to be an offering--whether I'm cooking in the kitchen or broadcasting on this station, or out for a walk with my husband. So let me read a little bit more.

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This will be the end of Hazel's diary.

July 5, 1945: "My heart is breaking. I can only say through my tears, 'Thy will be done.' When Jacob thought Joseph was lost for good, God truly meant it for good. So may it be with my loving, precious Bernie."

Bernie Jackson was her third son, and he had just been sworn in to the navy. I knew Bernie when he and I were in high school and Hampton DuBose Academy in Florida. His mother goes on--the next day, July 6, 1945. She quotes this poem:

"Not now, but in the coming years, it may be in a better land we'll read the meaning of our tears up there; someday we'll understand.

Loved ones may go and all I hold most dear
Life lose its charm and sorrow linger near.

Yet there is One whose love will still abide
Through cloud and sunshine what so e'er be tide."

Someone, undoubtedly, is listening to me today whose life has lost its charm and sorrow is lingering near. Let me remind you there is One whose love will still abide through cloud and sunshine what so e'er be tide. God knows what you need, and He waits to hear your prayers. Remember what Hazel said back in December of 1941 in her diary?

The war had started and she writes, "Praise God for the peace and joy He gives in the midst of war and uncertainty regarding our immediate future. Thankful for each day that passes. Letter from the Swiss Consul regarding repatriation. The Japanese boat will probably be the last one 'til the end of the war. We are trusting God to show clearly His will."

Trusting God to show clearly His will. And I'm sure that Hazel would have found exactly the same principle that I have discovered in the spiritual life, God is never late in showing us His will. We often think that He is because we want Him to show it to us sooner than we need to. But we can trust God to show us His will in His time. In the meantime, we do faithfully what God has given us to do today.

Now how does God show us His will? Well, first of all, through His Word, through circumstances, through prayer and surrender--four things which I think are very essential if we honestly and truly want to know what God wants us to do. Study His Word, note the circumstances in which you find yourself, pray, and surrender. It's simple, but not necessarily easy.

In our worst times--those times when we are frantic with grief, totally at a loss to know what to do; or perhaps kicking yourself around the block because you've blown it somehow, you've made a mess of things--where do you turn? Do you allow time for quietness, for contemplation, for studying the Bible, for doing the next thing?

I read a very remarkable book about a man named Walter Ciszek who was in concentration camp under the Soviets. And in this book which is entitled *He Leadeth Me*, he has been interrogated and the interrogators were trying to persuade him to cooperate. And this is what he said. You can imagine what a dilemma he was in, with these interrogators wanting

this godly man to cooperate with them.

He says, "I saw only my own weakness and helplessness to choose either position open to me--cooperation or execution. I knew that I had gone beyond all bounds. I had crossed over the brink into a fit of blackness I had never known before. It was very real, and I began to tremble. I had lost the last shreds of my faith in God. Recognizing that, I turned immediately to prayer in fear and trembling.

"I knew I had to seek immediately the God I had forgotten. I knew immediately what I must do. What I *would* do. And somehow I knew that I could do it. I knew that I must abandon myself entirely to the will of the Father and live from now on in this spirit of self-abandonment to God. And I did it. God's will was not hidden somewhere out there in the situations in which I found myself. The situations themselves were His will for me."

Now think about that. I'm putting in a parenthesis here, but can you imagine coming to the point where he recognizes that the situation in which he found himself--which was this wicked concentration camp under the Soviets--were God's will for him.

"What He wanted for me," Ciszek says, "was to accept these situations from His hands." This is God's hands he's talking about. "To let go of the reins and place myself entirely at His disposal. It was the grace God had been offering me all my life, but which I had never really had the courage to accept in full."

And of course he was able to do what, in his weakness and helplessness, he was quite sure he could not do. Remember that mighty fortress who is our God.

And I love what Janet Erskine Stuart says, "God seems to have laid out the order of the things in His Church not for a general and brilliant triumph, but for the hidden sanctification of the individual souls which compose it."

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Did God guide Hazel and her family? Of course He did. Did God guide Walter Ciszek in that terrible dilemma in concentration camp? Of course He did. Were there times when they were utterly bewildered? Of course there were. Remember the three simple steps for discerning the will of God. Read the Word, note the circumstances, pray and surrender. You might say that that's four steps. Prayer and surrender are almost linked together, aren't they?

And make sure that you sing some hymns. If you don't know any old hymns, I hope that you'll get your hands on a hymnbook and copy out that wonderful hymn that we've been reading from this week--"A Mighty Fortress."

"Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; the body they may kill: God's truth abideth still--His kingdom is forever." Tell God you'll do anything He says. Read your Bible, pray, sing hymns, do faithfully today what God has given you to do. Do the next thing.

"From an old English parsonage down by the sea,
There came in the twilight a message for me.
It's quaint Saxon legend deeply engrav'n
hath as it seems to me teaching from heaven.
And all through the hours the quiet words ring
like a low inspiration 'Do the Next Thing.'"

Are you worried about tomorrow? Are you frantic about a certain decision that seems to have to be made within the next few days, and you just don't know what it is? God is there. God is much more interested in your doing the right thing than you are. He'll hear your prayers. May God remind you that He is a mighty fortress.

Lisa Barry: As we bring this series to a close, I want to offer one more opportunity for you to purchase a book we've been telling you about this week. It's a collection of hymn stories that correspond with each day of the year. If you've had a desire to learn more about hymns but didn't know where to start, this is it. The book is called *The One Year Book of Hymns*. The cost is \$18.50 and to purchase it you can send that along with a note to this address:

Gateway To Joy, Box 82500, Lincoln, NE, 68501. That's Gateway To Joy, Box 82500, Lincoln, NE, 68501. Or call toll free 1 800-759-4JOY. That's 1-800-759-4569. Or a third option is our Web site and that can be found at gatewaytojoy.org.

Gateway To Joy has been a production of Back to the Bible, and people like you make it possible. Be with us again on Monday when Elisabeth Elliot begins a brand new series called "Unavoidable Uncertainties." We've all had a few of those, haven't we? It's all coming up next time on *Gateway To Joy*.

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