

[Day #16] Pt 1: No Graven Image

Read: Romans 3:3-4; Exodus 20:3-4

Author Elisabeth Elliot had both the credibility and the agility of mind and pen to speak concerning suffering. Her first husband was savagely martyred, her second died from cancer, and her third cared for her through a long, debilitating illness which took her in 2015.

Evidence of the hard storyline Elliot's life took is that a novel she published, which closely mirrored her own story, was met with criticism by the Christian public at the time. The primary complaint about the book entitled, *No Graven Image*, was that it wasn't believable; certainly God would never subject one of His choice servants to such adversity!

Obviously those who complained: 1) were not familiar with Elliot's own story; and 2) didn't enjoy having their own "graven images" of what God is really like challenged. Elliot welcomed the criticism, which only confirmed the book's premise: that God is who He is, does as He wills, and answers to no one but Himself; any other god we erect in our hearts is a graven image.

How do our own concepts of God stand against the tests of the Scriptures and of life? Have we built enough mystery into our faith so that we are unshaken by a God who

- tells the Israelites to draw close to Him at the mount and then terrifies them? (Exodus 20:18-19)
- heals Naaman's leprosy but inflicts it on Elisha's servant? (2 Kings 5)
- promises to answer prayer (John 14:14) yet sometimes is silent?
- promises to never leave us (Hebrews 13:5) yet sometimes it feels as if He is absent?
- bottom line – allows seemingly bad things to happen to good people?

Have you noticed how the god we erect in our hearts usually looks strangely like ourselves, following our logic, acting as we think best? Then, when we anticipate God will "zig," but instead He "zags," we are hurt, disillusioned, even offended. Such responses – and we've all had them – are evidence of a faulty view of God, a graven image. Even Job slipped up on this point.

"Let God be true and every man a liar." (Romans 3:4) Imagine how different life would be if we could be so deeply planted in biblical faith that all God allows – good or bad – were equally met in our hearts with worship and awe, *especially* when it is different from our expectation.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What kind of “graven image” do people typically erect about God?

How do they respond when He shatters their graven image by responding differently from what they expected (including a response of seeming silence)?

What do you think would be a God-honor response to these inevitable “surprises”?