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SF770: Soul Care

Book Report: Let Go by Francois Fenelon

Mar 3, 2023

*Let Go* by Francois Fenelon is a collection of letters written by Fenelon to several different people. The message behind all of these letters can be summarized in one sentence – pick up your cross and die. It seems like many of these people have reached out to Fenelon to be consoled, counseled, and encouraged in whatever situation or turmoil they were facing. But Fenelon gives them one piece of advice, which is to die so that they would fully surrender themselves to the whole process that God has prepared for them. Grief and loss is something that is naturally experienced in this world. Suffering is also part of that, but sometimes it can be self-induced. A lot of times, when people experience these things, they try to negotiate themselves out of the painful moments. Whatever the cause of the grief, loss, and suffering, Fenelon speaks into three main points that all intertwine with each other: stop negotiating and resisting, surrender yourself, and find rest in Jesus.

Fenelon mentions over and over to give into the hand of God and stop resisting. This is the first step of letting go. Giving ourselves to God means loosening the grip and the control we think we have over our own lives. He says, “Nothing so shortness and soothes our pains as this spirit of non-resistance” (104). In contrast, a spirit of resistance will prolong and further agitate our pain. We must realize that there is no other way but through. Fenelon says, “I see that every exit is closed. God intends to accomplish His work in you by cutting off every human resource. He is a jealous God” (143). There is no one else who can bring us comfort and fulfillment but God.

Surrendering yourself comes through the process of letting go. Surrender does not look like doing more or serving more, but it is a laying down of your will. Fenelon says, "All that lies in your power is the direction of your will" (172). I'm reminded of what Jesus says. In John 5:19, he says, "The Son can do nothing by himself; he can only do what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." This is a perfect example of surrender. Another powerful example is in Matthew 26, when Jesus is at the Garden of Gethsemane, and he prays, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." And again he prays, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." Jesus vocalizes his will - that he wants the cup to pass. He is not wanting to suffer the cross, where there will be excruciating pain. The cross is where Jesus experiences physical, spiritual, and cosmic pain. He who knew no sin would take on sin to cancel the debt of sin. And only Jesus would resurrect. In the Garden and the presence of the Father, Jesus surrendered His will. On the cross, it was not death that overtook His life, but Jesus willingly gave it up.

Jesus invites us into a place of rest. And this will ultimately be the place where we will be comforted. Fenelon says, "Sink in silence into the bosom of Him who is the word, the life, and the soul of all those who speak and live the truth. You will find in Him every need supplied. You will also find everything in Him to be perfect, which you find so imperfect in the creatures in whom you confide (395). Everything that is not of God must die in us. And in that season of pain, suffering, trial, we must submit ourselves to the Lord and not the pain. Resistance or self-medication will prolong the pain, and it will not address the issues of the heart. Surrendering of will is the pathway to God. And Jesus is our reward.

The topic of “letting go” is near and dear to my present context, not just in ministry, but in my personal life. There are a lot of things I need to let go of. Fenelon says it in his letter. “We indulge in a thousand subtle and superfluous reflections. We are constantly afraid of not saying or doing enough. We get angry, excited, exhausted, distracted, and finally make no headway.” This strikes my heart, especially this week because I am preaching for the first time at my church. I can lead worship and say things with the clutch of an instrument. But to speak and preach the word of God is something outside of my comfort zone. I often found myself thinking about what would happen if I messed up, if I froze, what people would think of me, and a fear of utter failure. I had to get into the presence of God many times this week because I was afraid of people. I know that this must die, and I fully surrender myself to the possibility that it might happen, but it will be alright. My world will not crumble because I know who I am in God.

This book is in line with my theology of soul care. I believe that there are seasons of suffering and moments of crisis that reveal areas of our flesh that need to die. In James 1:2-4, it says, “Count it all joy when you face trials of many kinds, because the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James says to count it all joy because when you prostrate before the Lord and submit yourself to the process that the Lord is taking you through, you learn to deal with difficulties in His presence. You learn to posture yourself before the Lord and look to Him. The suffering will fade, but God will remain. And that is the crux of dying to yourself. It is the heart of God that we live life abundantly. God is for us, and He is the Bishop of our souls. Our souls are abundant and filled only in the presence of the Living God. When we are tested and tried and found faithful, looking to Jesus, we are submitted to the sanctifying process. Things that can be shaken off will be shaken off, and the things that are unshakable remain.

With integrity, I have read this book

Thoroughly and Entirely— 100 %

Quickly but Completely— \_\_\_\_%

Thoroughly but NOT Entirely—

\_\_\_\_%

Quickly and NOT Completely—

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## Bibliography

Fenelon, Francois. *Let Go: to Get Peace and Real Joy*. Whitaker House, 1973. Kindly edition.

Location 845.