From “LET GO”  
By Fenelon  
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We Should Listen to God and Not to Self

I beg you not to listen to self. Self-love whispers in one ear and the love of God in the other. Self-love is always worthless, aggressive, grasping, and impulsive. But the love of God is so different. It is simple, peaceful, and speaks but a few words in a mild and gentle voice. And the moment we decide to start listening to the voice of self, we can no longer hear the more modest whisperings of divine love. You can always tell when self is speaking. Self always wants to entertain itself and never feels sufficiently well attended to. It talks of friendship, regard, esteem, and does not wish to hear anything that is not flattering. The love of God, on the other hand, desires that self should be forgotten, that it should be counted as nothing, that God might be all in all. God knows that it is best for us when self is trampled under foot and broken as an idol, in order that He might live within us, and make us after His will.

So let that vain, complaining babbler—self-love—be silenced, that in the stillness of the soul we may listen to God.

Absolute Trust Is the Shortest Road to God

I have no doubt that God considers you to be one of His friends; otherwise He would not trust you with so many crosses, sufferings and humiliations. Crosses are God’s means of drawing souls closer to Himself. And these crosses accomplish His purposes much more rapidly and effectually than all of our personal efforts put together. Crosses destroy self-love at its very root, down in the depths of the human spirit where we can hardly detect it. But God knows where it is lodged, and He attacks it in its greatest strongholds.

If we have strength and faith enough to trust ourselves completely into the hands of God, and follow Him wherever He leads us there will be no need of stretching and straining to reach perfection. But since we are so weak in faith, and always stopping along the way to ask questions, our journey is lengthened and we get behind in spiritual development. So you see how important it is for you to abandon yourself as completely as possible to God, and continue to do so until your last breath. And don’t be afraid. He will never leave you.

Our Knowledge Stands in the Way of Our Becoming Wise

Live in quiet peace, my dear young lady, without any thought for the future. For only God knows if you have a future in this world. Perhaps not. In fact, you do not even have a today that you can call your own. A Christian must live out the hours of today in accord with the plans of God, to whom the day truly belongs.

Keep on with the good things you are doing, since you feel a leaning in these directions, and certainly you will be able to get them done. But be careful of distractions and the desire to do too many things at once. Above all things, be faithful to the present moment, doing one thing at a time, and you will receive all the grace you need.

I am sure that you understand that it is not enough to be merely separated from the world. For we can be separated and be quite proud about it. So we need to give considerable attention to becoming lowly. And I want you to see clearly the distinction between these two things. In separation, we renounce the outer things of the world. But when we turn to the subject of lowliness and humility we are then dealing with the inner self. Every shadow of pride must be left behind. You cannot imagine how dangerous pride is—especially if it is that pride of wisdom and morality which seems so right and kind.

We must take a humble position in every situation. We must never brag about ourselves, and especially not of our goodness or special strength. I have said this because I think you are depending too much on your own strength, your own selflessness, and your own uprightness. What you need to see is that these things are not your own. They are God’s.

We can learn a lesson from babies. Babies own nothing. They treat diamonds and apples alike. Be a babe. Have nothing of your own. (It all belongs to God anyway!) Forget yourself. Give way on all occasions. Let the smallest be greater than you.

When you pray, let your prayers be simple loving prayers out of the heart. This is far better than more refined prayers which come only from the head.

You will learn most in times of deprivations, deep meditation and silence of the soul before God. It is here where you will learn to renounce your own selfish spirit and to love humility, obscurity, weakness and submission. These things, so despised by the world, are the accomplished teachers of all truths. Human knowledge can only stand in the way.
Beware of the Pride of Reasoning; the True Guide to Knowledge Is Love

Your mind is too much taken up with your circumstances, and this hinders you from understanding the mind of God. Even worse, I find you too much inclined to arguing and reasoning. I am quite afraid of this inclination too much reasoning because I think it is such a hinderance to the kind of quiet meditation in which God reveals Himself. You must learn to be humble, simple, and sincerely separated from the ways of men. When you are in the presence of God, be quiet, calm, and do not reason with Him. I am giving you this advice because your most influential friends are such dry, reasoning, critical people that they hinder you in your inner life. Even though you may have resolved to not take spiritual advice from them, yet their endless reasonings about unanswerable questions would render you so imperceptibly, draw you away from God and finally plunge you into the depths of unbelief. I am pointing out this danger because of the reasoning kind of person you were before your conversion. Habits of long standing are easily revived. And the subtle pressures which cause us to revert to our original position are very difficult to detect, because they seem so natural to us. So be very careful of taking up any habits of the past, no matter how innocent they may seem. Distrust them. You might be starting something which will be the end of you.

I haven’t had any leisure time for study for four months now. And even though I enjoy study very much, I am very happy to forego it, and not cling to anything, if this is God’s will. It may be that during the coming winter I will have some leisure time for my library, but even then I shall enter it cautiously, keeping one foot on the threshold, ready to leave it whenever God suggests that I should. I believe that the mind needs to fast just as well as the body. You know how much I enjoy writing and speaking, but right now I have no desire to write, or speak, or to be spoken about, or to reason, or to persuade anybody. This may seem like a rather dull way of life to some and it is true that I do have my share of problems, but I do manage to get away from it all and have a little recreation at times. I am a blessedly free man, and I try to do each day whatever I feel the Lord is leading me to do. Of course, those who are trying to figure out where I will be and when are sadly mixed up. God bless them! I am not trying to annoy them, but I insist on freedom in the Lord. I would say to them as Abraham said to Lot, “Is not the whole land before thee? If thou wilt take the left hand, I will go to the right.” (Gen. 13:9).

Happy is he who is a free man, but only the Son of God can make us really free. He can do it by breaking every fetter. And how does He do that? By that word that divides husband and wife, father and son, brother and sister. There is not a person in the world who can be allowed to hinder us from doing the will of God. If we allow the world to hinder us, then our professing freedom is only a word. And we will be as easily captured as a bird whose leg is tied to the ground. He might seem to be free. If the string is delicate enough, you might not even see it. And if it is long enough, the bird might be able to do a little flying. But, nevertheless, he is a prisoner. I hope you see what I am trying to say. Because the freedom that I covet for you to enjoy is far more valuable than all you are fearful of losing.

I want you to be faithful, to put into practice that which you know, that you may be entrusted with more. Do not trust your intellect. It has so often misled you! My own intellect has been such a deceiver that I no longer count upon it. Be simple and firm in your simplicity. Remember that “the fashion of this world passeth away” (I Cor. 7:31) and we shall vanish with it if we make ourselves like it. But the Word of God will never pass away, and neither shall we if we pay attention to it and put it into practice.

Again I warn you, beware of philosophers and the world’s great educators. They will always be a snare to you. I know you have good motives, and you expect to do them some good by your associations, but I must warn you that they will do you more harm than you will do them good. They spend their time talking about trifling matters and never reach the knowledge of the truth. They have a greedy desire for knowledge which can never be satisfied. They are like those conquerors who wreck and destroy the world without possessing it. For they gain much knowledge, without any hope of ever putting it all into practice. Solomon knew all about this from personal experience and testifies to the vanity of gathering up knowledge.

I’m convinced that everything we do should be under the guidance of God. We should not study unless He guides us to study. And if He is guiding us to study, then let us meditate on our studies even on the way to the grocery store. Let’s put our whole heart into it. And then, too, we must study prayerfully. We must not forget that God is both Truth and Love. We can only know the Truth in proportion to our love. When we love Truth, we understand it well. If we do not love Love, we do not know Love. He who loves much and remains humble, is the Well-beloved one of the Living Truth. He not only knows more than the philosophers know, but he knows more than they desire to know. I pray that you might obtain that knowledge which is reserved for babes and the simple-minded, while it is hid from the wise and prudent (Matthew 11:25).
The Discovery and Death of Self

Yes, I am happy to have you call me your father! Because I certainly am — and always will be. You only need more assurance that I love you as a father, and this assurance will come when your heart is freed from the bondage of selfish love. We are in confining quarters, indeed, when we are enclosed in self, but when we emerge from that prison, and enter into the immensity of God and the liberty of His children, we are truly free.

Though it sounds strange to say it, I am rejoicing that God has reduced you to a state of weakness. Your ego can neither be convinced nor forced into submission by any other means. It is always finding secret lines of supply from your own courage; it is always discovering impenetrable retreats in your own cleverness. It was hidden from your eyes while it fed upon the subtle poison of an apparent generosity as you constantly sacrificed yourself for others. But now God has forced it to cry aloud, to come forth into open day and display its excessive jealousy. Oh, how painful, but how beneficial these times of weakness! As long as any self-love is remaining, we are always afraid it will be revealed. But God does not give up as long as the least symptom of it lurks in the innermost recesses of the heart. God pursues it, and by some infinitely merciful blow, forces it into the open. And the sight of the problem then becomes the cure. Self-love, forced into the light, sees itself as it really is in all its deformity and despair and disgrace. And in a moment, the flattering illusions of your whole selfish life, are dissipated. God sets before your eyes your idol: self. You look at that spectacle and you cannot turn your eyes away. Nor can you hide the sight from others.

To expose self-love in this way without its mask is the most mortifying punishment that can ever be inflicted. We no longer see self as wise, prudent, polite, composed, and courageous in sacrificing itself for others. It is no longer the old self-love whose diet consisted in the belief that it had need of nothing, and deserved everything. It weeps from the rage that it has wept. It cannot be stillled, and refuses all comfort, because its poisonous character has been detected. It sees itself foolish, rude, and impudent, and is forced to look its own frightful countenance in the face. It says with Job, “For the thing I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me” (Job 3:25). For it is that which it fears most that will be its destruction.

We have no need that God should attack in us that which is lifeless and unresponsive. (It is the living only that must die). Nothing else matters. So you see why I rejoice in your state of weakness: This is what you needed — to behold a self-love defeated, sensitive, impure, and exposed for what it really is. And now all you have to do is to quietly look at it as it is. The moment you can do this, self will disappear.

You asked for a remedy, that your problems might be cured. You do not need to be cured, you need to be slain. Quit looking for a remedy and let death come. This is the only way to deal with self. Be careful however of that bitter bravery that decides to accept no remedy, for this itself may become a remedy in disguise, giving a type of satisfaction and comfort to your ego. Do not seek any comfort from self-love, and do not conceal the disease. Uncover everything in simplicity and holiness and then allow yourself to die.

But understand that this is not done by any exertion of your own strength. When you finally see self for what it is, weakness has become your only possession. Strength is not even in the picture. And if you had any, it would only make the agony longer and more distressing. If you die from weakness and weariness, you will die more quickly and less violently. A dying life must of necessity be painful. Kindnesses are a cruelty to one who is being tortured to death. All he longs for is that one fatal blow — not food, not sustenance. In fact, if it were possible to weaken him even further and hasten his death, we would be shortening his sufferings. But we can do nothing. Only the hand that tied him down to that place of torture can deliver that fatal blow that will set him free.

So do not ask for either remedies or sustenance. Do not even ask for death. To ask death is impatience. And to ask food or remedies is only to prolong the agony. What, then, shall we do? Do nothing. Seek to nothing. Hold to nothing. Simply confess everything, not as a means of getting relief, but because of humble desire to yield unto Jesus.

Though I am your Father in the Lord, do not look to me as a source of life. I would rather have you consider me as a means of death to your love of self. For just as surgical instruments would fail in fulfilling their purpose if they did not minister to life, so an instrument of death would be falsely named if, instead of slaying, it kept alive. For the time being, I would be that instrument of death. If I seem to be hard, unfeeling, indifferent, pitiless, wearied, annoyed, and contemptuous, God knows how far it is from the truth. But He permits me to seem this way. And I shall be much more serviceable to you in this false and imaginary character than were I to show my real feelings and very human desire to help. You see, the point is not how you are to be sustained and kept alive, but how you are to give up and die.
Resisting God, an Effective Hindrance to Grace

Down deep in your heart I believe you know what God demands of you, but you are resisting Him. And this is the cause of all your distress. You are beginning to think that it is impossible for you to do what God requires. But recognize this for what it is: a temptation to give up hope. Now it's quite all right for you to give up hope about self (it will never be any better!), but never give up hope in God. He is all good and all powerful, and He will give whatever you need according to your faith. If you will believe all things, all things shall be yours, and you shall even remove mountains. But if you believe nothing, you shall have nothing. And only you will be to blame. Look at Abraham, who hoped against every reasonable hope! Look at Mary, who, when the most incredible thing in the world was proposed to her, did not hesitate, but exclaimed, "be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

So open up your heart to the riches of God's grace. You are now so locked up within yourself that you not only do not have the power to do what is required of you, but you do not even desire to have it. You actually seem to be afraid of what might happen if you open up to God's grace in this situation. And, of course, God's grace cannot fill your heart when it is so completely locked up.

All I ask of you is that you have a teachable spirit of faith, and do not pay any attention to self. Simply trust everything into the hands of God, be humble, and open up to His grace. Through meditation and prayer, you will receive peace, and everything will gradually be worked out for you. And the things which, in your hour of temptation, seemed so difficult will disappear almost imperceptibly.

The True Source of Peace Is in the Surrender of the Will

Live in continued peace. But understand that peace does not depend upon the fervor of your devotion. The only thing you need to be concerned about is the direction of your will.

Give that up to God without reservation. The important question is not how religious you are, or how devoted, but rather is your will in harmony with God's? Humbly confess your faults. Learn to be detached from the world and completely abandoned to God. Love Him more than yourself and His glory more than your life. The least you can do is to desire and ask for such a love. God will then pour out upon you that special love which only His children know, and He will give you His peace.