

# An Invitation



THE IMMEDIATE RESULT OF THE COMING OF

THESE GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY TO ME

WAS NO OUTWARD CHANGE IN ANYTHING,

BUT AN INWARD CHANGE OF EVERYTHING.

*Elisabeth Rundle Charles*



*Come and Rejoice with Me!*

ELISABETH RUNDLE CHARLES

1828-1896

## AN INVITATION TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

*And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!"  
And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. (Revelation 22:17)*

*For the bread of God is He who comes  
down from heaven and gives life to the world. (John 6:33)*

What words could portray the sweet, open, and welcoming invitation of the Christian life more aptly than these: "Come and rejoice with me! For I have found a Friend." Through this poem, Elisabeth Rundle Charles simply and wondrously describes her joyful discovery of the One Who came down out of heaven freely inviting all to come and feast on Him as bread divine. By enjoying God's free gift of grace, we taste something of heaven's life on earth.

"Come and rejoice with me! For I was wearied sore." Upon finding Him, there is no longer the need to restlessly wander or wistfully wonder, "What is the meaning of life?" He is our satisfaction and the answer to our every problem. Do we need love? He is "a treasury of love, a boundless store." Do we need a friend? He is One "Who knows my heart's most secret depths, yet loves me without end!"

Christ the Lord Himself has drawn close enough for us to experience Him directly, personally, and intimately. For us to live pleasingly and joyfully before God, there is no substitute for the enabling supply that flows from Him to us. In the realm of things truly Christian—Christ is everything!

Yes, we may rejoice, for by the Father's wise design, His Son Jesus Christ is perfectly suited to meet our every need—and more than sufficiently so! Let us attend to that welcoming voice of invitation to come and rejoice in Christ, Who is a treasury of richest delights!

*Come and Rejoice with Me!*

# *Come and Rejoice with Me!*

## *Verse One*

Come and rejoice with me!  
For once my heart was poor,  
And I have found a treasury  
Of love, a boundless store.

## *Verse Two*

Come and rejoice with me!  
I, once so sick at heart,  
Have met with One Who knows my case,  
And knows the healing art.

## *Verse Three*

Come and rejoice with me!  
For I was wearied sore,  
And I have found a mighty arm  
Which holds me evermore.

## *Verse Four*

Come and rejoice with me!  
My feet so wide did roam,  
And One has brought me from afar,  
To find in Him my home.

## *Verse Five*

Come and rejoice with me!  
For I have found a Friend  
Who knows my heart's most secret depths,  
Yet loves me without end.

## *Verse Six*

I knew not of His love;  
And He had loved so long,  
With love so faithful and so deep,  
So tender and so strong.

## *Verse Seven*

And now I know it all,  
Have heard and known His voice,  
And hear it still from day to day.  
Can I enough rejoice?

*Come and Rejoice with Me!*

*An Invitation*

# COME AND REJOICE WITH ME!

## *An Invitation to the Christian Life*

### FACTORY'S GRIND ALTERS NATURE'S RHYTHM

*Within one generation, society in England was transformed from rural and agrarian to urban and industrial. Factory workers were considered to have less intrinsic value than what they built and maintained and were treated as mere expendable cogs in factory machinery. Pay was so low that parents sent their children, with their useful small hands, to work for family survival. Fresh air and sunshine had been*



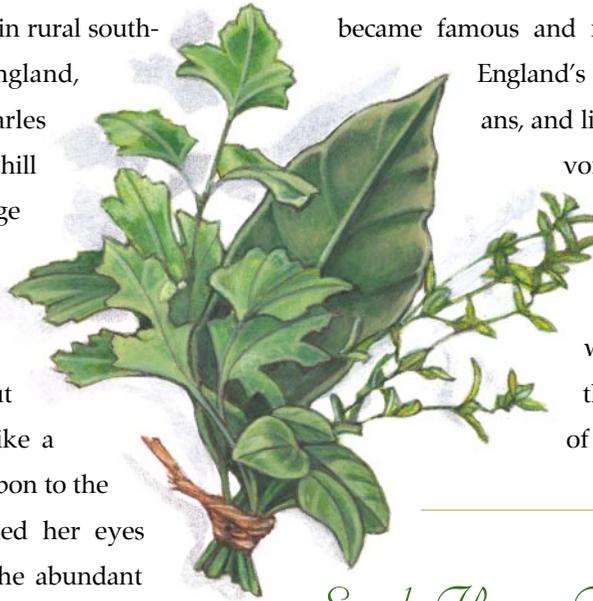
*replaced by the stench of relentless, pluming gray smoke from kerosene lamps and coal-fired furnaces. Poverty, squalor, sickness, and misery prevailed, all to make production, communication, and transportation faster and more efficient. Amid this suffering, Elisabeth Rundle Charles gave her whole life to pour out the Lord's love in word and deed to those surrounding her, both rich and poor.*

*Come and Rejoice with Me!*

**O**n a crisp autumn day near the end of the nineteenth century in rural southwest England,

Elisabeth Rundle Charles stood on the crest of a hill overlooking the village of Morwellham on the river Tamar. The shipping wharves had fallen into disrepair, but the river still flowed like a winding bright blue ribbon to the sea. As Elisabeth shaded her eyes from the setting sun, the abundant recollections from her heart began to pour forth, for it was also the sunset of her life.

Fifty years before, the region below presented a different scene. On either side of the bustling river “rose hills clothed with woods,” and at the base of the hills lay “treasure heaps of copper ore.” Today, no ships were on the river, the wooded hills were cut bare, and the treasure heaps where she had played with her cousins in her happy childhood were gone. But what a picturesque and encompassing vista she remembered. From the lovely, safe sanctuary



of her early years, her life had flourished like a flowing river across the land in which she became famous and renowned as one of England’s great writers, historians, and linguists. Her Christian voice spoke eloquently through her fifty published books. Elisabeth’s thoughts wandered from both the pleasant memories of her childhood and

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### *Simply Hearing His Voice*

GOD HIMSELF IS NEARER US THAN ANY OF THE CREATURES OR CIRCUMSTANCES THROUGH WHICH HE MOVES US; SINCE *INBREATHING* IS A FINER EXPRESSION OF HIS WORK IN US THAN IMPELLING; AND SINCE EVERY GOOD AND TRUE WORK... IS INSPIRED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

— ERC

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*Come and Rejoice with Me!*



the comparative emptiness of the scene before her, to thoughts of “a higher sense,” to “a far higher life beyond our sight and hearing.” To know her life is to understand the meaning of her thoughts.

  
**A SENSE THAT  
GOD WAS THERE**

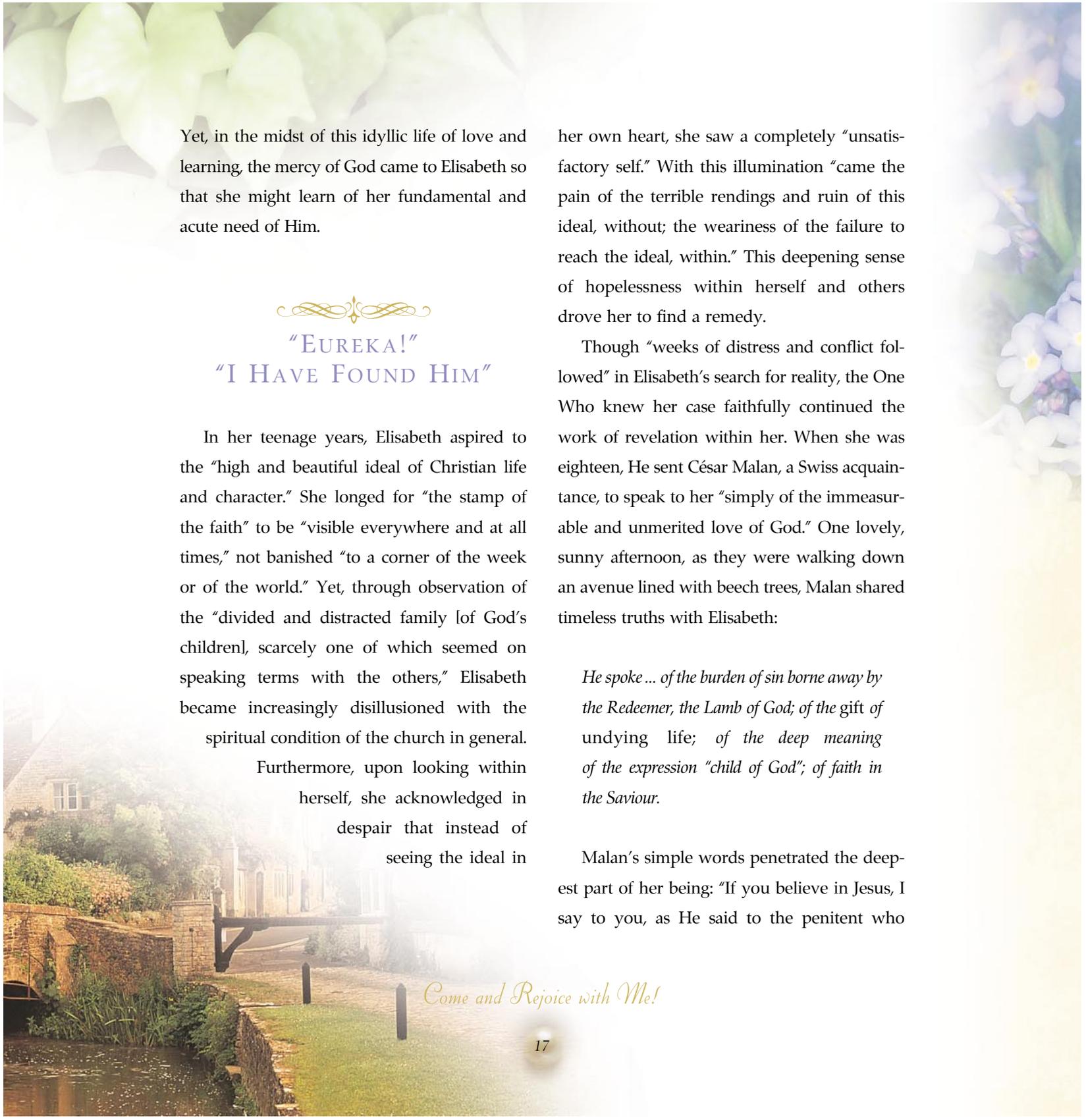
Elisabeth grew up in nearby Tavistock, but the Rundle family often spent summer months in the village of Morwellham, where many of the family businesses were located. Her childhood was serene and delightful. Her father, John Rundle, was a highly respected man of integrity, intelligence, and unselfishness. He was a banker, a member of Parliament, a community employer, and a respected leader whose benevolence blessed many through times of great need and unrest. And he was Elisabeth’s closest friend. Her mother, Joana, provided a well-ordered and peaceful home with a “quiet pervading presence, a sweet brooding, a sunny warmth.” Indeed, this precious atmosphere of childhood nurturing and

safekeeping was a reference point across Elisabeth’s whole life.

Elisabeth, though an only child, was raised and educated alongside her cousins, with whom she shared a closeness like that among loving sisters. They were educated by governesses who creatively immersed them in global geography, history, and math. Later, tutors trained them in the classic disciplines of algebra, composition, and the languages of Latin, Greek, Italian, French, and German. There were also “sojourns in London, during the Parliamentary Session,” and she traveled throughout England, France, and Germany in her youth.

Moreover, Elisabeth’s spiritual environment had been full of God’s love. There were prayers at her mother’s bedside and the singing of old hymns of Cowper, the Wesleys, and Watts, “dimly understood, but flowing with a sense of music through the heart.” She speaks of a “sense that God was there and ready to bless and help me and mine.”

*Come and Rejoice with Me!*



Yet, in the midst of this idyllic life of love and learning, the mercy of God came to Elisabeth so that she might learn of her fundamental and acute need of Him.

  
"EUREKA!"  
"I HAVE FOUND HIM"

In her teenage years, Elisabeth aspired to the "high and beautiful ideal of Christian life and character." She longed for "the stamp of the faith" to be "visible everywhere and at all times," not banished "to a corner of the week or of the world." Yet, through observation of the "divided and distracted family [of God's children], scarcely one of which seemed on speaking terms with the others," Elisabeth became increasingly disillusioned with the spiritual condition of the church in general.

Furthermore, upon looking within herself, she acknowledged in despair that instead of seeing the ideal in

her own heart, she saw a completely "unsatisfactory self." With this illumination "came the pain of the terrible rendings and ruin of this ideal, without; the weariness of the failure to reach the ideal, within." This deepening sense of hopelessness within herself and others drove her to find a remedy.

Though "weeks of distress and conflict followed" in Elisabeth's search for reality, the One Who knew her case faithfully continued the work of revelation within her. When she was eighteen, He sent César Malan, a Swiss acquaintance, to speak to her "simply of the immeasurable and unmerited love of God." One lovely, sunny afternoon, as they were walking down an avenue lined with beech trees, Malan shared timeless truths with Elisabeth:

*He spoke ... of the burden of sin borne away by the Redeemer, the Lamb of God; of the gift of undying life; of the deep meaning of the expression "child of God"; of faith in the Saviour.*

Malan's simple words penetrated the deepest part of her being: "If you believe in Jesus, I say to you, as He said to the penitent who

*Come and Rejoice with Me!*

washed His feet with her tears, ‘Go in peace; thy sins *are forgiven* thee.’” Later in her room, Elisabeth responded to the work of the Holy Spirit within her:

*For the first time I seemed to forget and lose myself altogether, my struggles, my sufferings, my good or evil works, and could only fall on my knees in an agony of tears ... and*

*say, “My God! guide me.” I felt I was speaking to God, and that He heard me....*

*...I began to see that the work of our Redemption is not ours but God’s, that Christ has borne away our sins, has redeemed us with His precious blood, has reconciled us to God.... The Spirit bore witness with my spirit that I was His child. I loved Him because He had first loved me! For hours I was conscious of nothing but the absorbing joy. “My Father! I am Thy child.”*

*... [I] could seek, instead of flying from, His presence. All things were restored to harmony because [they were] restored to their true Centre.*

Before, Elisabeth had been “toiling to build a tower,” but her efforts had become her “prisons.” From her conversion onward, she had no

wish but that her life “might be spent in the service of Him Who had earned [her] deliverance at such a priceless cost. Joyful would be every toil and sacrifice as the free service of love.” She exclaimed, “From a weary labour-

er, worn with slavish and ineffectual toil, I had become as a little child receiving from God.”

After such a dynamic and life-changing conversion, she realized that “to follow Him Whose presence is our life and joy naturally leads us where He went and goes still, among the sorrowful and sick and perplexed.” In fact, she “lived more amongst the poor than before that joy came.” Her life became one characterized as not merely serving her Lord, as if to a distant Master, but as being and working in union with Him—a spontaneous, outward response to faithfully serve her indwelling Lord Jesus.

*God loves us, not because  
we are worthy;  
but His love will make  
its object worthy.*  
~ César Malan

H. A. César Malan, of Geneva, Switzerland, also shared the gospel with hymn-writer Charlotte Elliot, who wrote “Just As I Am.”

*Come and Rejoice with Me!*

It was after this new birth from spiritual poverty and weariness of religious service without God to untold wealth in Christ that Elisabeth wrote the poem "Come and Rejoice with Me," which she entitled "Eureka," mean-



*An unveiling came to me,*

NOT OF AN IDEAL, OR A THOUGHT,  
BUT, AS NEVER BEFORE ... A LIVING PER-  
SONALITY [GOD], WHICH POSSESSED  
MY WHOLE BEING AND CHANGED THE  
CURRENT OF MY THOUGHTS AND LIFE.

ERC



ing "I have found Him!" How wonderful and glorious was her discovery of Christ, not through religious work, but through simple faith and obedience to Him.

But communicating this crucial difference in her relationship with God to others was not easy. It was a difficulty, Elisabeth says, "of making people who saw the new radiance with which everything shone for me understand what it was. 'You knew all this before,' they would say. And, of course, I *did* know it before; and did *not*." Knowing Jesus brought a longing "that others, also, should cross this invisible



*Come and Rejoice with Me!*



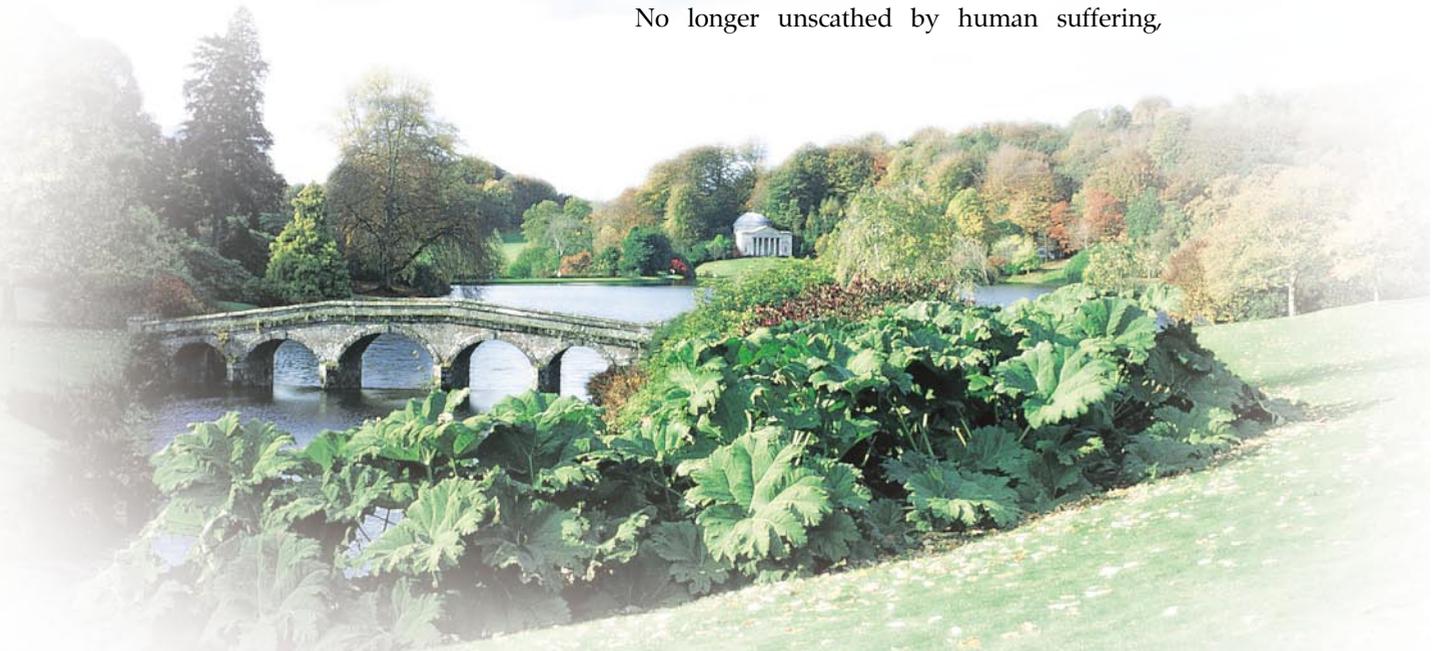
line between knowing about God, knowing about truth," to "knowing Him."

  
"NOT SUBMISSION MERELY,  
BUT ENTIRE ACQUIESCENCE"

At the age of twenty-three, Elisabeth married Andrew Paton Charles, a man "whose place, so quietly filled, no one else could take." Their new home in Hampstead was happily situated near some old parish almshouses where Elisabeth "had the poor, sick, and aged

close" to her as she was used to before. With no children of their own to fill their lives, they instead focused on working "among the poor around the factory" where Andrew was part owner. Elisabeth also continued her writing, publishing some nineteen books during her married life.

Not long into their marriage, Andrew began having serious health problems from which he never fully recovered. After only seventeen years of companionship and service together, Andrew died, leaving Elisabeth a widow at the age of forty. Thus, she entered the darkest days of her life, which she called "that great sorrow." No longer unscathed by human suffering,



*Come and Rejoice with Me!*

Elisabeth does not ask for our pity in the midst of her greatest trial. For in that very year, she boldly republished her "Eureka," which she significantly retitled "Joy in Christ."

As Andrew had always embodied "the will of God, not submission merely, but entire acquiescence," Elisabeth earnestly desired to follow his example. Soon her friends began to draw her back into life by requesting translations of Martin Luther's writings and reacquainting her with the love of music. She gradually "awoke to the joys of thought, imagination and writing.

The suffering grew into song and parable and story." Elisabeth soon became distinguished as one of England's best-known authors.

Although she was left without an inheritance from either her father or her husband, she was able to care for her beloved mother

and many others with income from her book royalties, which she felt were "like manna from heaven." And like hidden manna, her life, her experience of Christ, her writings, and this

poem will continue to feed God's seekers for generations.

From the crest of the hill overlooking the now sleeping river that stretched out from Morwellham across the English countryside toward the sea, Elisabeth reminded herself of the most important invitation she had ever received and the greatest discovery she had ever made—the one that completely changed the rest of her life.

How different was her inner condition before discovering Christ as her all-sufficient and all-supplying One! Childhood's pleasantness, even her parents, could not save her; good religious works, however well intended, had left her the more miserable and disillusioned. Thus, she had invited the One



*Come and Rejoice with Me!*



into her heart Who could make her life meaningful. Moreover, she continually came back to the One Who had brought her “from afar” to find in Him her “home.” He had become her river of water of life, still flowing, supplying her every need. He had become her “treasury of love, a boundless store,” from Whom she freely and ever more deeply drew deposits

throughout her life. It is this secret of Christ’s sufficiency she shares with all of us who heed her invitation: “Come and rejoice with me!”

*If, at any time, this life of ours grows feeble, or low, or lonely, I know no other remedy than to return to its Eternal Source, to God Himself.*



*Lord Jesus,*

*Thank You for inviting me to receive You! Please come into my life right now. Free me from my striving, my efforts that change nothing, my attempts to reach Your standard, which never work. I, in this self of mine, simply cannot make it! But You died for me to meet my every need. As my doctor, heal me. As my friend, comfort me. As my mighty arm, hold me. Lift me off my feet and bring me home to Yourself. I accept Your invitation. Yes, Lord, be my joy, my sufficiency. Thank You, Lord Jesus; in You, I now rejoice!*

*Amen!*



*Come and Rejoice with Me!*

# Elisabeth Rundle Charles

1828–1896

Elisabeth Rundle Charles was a poet, author, linguist, musician, and painter, who became one of the best-known women in England during the nineteenth century. She was born in Tavistock, Devonshire, January 2, 1828, to Joana and John Rundle, who was a banker, businessman, and member of Parliament. He was her true friend and guide, and her mother was her devoted, life-long companion. Although not blessed with siblings, her childhood was filled with the delights of a loving extended family.

Elisabeth was educated at home in the classic disciplines and was writing poetry by age thirteen. Near age eighteen, she was led to the Lord, and from the overflowing joy of her conversion, wrote the hymn entitled “Come and Rejoice with Me!”

She was especially well known for her many books, publishing her first—



a translation from the German pietist Joachim Neander—at age twenty-two. In 1863, her *Chronicles of the Schoenberg-Cotta Family*—a historical novel about the childhood of Martin Luther—became the best known of her fifty books.

At age twenty-three, she married Andrew Paton Charles, a lawyer and businessman. They were known for their philanthropic work among the poor of Wapping and Hampstead, including founding a home for incurables in 1885.

Andrew died seventeen years after their marriage, but by abundance of grace from God—Who both inspired her to write pervasively popular books of Christian history and literature and blessed her with a flow of royalties—she was able to care for her loving mother and others for many years. Elisabeth died when she was sixty-eight at Hampstead Heath, near London, March 28, 1896.

*Come and Rejoice with Me!*

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Cover/Interior: Synnove Inman Design

Contributing Editors: James G. Waldrup III, William C. Bean, Gary William Evans & Virginia M. Davis

Research Editors: Elizabeth W. Bidwell & Jennifer Andrada

Published by: Blue Sky Ink, a division GRQ Ink, Brentwood, Tennessee 37024

Printed in China (Blue Sky Logo) Brentwood Tennessee

