

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 31

Dearest Grandchild,

Because we are approaching Easter; today's letter will focus on the resurrection. I assume this is probably not high on your list of things to think about. You are busy with school and other important activities that demand your attention. Someday, however, you will probably see the subject of the resurrection in a different light. Someday, someone you love will die. Someday, you may be faced with a life threatening injury or illness. At that point in time you may ask the same question that Job asked: **"If a man dies, will he live again?" (Job. 14:14).**

The doctrine, or teaching, about the resurrection of Jesus is not a peripheral issue. It is the foundation upon which Christianity exists. If Christ has not been raised from the dead our faith is in vain (1Cor. 15:17). All of the apostles, except John, died as "martyrs". And even John himself was persecuted and imprisoned for his faith. Our English word "martyr" comes from the Greek word "martur" which means "witness". Every one of these "martyrs" were "witnesses" of Christ's resurrection. Every one of them was pressured to deny what they "witnessed", but not one of them ever did.

Just because someone dies for something does not make it true. Soldiers in all wars die because they believe something different from their enemies. During World War II thousands of Japanese soldiers committed ritual suicide called "hari kari". They obviously did this because of something they believed. On Nov. 18, 1978 hundreds of people committed suicide in Guyana because they believed a false prophet named Jim Jones. Today, hundreds of Muslims are eager to become suicide bombers. Just because someone is willing to die for something, however, does not make it true.

So the fact that the apostles died as martyrs does not, by itself, make their message true. It does indicate, however, that they "believed" it was true. This is key! When you consider the testimony of a witness you need to ask if the witness actually saw something. Is the witness credible? Is the witness in a position to know something personally, or are they merely repeating rumors or hearsay. The apostles died as martyrs testifying to a historical fact. Testimony about something you have already experienced is in a totally different category from testifying about something you hope will happen in the future.

In this regard it is important to remember that none of the apostles initially believed that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. When Mary Magdalene told them she had seen the resurrected Christ **"they did not believe it" (Mk., 16:11).** When two disciples said they had seen the resurrected Jesus on the Road to Emmaus **"they did not believe them either" (Mk. 16:13).**

Thomas, in particular, was difficult to convince. He is also known as "Didymus" (Jn. 20:24) which means "twin". His life experience as a "twin" involved many instances of mistaken identity.

Therefore he said: **“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.” (John 20:25)** A week later Jesus appeared again to the apostles and Thomas was with them. On that occasion Jesus said to Thomas: **“Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” (John 20:27)**

Thomas, because he was honest, had no choice. He was face to face with irrefutable evidence. The apostles testified about what they had “heard”, “seen with their eyes” and their hands had “touched” (1 Jn. 1:1). So doubting Thomas was convinced and said to Jesus: “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28).

Remember! Believing in the resurrection did not make life easy for any of the apostles. When the resurrected Christ commanded them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, they did precisely what Christ commanded them to do. Thomas, himself, died as a martyr preaching the Gospel in India. Grandpa has been to India several times, but I have always gone there on a jet airplane. Even at that, it is a long and tiring journey. Traveling to India two thousand years ago is too difficult to even imagine. Thomas did it anyhow! To this very day there are Christians in India who call themselves St. Thomas Christians because they trace their spiritual roots back to the ministry of Thomas himself. Though Thomas was speared to death for preaching, he never denied the reality of what he had “witnessed”.

1 Cor. 15 is called the “Resurrection Chapter” in the Bible. All 58 verses in that chapter deal with the subject of the resurrection. The first part of the chapter deals with proof regarding the resurrection of Jesus. The last part deals with the fact that everyone will be raised from the dead.

Hear are a few facts from the chapter for you to consider:

- The “Gospel” or “Good News” involves facts. It is a fact that Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected. These facts are made even more remarkable because they happened “according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3, 4). Every major aspect of the life of Christ was “according to the Scriptures”. His death, burial, and resurrection, for example, were predicted in the Scriptures and taught in the synagogues centuries before they came to pass.
- Witnesses to the resurrection not only involved the apostles, but also above 500 others to whom he appeared at the same time. At the time Paul wrote to the Corinthians, most of these 500 witnesses were alive and could be interviewed (1 Cor. 15:6).
- As we have already said, if Christ is not raised from the dead there is no reason for anyone to be a Christian (1 Cor. 15:12). **THIS TOO IS VERY SIGNIFICANT!** All the enemies of Christ had to do to stop Christianity was produce His body. The fact that they did not do so is also another strong evidence for His resurrection. If they could have, they would have.
- In this chapter Paul specifically testifies that Jesus appeared to him (1 Cor. 15:8). There was, perhaps, no one more hostile to Christianity than Paul, who was originally known as Saul of Tarsus. His persecution of believers is so well know that it does not need to be documented. The fact that Paul was convinced of the resurrection, and died as a martyr preaching the

resurrection, speaks volumes.

## THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION TODAY

Paul prayed for the believers in Ephesus that their eyes would be opened to hope, riches, and power (Eph. 1:18, 19). He then explained: **“That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.” (Eph 1:19-22)**

Did you get that? The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to you and me!

Much of your life revolves around the use of power. You need power to charge your cell phone or operate your computer. You need power to heat your room and wash and dry your clothes. Even a flash light will not work without power.,

The Bible word used to describe this power available to us is “dunamis” from which we get our English word “dynamo”. The Holy Spirit within us is like a dynamo. It flows like a river (Jn. 7:37 - 39). A river doesn’t get tired and neither to you have to beg it to flow. In the same way the boundless power of the Holy Spirit is available to you every moment of every day.

The power of the resurrection is therefore relevant to you every day of your life.

Someone has observed that if you are doing what God wants you to do, the power behind you is always greater than the task before you.

Here is a brief list from the book of Ephesians of things the Holy Spirit will empower you to do: **“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ‘In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Eph 4:25-32)**

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce