

**LETTERS FROM GRANDPA**  
**# 54**

Dearest Grandchild,

Recently, in my morning devotions, I read again in Jeremiah about a bad man named Ishmael. For some reason I felt led to warn you, whom I love so much, about bad people. Because you have been raised in a good family and have mostly been surrounded by good people, I do not want you to be naive about the reality of evil.

Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, was a bad person. Gedaliah, the king, however, didn't realize it. Ishmael, the bad guy, was even a member of the royal family, but he was still a bad guy (2 Ki. 25:25). He was sent by Baalis, the king of the Ammonites, to assassinate Gedaliah the king of Judah (Jer. 40:14). When Johanan warned the king of this treachery, he naively refused to believe it. Johanan even offered to kill Ishmael to keep the conspiracy from coming to pass. To this Gedaliah said: **“Don't do such a thing! What you are saying about Ishmael is not true” (Jer. 40:16)**. Gedaliah was not only wrong, he was dead wrong!

So, in the seventh month, King Gedaliah foolishly welcomed the wicked Ishmael to a feast. Ishmael also brought with him ten other wicked men (Jer. 41:1). Remember, hospitality was held in high regard by the Jews. Illustrative of this is that when Lot welcomed two strangers under his roof he felt a sacred obligation to protect them (Gen. 19:8). Based on the false assumption that Ishmael and his thugs were men of honor, Gedaliah let down his guard, and welcomed these bad people to his dining table. That's how he got himself killed. The wicked Ishmael not only killed Gedaliah, but also all of the Jews as well as the Babylonian soldiers who were with him (Jer. 41:3).

Jesus was not fooled by bad people, and you shouldn't be either. Jesus knew that Judas was a bad person and even quoted from Ps. 41:9) about someone eating bread with Him while planning His death (Jn. 13:18). Grandpa doesn't want you to be surprised by the presence of bad people either.

Further evidence that Ishmael's was bad was his treacherous murder of religious pilgrims. They came to Jerusalem to worship but the wicked Ishmael lured them to their deaths by “weeping” and telling lies. Even though he had already killed Gedaliah, he “welcomed” these innocent pilgrims by saying: **“come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam” (Jer. 41:6)**. When they did come, however, he killed 70 of them without mercy and threw their bodies into a cistern (Jer. 41:7). Yes indeed! There are bad people in the world. Please consider history:

- Adolf Hitler murdered millions. He even filmed the death of his enemies and then watched the movies for enjoyment. Sadly, he valued the life of his dog more than he did the lives of men created in the image of God.
- Georgian historian Roy Aleksandrovich Medvedev reminds us of another mass murderer named Joe Stalin. He estimated that Stalin murdered 40 million.

- Mao Zedong, founder of the People's Republic of China, was even more sadistic killing an estimated 45 million in only four brief years.
- Pol Pot and his communist Khmer Rouge, killed over 1.5 million in Cambodia.

But now, let us focus on bad people closer to home.

- Back in 1950 Carl Mosser picked up a hitch hiker named Billy Cook. Cook rewarded his kindness by killing all five members of the Mosser family as well as their dog. Cook dumped their bodies in a well on the west side of Joplin, Mo. and drove their car to Tulsa. He abandoned it about a mile from the house where I grew up.
- I also remember the sad story of eight student nurses murdered by Richard Speck back in 1966. Since he killed them one at a time we assume that his remaining victims didn't realize how bad he really was. Perhaps, like Gedaliah, they naively assumed that he would be polite and reasonable. They too were dead wrong! One nurse survived by hiding under a bed where he didn't find her.
- Serial killer Ted Bundy was good looking, smart, and even had a future in politics. When asked if he had killed 36 women, he said: "Add a zero and then you'll have it". His good looks and charm totally disarmed his victims. Opponents of the death penalty say that it doesn't do any good, but it sure stopped Ted Bundy. He died in the electric chair Jan. 29, 1989, and since that time hasn't raped and murdered anybody.
- Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader in Afghanistan, bragged that his followers had infiltrated allied forces. The killing of allied troops by these "Taliban friends" is so common that it is now known as "Green on Blue attacks". In 2012 this accounted for 15% of Coalition deaths.
- Unfortunately, some people are so bad that they are more like animals than humans. Jude put it like this: **“. . . these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals — these are the very things that destroy them.” (Jude 10)**

Paul lived among bad people and even died as a martyr because of a bad emperor. Still he reminded Timothy that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of self discipline (2 Tim. 1:7). "Self discipline" involves discernment. Gedaliah needed it, and so do we.

Saul of Tarsus was a bad person, and even described himself as the "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:16). God transformed him, however, into the Apostle Paul who wrote more books of the Bible than any other. Some bad people can be saved.

Jesus, by contrast, told His disciples that some bad people were to be left alone: **“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matt 15:14 KJV)**. John adds these sobering words regarding some very bad people in his day: **“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.” (1 John 5:16-17 KJV)** We need discernment to know which people to confront, and which to leave alone.

Jesus taught us to pray “lead us not into temptation” (Matt. 6:13). So please stay away from bad places where bad people hang out. Please be sensitive to the fact that bad people are sometimes like wolves in sheep’s clothing. The infamous Nazi Dr. Josef Mengele, for example, was known as the “Angel of Death”. He would lure children into a van with candy, and then transport them to his laboratory where he would torture them to death with his medical experiments.

One simple way to stay safe from the wolves, is to stay close to the Shepherd. Please be diligent and discerning. Please be regular in your Bible study and prayer. Please be regular in your church attendance and hang out with people who will help you to be more like Christ.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce