

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 80

Dearest grandchild,

Just got back from Cuba. I was teaching 30 preachers in a clandestine Bible Institute. Only one of them had enough money to own any kind of transportation. The “rich” preacher had a small motorcycle. The others walked, used public transportation, or hitched a ride. Taxis for the poor are inexpensive, but are usually about 60 years old and barely function. After many million miles, for example, a 1951 Ford may have a Russian motor, German transmission, and Italian radiator. The windows may not roll up and the door handle may not work. This is the “utopia” that communism has produced in Cuba. The family in Cuba seems to be in worse shape than the Cuban economy. Almost everyone I met came from a broken home. One preacher, for example, was abandoned by his father and mother when he was 16. Now, many years later, his unconverted father has married again and this godly son helps provide for his care. When we were introduced he was smoking a cigarette and drinking coffee. He offered me a cup of coffee and when I declined he offered a glass of rum. I declined that too!

Atheists, as you know, believe in evolution and see people like advanced animals. Thus they treat people like a farmer treats animals. Take, for example, chicken farmers. These men recognize that huge chicken houses can raise chickens more efficiently than a mother hen. That’s why almost all the chickens we eat come from commercial chicken houses. By controlling diet and environment these poor creatures are trapped and fed for slaughter. Just as mother hens are not necessary to raise chickens, unbelievers conclude that parents are not necessary to raise children. The destruction of the family is therefore seen as progress.

Mao Tse Tung was a communist dictator who believed that political power grew out the muzzle of a gun. He has the dubious distinction of killing as many as 60 million people in his conquest of China. Nine years after seizing power, he sought to improve China with “The Great Leap Forward”. This program was designed to replace the family with huge communes. By the end of 1958, 700 million people had been placed into 26,578 communes. However, in 1959, things started to go wrong. Party officials would order the impossible and commune leaders who failed to meet quotas could be charged with being a “bourgeois reactionary.” The inefficiency of the communes, and three consecutive years of natural calamities, led to the starvation of twenty million people between 1959 and 1962.

Just as chickens are denied freedom for efficiency, people are denied freedom for the same reason. Communist countries do not allow freedom. North Korea is a communist police state with some 200,000 political prisoners. Life in their prisons is harsh beyond imagination. Former Washington Post journalist, Blaine Harden, has written a biography of the only man known to have been born in a N. Korean prison and escaped to tell his story. His name is Shin Dong-hyuk and the book about him is titled “Escape from Camp 14”.

Shin was born in Camp 14 on Nov. 19, 1982. His parents were not married but permitted sex as a reward for good behavior. Shin seldom saw his father but stayed with his mother for 12

years. Unfortunately he didn't love her. He resented her as a competitor for their meager food rations. Their meager rations consisted of thin soup with rats and insects added when they were available.

At age 14 he overheard his mother and brother planning an escape. He turned them in hoping to receive a reward. Instead, he was tortured for four days in an attempt to extract more information. They put hooks into his body to keep him from moving and even lit a charcoal fire beneath his back. He still has the scars to remind him of the experience. On Nov. 29, 1996 Shin was forced to witness the execution of his mother and brother.

When Shin accidentally broke a sewing machine his right middle finger was cut off as punishment. He was thankful not to be killed. Keep in mind that Shin was born in Camp 14. It was the only world he knew. He assumed that the whole world was like camp 14. Then, one day while working in a textile factory, he became friends with a 40 year old political prisoner named Park. Park told him about the outside world and assured him that "out there" people could eat as much as they wanted. Shin was amazed and considered this the essence of freedom. Dreaming of the "outside" he determined to escape.

On Jan. 2, 2005 Shin and Park were assigned to collect firewood near the camp's electric fence on top of a 1,200 foot mountain. When the guards were out of sight Park attempted to get through the fence but was instantly electrocuted. Shin, using Park's body to ground the current, crawled out to freedom. Even though he received severe burns on his legs he still survived.

Breaking into a nearby farmer's barn he found an old military uniform and began masquerading as a soldier. Remarkably, at this time he had never seen or used money. He worked his way northward towards China, scrounging and stealing to survive. He made it out of Korea by bribing border guards with stolen food and cigarettes. After spending some time working there he was "accidentally" discovered by a journalist and taken to the South Korean Embassy for asylum. Today he lives in S. Korea and has received many honors. He has also been featured in books, plays and films. A German documentary on Camp 14, directed by Marc Wiese, was released in 2012. Shin recently said: "*when I see videos of the Holocaust it moves me to tears. I think I am still evolving – from an animal to a human*". The following link is a brief interview with Shin.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqZamsQp2rA>

In some ways our sinful world is much like Camp 14. We are so used to it, that it is hard for us to envision anything different. We are from below, but Jesus is from above. He is not "of this world" (Jn. 8:23). Jesus told Nicodemus: "**I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?**" (John 3:12). Just as Park told Shin incredible things about another world, Jesus also tells us incredible things about another world. Just as Park died so that Shin could use his body as a bridge to freedom, Jesus died so that we could also use his death as a bridge to freedom. There is a better world yet to come, and I pray for you every day that you will enjoy it for all eternity.

I love you,
Grandpa Boyce