

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 82

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the subject of the resurrection. No teaching is more significant or important to the Christian faith. If Christ has not been raised from the dead our faith is vain. If I did not believe that Jesus was raised from the dead I would immediately leave the Christian faith.

There are some things universally experienced by the human race that cause thinking people to ponder the possibility of life after death.

- First, there is the phenomenon of sleep. Normal people spend 8 hours every day, or 1/3 of their lives asleep. Why?
- Second, there is the reality of seeds that die, and come to life again. Even a putrid, rotten potato will produce fresh new life if it is only planted. Why?
- Third, the seasons of the year stir our imaginations. In the dead of winter it is difficult to imagine a leafless tree coming to life again . . . but it does. Why?
- Some think the book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible. Be that as it may, Job asked: **“If a man dies, will he live again?” (Job 14:14.** Later, he answered his own question and said: **“Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes — I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19:23-27)**
- When Abram was asked to offer his son Isaac upon the altar, he “reasoned” that God was able to raise him from the dead (Heb. 11:19). It is also “reasonable” for us to think the same way.

Just think of it! Both the Jews and Romans did everything they could to stop Christianity. Christians were persecuted in Jerusalem as well as throughout the Roman world, but Christianity continued to grow. ALL THEY WOULD HAVE HAD TO DO TO STOP CHRISTIANITY WAS TO PRODUCE THE CORPSE OF JESUS! The fact that they didn't is evidence that they couldn't. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, the Jews and Romans both had the motive, the means, and the money to find his nail pierced body and display it to the public. They didn't, and they couldn't!

I have mentioned J. Warner Wallace to you before. He is the “cold case” detective from Los Angeles. He has prosecuted a number of high profile cases without any direct evidence, but has never lost a case in court. In the absence of eye-witnesses or DNA hits, he uses circumstantial evidence to convince juries. Remember! Juries are instructed to convict someone “beyond a reasonable doubt”. Here is a brief clip for you to consider:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_gmMc0Yx1Y

It isn't necessary for you to buy this book in order to probe more deeply into the subject. A simple Google search of “J. Warner Wallace” will provide many videos and much valuable

information.

Our English word “martyr” comes from the Greek word “martus” which means “witness”. Just because someone dies for something does not mean that it is true. If a suicide bomber, for example, dies believing that after death he will receive 72 virgins, that does not make it true. It is “reasonable”, to assume, however, that he “believes” it is true. In this regard the “witness” of the Apostles regarding resurrection of Christ is powerful evidence to what they “believed”. Everyone of these men were eye witnesses of His resurrection. They were able to see Him, touch Him, and talk to Him. Jesus even invited them to examine the nail prints in his hands, and the gaping wound in His side. The fact that they died as “martyrs” or “witnesses” makes it “reasonable” to assume that they had actually seen the resurrected Christ.

John Fox was born in 1517 and has written a classic book titled: “Fox’s Book of Martyrs”. In this book of history he tells, not only about the death of the Apostles, but about the deaths of hundreds of other martyrs as well. Here is a list of the first 17 martyrs listed in his book:

- Stephen - died by stoning.
- James the Great - beheaded by Herod.
- Philip - died by crucifixion in A.D. 54.
- Matthew - slain with a battle axe in A.D. 60.
- James the Less - had his brains dashed out with a fuller’s club.
- Matthias - was stone and then beheaded.
- Andrew - was crucified on an X shaped cross now known as St. Andrew’s cross.
- Mark - dragged to death by the people of Alexandria.
- Peter - crucified upside down.
- Paul - beheaded by Nero.
- Jude - Crucified at Edessa in A.D. 72.
- Bartholomew - cruelly beaten and then crucified.
- Thomas - thrust through with a spear in India.
- Luke - hanged on an olive tree.
- Simon Zelotes - crucified in A.D. 74.
- John - miraculously escaped death from a cauldron of boiling oil, imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos, and is the only one of the Apostles to die a natural death.
- Barnabas - died as a martyr about A.D. 73.

Jesus not only appeared to the Apostles, but to more than 500 other witness at the same time. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians most of these witnesses were still alive (1 Cor. 15:6). We have no historical record of anyone who witnessed the resurrection changing his or her story regardless of the circumstances.

Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that their testimony is true, and that Jesus Christ did, in fact, conquer death and come out of the grave. This “blessed” hope will become more important to you the older you get, and the more funerals you attend.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce