

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with 2 Chron. 16:9: **“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”** In our last letter we considered the example of Saul of Tarsus who was able to hear the voice of God when others around him did not. We speculated that it was because he was seeking God with all his heart. Remember! God promised to be found by those who seek Him with all their heart (Jer. 29:13).

In a recent Sunday School class a young preacher from Barbados gave his testimony. His name is Wendell Pinder. His brother, Arlington, is a missionary to Barbados whom our Sunday Class has supported for many years. At any rate, not long ago Wendell was a lost sinner. He was addicted to alcohol and drugs and became so desperate that he was ready to commit suicide. As a last resort he “cried out” to God for help. Every parent knows the difference between “whining” and “crying out”. Since God is a very present help in time of trouble (Ps. 46:1) this began a series of providential things that brought Wendell to Christ and transformed his life. He felt drawn to the congregation where his brother preached, but when he arrived he was told that Arlington was on vacation and someone else was preaching. Arlington, however, felt strongly that God wanted him to be there even though he wasn't preaching. To make a long story short, Wendell surrendered to Christ, went to Bible College, and is scheduled to return to his ministry in Barbados in two weeks.

But back to our text. The eyes of the Lord range throughout the whole earth looking for people like Wendell who want to be fully committed to Him. David was just such a person. When Samuel came to Bethlehem to anoint a new king David was not even in the running. His seven brothers assumed that God would choose one of them and David was left out in the country to take care of the sheep. You know the story. God chose David when others did not. Samuel explained: “Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (I Sam. 16:7). Remember! The eyes of the Lord range to and fro throughout the whole earth looking for those whose hearts are fully committed to Him!

Most people in life suffer rejection. It is often heart breaking to be the last person selected when choosing up teams. Jesus knew what it was to be despised and rejected, that's why He is described as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Is. 53:3). God, however, decided to exalt Christ and will someday compel everyone on earth to bow the knee before Him and confess that He is Lord (Phil. 2:11). This truth applies to everyone. Whoever exalts himself, God will abase. Whoever humbles himself, God will exalt!

Writers have found a ready market among those who are rejected. Almost everyone has experience rejection. Take, for example, the story of Robert L. May. Robert was born a weak and delicate child. His playmates often goaded him to tears because he was so stunted and skinny. When he graduated from college, he did not get a plush job, but instead became a lowly copy writer for Montgomery Ward's in Chicago. . At 33 years of age he faced additional hardship because his wife, Evelyn, was terminally ill with cancer. In fact, she had been bed ridden for two years. His meager salary and savings

were eaten up by gargantuan medical expenses, and he was deeply in debt.

It was at this time that Montgomery Ward asked him to develop a children's booklet to give away at Christmas. Bob was hurting so much that he decided to write a story to help hurting people. His four year old daughter, Barbara, for example, had serious questions about her mother's illness. So Robert decided to write a story that would help her. Since he knew what it was to be laughed at, he came up with the story of a reindeer that was ridiculed because of his shiny red nose. He decided to call him "Rudolph". As the story took shape, little Barbara laughed with glee. She enjoyed the story so much that telling of Rudolph's triumph over trouble became a nightly bed time routine. As Robert was putting the finishing touches on the story, Evelyn passed away.

It was 1939. That Christmas, little Barbara May received the first of 2.4 million copies of Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer distributed by Montgomery Ward. Although there was a paper shortage during W.W. II, a total of 6 million copies had been given away or sold by the end of 1946. Because May was a Ward's employee, he received no royalties. In January 1947, however, Sewell Avery, Ward's corporate president, gave the copyright to May. His first commercial printing took place immediately and was a great help in paying off his debts. The same year a nine minute cartoon was shown in theaters across the country. May's brother in law, Johnny Marks, wrote lyrics and a melody for Rudolph, but many were afraid to meddle with the established Santa Claus tradition. Finally, Gene Autry recorded the song in 1949 and sold two million copies the first year. The song about Rudolph became one of the best selling Christmas songs ever, second only to "White Christmas". A T.V. special about Rudolf, narrated by Burl Ives, was produced in 1964 and remains a popular holiday favorite.

Robert L. May died in 1976, but his classic story of Rudolf lives on. The fact that he was laughed at as a child helped him to relate to millions of others who were laughed at as a child. The fact that his wife died of cancer helped him to understand the rest of us who face illness and discouragement. The fact that his four year old daughter needed something to cheer her up at Christmas helped him put his finger on the pulse of countless other children who need to be cheered up at Christmas.

The original Christmas story is also shaped by "facts" that resonate with mankind. Jesus was born in poverty so He can relate to and understand the poor people of the world. Jesus was harassed by King Herod so He can understand the harsh hand of government persecution. Jesus was constantly criticized during His earthly ministry, so he can empathize with other who are unjustly criticized. Jesus gave us an example that we should follow in His steps. He ministered to the sick. He was a friend to social outcasts and sinners. He denied selfish ambition and refused an earthly crown. He devoted His life to others. He took up a cross. He died praying for the forgiveness of those responsible for His death. He was, as the Scriptures teach, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. But this story too, has a happy ending. That "man of sorrows" who was "despised and rejected of men" triumphed over it all. He conquered death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Darkness and discouragement retreat before the "brightness of His coming".

If you understand that God is looking for people who hearts are fully committed to Him, it really won't matter what anyone else thinks!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce