

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 184

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the subject of forgiveness. Forgiveness is not only an integral part of following Christ, but also an indispensable key to happiness and success. Many years ago Uncle John made it possible for me to go to Ecuador with Steve Saint. His father, Nate Saint, and four other American missionaries died as martyrs there Jan. 8, 1956. They were killed by stone age natives known as Aucas. "Auca" is a derogatory term which means "naked" or "savage". They call themselves "Huaronis" which means "the people".

At any rate, these killers were ultimately converted to Christ and have been totally forgiven by Steve and his family. Mincaye, one of the killers, is so loved by the Saint family that he is considered as the grandfather to Steve's children. When Steve and his sister became Christians they even asked two of the killers, Kimo and Dewey, to baptize them into Christ. They did so in the same river and at the same place where these men killed the missionaries many years before.

When Steve was telling the story of his baptism in Eastern Europe a reporter came up afterward and said that the translator had made a terrible mistake. He said that the translator said that the savages baptized you when he should have said that you baptized them. With some difficulty Steve finally convinced the reporter that he and his sister had totally forgiven the killers and considered them like family. That's why they gave these former killers the honor of baptizing them into Christ. The amazed reporter then acknowledged that this kind of forgiveness was desperately needed in Europe where generational revenge has resulted in centuries of war.

A similar story of forgiveness involves the murder of in India of Graham Steward Staines and his two sons Timothy and Phillip. Staines loved the Indian people and had been a missionary there for 34 years. Staines had a special love for and outreach to lepers. On January 23, 1999 Hindu extremists covered his car with kerosene and set it on fire with Staines and his two sons inside. His widow Gladys, and daughter Esther, went on national television and publicly expressed their forgiveness for the killers.

Here is another story from America. On Oct. 2, 2006 Charles Roberts went into an Amish school at Nickel Mines, Pa. He made everyone but ten girls leave and then began the process of executing them one by one. Miraculously five of the wounded girls survived. Assuming they were all dead, Roberts then he turned the gun on himself. The Amish community did what Jesus commanded and expressed their love and forgiveness for the killer's wife and children. They even contributed money to the killer's family. Moreover, after the heartbreak of burying their own children, the next day they also went to the killer's funeral. They even hugged the widow and other members of the killer's family. Their Christ like forgiveness was like a city on a hill that could not be hidden.

Everywhere there are true disciples of Jesus these stories are repeated. Jesus not only died for sinners like you and me, but specifically asked God to forgive the men who were driving nails

into his hands and feet (Lk.23:34).

Paul, as you know, was persecuted by the Jews in Damascus, Jerusalem, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, Etc. Yet, note his impassioned love and forgiveness for the very ones who were constantly trying to kill him. **“I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit – I have a great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of m brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel.” (Rom. 9:1 - 4).**

I’m sure that you have enemies. Some of these have probably said or done things to hurt you. Please forgive them! Jesus warned that if you do not forgive people who sin against you, your heavenly Father will not forgive your sins (Matt. 6:15).

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce