

**LETTERS FROM GRANDPA**  
**# 232**

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be about a famous man you have probably never heard of. His name is Frank Buchman. He was born in Pennsylvania on June 4, 1878. Among many other achievements, he helped found Alcoholics Anonymous which has over 500,000 groups meeting in 116 countries.

The emphasis of this letter will be on a turning point in his life in 1908. Our story begins in May 1904 when he founded a ministry to help needy children in Philadelphia. That ministry flourished and in the spring of 1906 moved to the inner city where throngs of street children received Christ and learned to make an honest living. On May 3, 1906 the Board of the ministry met to devise ways of spending less money. This created a conflict with Buchman, and in Oct. 1907 he presented them a 17 page hand written defense of his work. Further, he presented them with an ultimatum. He was confident that the ministry could not continue without him. To his amazement, however, he was forced to resign. In Jan. 1908 Frank sailed for Europe on the SS Molke a broken and bitter man.

The "turning point" we are talking about came during a Sunday service at a little stone chapel in England. Only 17 people were present. It was a message on the cross which Buchman had heard many times before. On that day, however, the Holy Spirit put new meaning in the message. Buchman saw that his pride and ill-will against his board was like driving nails into the hands of Jesus. He said: *"I began to see myself as God saw me, which was a very different picture than the one I had of myself. I don't know how you explain it, I can only tell you I sat there and realized how my sin, my pride, my selfishness and my ill-will had eclipsed me from God in Christ. I was in Christian work, I had given my life to those poor boys and many people might have said how wonderful, but I did not have victory because I was not in touch with God. My work had become my idol. I did not need any other voice of the Man on the Cross, I thought of the lines, This hast Thou done for me, what have I done for Thee, Thou Crucified? I was the center of my own life. That big I had to be crossed out. I saw my resentments against those men standing out like tombstones in my heart. I asked God to change me and He told me to put things right with them".*

In a spirit of genuine repentance Buchman wrote to all six board members. Sadly, only one letter has survived. It was addressed to Dr. J. F. Ohl, the chairman of the Board, and is dated July 27, 1908. It reads in part: *"I am writing to tell you that I have harbored an unkind feeling toward you - at times I conquered it but it always came back. Our views may differ but as brothers we must love. I write to ask your forgiveness and to assure that I love you and trust by God's grace I shall never more speak unkindly or disparagingly of you. The lines of this hymn have been ringing in my ears - When I survey the wondrous Cross, on which the Prince of Glory died, My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride".*

This was indeed a turning point in his life. From this point onward Buchman buried his pride and sought for absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love. His total dedication and transparency began a chain reaction of conversions that transformed millions of lives all over the world. One of his early converts was a notorious bootlegger at Penn State University named

Bill Pickle. Bill's testimony led the football coach and some of the star players to become Christians. Then the revival spread from the college to the town. Then it spread to other college campuses across the nation and around the world. In the 1920's the movement became known as the Oxford Group.

Buchman became world famous and had the opportunity to witness to men like Mao Tse-tung, Gandhi, Nehru, Princess Sophie of Greece, Mussolini, Himmler, Eric Liddell, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover, Henry Ford, Solzhenitsyn, Kipling, Edison, and others too numerous to mention. It is not surprising that such a famous man would be embroiled in controversy. Fortunately, God (the Righteous Judge) will sort out the truth in his life just as He will in every life.

Ultimately seven nations, including France, Germany, Greece, Japan, and the Philippines honored him for the positive effect he had on their relations with other countries. The transition in his life from obscurity to international fame did not come easily. It came at the cost of his own identity in a chapel in England with only 17 people present. That's when he dared to deny himself, take up a cross, and pour contempt on all his pride. In this regard he sets a good example for us all!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce