

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA  
# 264

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with a popular "saying" in the early church. Paul wrote about it to Timothy: **"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life" (1 Tim. 1:15,16).**

The "saying" was that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". Since Paul was the "worst of sinners" Jesus used him as an example. If Paul could be saved, anybody could be saved.

There are millions of conversion testimonies that prove this "saying" is true. Consider, for example, the conversion of Joshua Milton Blahyi. During Liberia's first Civil War he became known as one of the most ruthless and inhumane murderers in the history of Africa. The Daily Mail Australia considered him "The Most Evil Man in the World". The fact that he would go into battle naked earned him the moniker of "General Butt Naked". The story of his conversion is related in his autobiography *The Redemption of an African Warlord*. A documentary on his life won the 2011 Sundance Film Festival's Excellence in Cinematography Award. The Los Angeles Times said that the movie about him is *"a compelling portrait of an extraordinary complex personal odyssey that portrays both the power and the limitations of faith and forgiveness"*.

Joshua's satanic life style began as an 11 year old boy when tribal leaders designated him as their priest. At this tender age he was easily influenced by evil spirits and demons. When he was instructed to make child sacrifices, for example, he did so without hesitation. Joshua grew up to become a general in a civil war that claimed the lives of 250,000 people. (the entire population of Liberia is less than 5 million) Joshua has confessed to personally killing some 20,000 victims.

Joshua's baptism into Christ was recorded by Eric Strauss and Daniele Anastasion and incorporated into the above mentioned documentary. A small group gathered at the ocean to witness the historic occasion and sang: "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back".

As a note of interest to our family, this infamous warlord was baptized into Christ by Australian Evangelist Doug Willis. Doug has been a personal friend of our family since 1960. We first met in Cottage Grove, Oregon and I brought him from there to our home in San Jose, California. Those precious days have never been forgotten. Since Doug worked his way to America on a Norwegian freighter he was basically penniless. Providentially, our good friend Warren Phelps generously gave him a car. Since he was new to the states I gave him a letter of introduction to our brethren across America. He spent several months traveling America learning everything he could to make his life count more for Christ. Doug has always had a passion for souls. Still active in his eighties he has preached in 40 different countries around the world. He has consequently established many churches and won thousands to Christ. Doug's latest book is titled *"The Baptism of General Butt Naked"*.

In 2008, a year after Joshua's conversion, he confessed his horrible crimes in detail before Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). He poured out his soul to them in total transparency. He confessed to cannibalism, child sacrifice, and thousands of murders. To the amazement and disbelief of almost everyone, he was given a complete pardon. He was the only

warlord to receive amnesty. As you might guess, he had to leave Liberia for several years to avoid being killed by the family members of his victims. He returned to Liberia in 2016 and founded a rehabilitation farm to help others recover from the insanity of war. He is now a preacher of the Gospel and President of End Time Train Evangelistic Ministries. He is now also married, has four children, and travels continually preaching Christ and seeking forgiveness from the families of his victims.

Yes! Christ Jesus did come into the world to save sinners. No one is too wicked or sinful to be beyond the reach of God's amazing grace. When Jesus ascended into heaven He sent His Holy Spirit to be our Counselor and to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgement. It is important to note carefully that while everyone has sinned and come short of the glory of God, the only sin the Holy Spirit will convict us for is the sin of not believing in Jesus (Jn. 16:5-11).

John Newton (1725-1807) was another notorious sinner. He was known as "The Great Blasphemer". His major claim to infamy was selling people into slavery. Like Joshua Milton Blahyi, he also experienced the miraculous thrill of forgiveness. Like Joshua he also devoted the rest of his life to preaching the Gospel and seeking to rectify the wrongs he had done. He demonstrated the reality of his repentance by seeking to purchase freedom for those whom he had once sold into slavery. He wrote, as you know, the words of the now famous hymn: *"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see"*.

There are literally millions like Joshua Milton Blahyi and John Newton who have been miraculously transformed by committing their lives to Christ. Can you think of even one sinner who has been so transformed by atheism? I can't either! Therefore, never forget this saying! Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce