

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

# 342

Dearest grandchild,

Since slavery remains in the news, today's letter will again deal with that subject. Indulge me as I begin with Babylon. "Babylon" is used in the Bible to represent evil. One of the evils associated with Babylon is selling the "souls of men" or "slavery" (Rev. 18:13). The word "Babylon" literally means the "gate of the gods", but the Hebrews derogatorily called it "balal" which is the Hebrew word for "confusion" (Gen. 11:9). The book of Revelation reveals the destruction of Babylon. John explains that while an angel from heaven came down to announce that Babylon had fallen, another voice from heaven said: **"Come out of her my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes" (Rev. 18:4-5).** It is important that the people of God separate themselves from evil. Unfortunately, slavery is just one of the many sins that Babylon "piled up to heaven". Jesus came to preach good news to the poor and to end slavery by proclaiming freedom to the captives (Lk. 4:18). He consistently advocated for those abandoned by society (Lk. 14:12-14) William Wilberforce was a follower of Jesus who labored for half a century to abolish slavery in England. With the help of God he succeeded! In July 1833, just three days before his death, the House of Commons passed a law emancipating all slaves in the British Empire.

On this side of the Atlantic another follower of Jesus was about to end slavery. His name was Abraham Lincoln. At that time roughly half of America accepted slavery. The Republican Party, as you should know, was founded in 1854 to oppose the extension of slavery into the Western territories. In 1860 Abraham Lincoln was elected as the first Republican president. The Civil War is a testament to his passionate desire to end slavery. On Sept. 22, 1862, long before the Civil War was over, Lincoln optimistically assumed the North would win and signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This bold "proclamation" freed all slaves as of Jan. 1, 1863. Unfortunately, the war did not end until 1865.

Enslaving others is not only wrong, but in the United States it proved to be an economic ball and chain. On the surface, it seems that "free labor" would be the key to prosperity. It was not! First, slaves were not free. A commonly quoted figure is that the price of a slave in 1850 was approximately \$40,000 in today's currency. Secondly, slave labor was not only expensive, it was inefficient. In 1800, when the White House was moved from Philadelphia to Washington D.C., first lady Abigail Adams was exposed to slavery for the first time. She saw 12 slaves working while their masters stood idly by and did nothing. She opined: *"Two of our hardy New England men could do as much as the whole 12"*.

The famous Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, observed the same thing. Going down the Ohio River in the 1830's he noted the prosperity of Ohio (a free state) on his right, and the poverty of Kentucky (a slave state) on his left. Slave owners traditionally considered work as undignified and were proud that they didn't have to get their hands dirty. De Tocqueville noted: *"The men whose task it is to cultivate the rich soil of Kentucky are ignorant and lukewarm, whilst those who are active and enlightened either do nothing or pass over to the state of Ohio, where they may work without dishonor"*.

It was in this era that the term "Yankee ingenuity" was coined. Since the Yankees didn't have slaves they invented machines. Thus, while the North became industrialized, modern, and productive, the South remained rural, primitive, and stagnant. Manual labor cannot compete with machines!

Your parents will remember that we moved to our little country home in 1965. Our neighbor across the road, Pete Lanyon, raised cattle and put up a lot of hay in square bales. We frequently helped him. On more than one occasion we worked long into the night to get those bales into the barn before a rain storm ruined them. Stacking hay on a truck, and then re-stacking it in the barn was time consuming, difficult, and sometimes dangerous. Today, no extra help is needed to harvest hay on the Lanyon farm. Today one man with a machine efficiently rolls up the hay in large round bales. Now there is no need to hurry to get those big bales out of the field. The bales are designed to shed water without ruining the hay. Consequently, one man with the right machine, can now replace an entire crew of hay haulers. We repeat! Manual labor cannot compete with machines! Your Uncle Steve once came home after “working” all day “putting up hay” for our friend Ron Lawver. Our sympathy for him disappeared, however, when we learned that he had “put up the hay” while in the cab of an air-conditioned tractor. Slave labor is not only wrong, it is also inefficient!

Yes! Babylon will someday be destroyed. Thankfully, the evil systems of this world that devalue and exploit others will also be brought to an end. While the merchants of the earth will mourn over the demise of Babylon, those who have come out of her for Christ will rejoice.

Helping people out of poverty requires more than compassion, it also requires wisdom. The oft repeated parable of the butterfly illustrates the danger of the wrong kind of help. The parable tells of a kind person who saw a butterfly struggling to get out of it’s cocoon. He decided to “help” the butterfly by cutting open the cocoon. As a result of this “help”, the butterfly could not fly. You see, it is the struggle to escape the cocoon that pumps essential fluids into the butterfly’s wings to give them strength. Without this struggle their wings are useless. Unfortunately, America did something similar in President Johnson’s infamous “war on poverty”. From 1964 to 2014, 22 trillion dollars was given to the poor through 80 different government welfare programs. (This does not include Social Security or Medicare). Robert Rector, of the Heritage Foundation, points out that this is three times the amount of money spent by America on all our wars from the Revolutionary War and onward. Yet the war on poverty has failed. Today, poverty is worse than it was in 1964. One evil consequence of this government give away has been the destruction of the American family.

In his book *Democracy in America*, (published in the 1800s), Alexis de Tocqueville praised American families and wrote: “*There is certainly no country in the world where the tie of marriage is more respected than in America or where conjugal happiness is more highly or worthily appreciated.*” The “war on poverty”, however, changed all this. Poor families soon discovered that a single mother received more free government money than a married woman. Subsidizing illegitimate children produced more of them. Consequently, when the “war on poverty” began only 7% of American children were born out of wedlock. Today the number of illegitimate children in America is 41%. The Heritage Foundation points out that not only do children raised without a father more readily turn to crime, but even with more money from the government, single mothers are still 80% more likely to be in poverty than mothers who are married. The expensive “war on poverty” has been a national catastrophe!

Yes! It is godly to free the slaves and help the poor. In our efforts to help the less fortunate, however, we would do well to remember this biblical mandate: **“If a man will not work, he shall not eat” (2 Thess. 3:10).**

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce