

**LETTERS FROM GRANDPA**  
**# 343**

Dearest grandchild,

While there are literally an infinite number of ways to sin, today's letter will deal with only four. They were mentioned by Jesus in three parables recorded in Luke 15. The one cardinal sin, of course, is not receiving Jesus as Savior. Jesus, of course, told these parables for a purpose. Obviously we need to learn from them. Pointing out these four sins merely helps us to understand why people do not receive Christ.

As you know, God wants everyone to be saved. **"God is love" (1 Jn. 4:16)** and He is not willing that any should perish but that everyone come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). The most famous verse in the Bible is John 3:16. It declares **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"**. John later wrote: **"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us" (1 Jn. 3:16)**. It should be crystal clear that Jesus loves us and wants us to be saved. On His way to be crucified, for example, He was more concerned about the people of Jerusalem than He was Himself (Lk. 23:28). The poet said it beautifully: *"Could I with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made, were every stalk on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade, to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry. Nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky"*.

Our chapter begins by stating why Jesus told these parables. The tax collectors and sinners gathered around Jesus and the Pharisees and teachers of the law were not happy about it (Lk. 15:1-2). It was then that Jesus told these parables emphasizing why people are lost and the happiness of their salvation.

# 1 is the parable of a lost sheep. A certain shepherd had a hundred sheep and when one was lost he left the 99 in the wilderness and searched for the lost sheep until he found it. When he returned with the lost sheep he called his friends and neighbors and rejoiced. Jesus then said: **"I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (Lk. 15:7)**.

Please consider that this sheep was not evil or malevolent. It was only careless! It didn't pay attention! On Oct. 21, 2009 Northwest Airline flight # 188 took off from San Diego en route to Minneapolis with 144 passengers and a crew of 5. On that occasion Capt. Timothy Cheney and First Officer Richard Cole overflew their destination by 150 miles. They had not answered the frantic calls from ATC for 45 minutes. Fearing the plane had been hijacked and was headed to Chicago to repeat 911, ATC was about to scramble fighters to shoot down the plane. At the last minute a stewardess pounded on the cabin door and finally got the pilot's attention. The embarrassed pilots turned around and landed safely at Minneapolis. These careless men not only lost their jobs, they also lost their pilot's licenses. They obviously should have paid attention! It is a far more serious matter, of course, to be lost eternally for not paying attention!

# 2 is the parable of a lost coin. A woman with 10 silver coins lost one. When she realized her loss she lit a lamp, swept the house, and searched carefully until she found it. After finding it she also called her friends and neighbors together for a time of rejoicing. Jesus said again: **"In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Lk. 15:10)**.

Please consider that the coin was lost because the woman was careless. The coin was not careless, the woman was. Sadly, many are lost today because Christians are careless. The Scriptures point out that God called Ezekiel to be a watchman for the house of Israel (Ez. 3:16-19). If Ezekiel saw danger coming and failed to warn the wicked, God would hold him responsible. How sad it is when someone is lost because the watchman are careless and irresponsible.

# 3 is the parable of the Prodigal Son. This is perhaps the best known and most popular parable in the Bible. The prodigal was not lost because of carelessness, but because of deliberate rebellion and sins of the flesh! He knew right from wrong and deliberately chose to do wrong. After going to a “distant country” and squandering his money in wild living, he finally “came to his senses”. He humbled himself and returned to his father confessing: **“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found’. So they began to celebrate”** (Lk. 15:21-24).

The beauty of this parable is that it doesn’t matter how rebellious and sinful you are, the Father still wants you to come home. The fact that the Father saw his sinful son when he was a great distance away indicates that the Father was watching for him. As always, when anyone repents it is a time for rejoicing and not a time for rebuke and recrimination.

# 4 involves the older brother. The older brother was also lost, but he sinned with his mind and not with his body. Remember! “hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage and selfish ambition” are sins in the same list with “sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery” (Gal. 5:19-21). The older brother was a sinner because he refused to forgive. Sadly, those who refuse to forgive cannot be forgiven (Matt. 18:23-35). Remember! **“. . . judgement without mercy will be show to anyone who has not been merciful”** (Ja. 2:13).

In conclusion, it really doesn’t matter why you are lost, but it does matter whether you are saved. It is my constant prayer that everyone in our family will someday be together in heaven. We repeat! **“There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent”** (Lk. 15:7).

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce