

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

399

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will begin with the fact that death stops your breathing but not your influence. It is certain that you will die and it is also certain that your influence will not die. Death, however, makes your influence indelible. Once you die your reputation is fixed and cannot be changed! The first person to experience physical death was a righteous man named Abel. He was killed thousands of years ago by his wicked brother, yet he still speaks. **"By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead." (Heb. 11:4).** Abel's good reputation is fixed for eternity. It cannot be changed. Thankfully his good influence continues to bless millions.

While Abel was one of the most righteous men on earth, Adolf Hitler was one of the most evil men on earth. Hitler committed suicide April 30, 1945 and will forever be remembered for his wickedness. Sadly, he still speaks and the evil influence of his life continues. Hitler was born April 20, 1889. On Hitler's birthday in 1999 Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold decided to celebrate his memory by murdering 12 students and one teacher at the Columbine High School in Colorado. 21 other innocent people were injured. Paul wrote: **"None of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone" (Rom. 14:7).** This is not only true of Abel and Hitler, it is true of everyone. Not only do we influence others while we live, but our influence, for good or bad, continues long after we are dead.

The first person to be killed at Columbine was a Christian girl named Rachel Scott. In March 1993, at the age of 11, she gave her heart to Jesus Christ. Rachel was serious about her commitment to Christ and wanted Him to be Lord over every aspect of her life. She wanted to please Christ in how she dressed, who she dated, and how she did everything. She even considering becoming a missionary. By April 1998 five of her closest friends distanced themselves from her because of her commitment to Christ. Like Anne Frank, who was murdered by Hitler, Rachel wrote essays and diligently made notes in her diary. A year before her death she wrote to a relative: *"Now that I have begun to walk my talk, they make fun of me. I don't even know what I have done. I don't even have to say anything, and they turn me away. I have no more personal friends at school. But you know what, it's all worth it."*

The fact that Rachel died with multiple gunshot wounds to her head, chest, arm and leg is testimony to the rage of Eric Harris who killed her. Investigators say that Eric asked her if she believed in God, and when she answered "yes" it triggered his violent and irrational response. Her influence did not stop, however, when she quit breathing. Soon after her death her car was adorned with flowers and messages to commemorate her life. Her funeral was said to be the most watched event on CNN, even surpassing the funeral of Princess Diana. In addition to the millions who watched the TV coverage, over 2000 local residents attended her funeral in person.

Rachel once wrote: *"I have this theory that if one person can go out of their way to show compassion, then it will start a chain reaction of the same. People will never know how far a little kindness can go."* Rachel's father, Darrell, has made it his personal mission to do as his daughter wrote and start a chain reaction of kindness. In 2001 Darrell began an international ministry called *Rachel's Challenge*. Since that time this ministry has delivered life-changing programs to over 30 million people. They work in conjunction with a school's existing programs to create a culture less susceptible to harassment, isolation, and violence. Rachel still speaks! Her godly influence lives on. Based on

voluntary reporting, her influence stopped eight school shootings, and on average 150 suicides are averted every year.

Rachel once said: "I am not going to apologize for speaking the name of Jesus," She wrote in her journal, "*If I have to sacrifice everything...I will.*" In addition to establishing *Rachel's Challenge* her father has promoted her faith in two books about her amazing life. The first book is *Chain Reaction – A Call to Compassionate Revolution*. The second book is *Rachel Smiles – The Spiritual Legacy of Columbine Martyr Rachel Scott*. In 2016, Rachel's story came to the big screen. The movie *I'm Not Ashamed* starred Masey McLain as Rachel.

In Matthew chapter 24 Jesus warned of the destruction of Jerusalem. The inhabitants of Jerusalem saw the Roman army coming and had time to flee the city (Matt. 24:15-22).

In the same chapter Jesus promised that He would return unexpectedly, like a thief in the night (Matt. 24:43). Since we do not know the day or the hour of our Lord's return we must be constantly prepared. Rachel Scott was only 17 years old. She was in good health and under normal circumstances would have lived for many more years. Her death came suddenly and unexpectedly. She probably had only a brief 10 seconds to prepare to meet God. Yet, based upon the witness of family and friends she was fully prepared to meet the Lord!

God has blessed Granny and me with 5 children, 26 grandchildren, and 18 great grandchildren. I pray for every one of you by name every day! I pray that you will live a long, healthy, and prosperous life, but am painfully aware of life's uncertainties. Not one of us has the guarantee of another day of life! The thought that even one of you might not go to heaven is a burden too heavy for me to bear!

Please be like Rachel Scott and live a life so clean and pure that 10 seconds is all you need to prepare to meet God!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce