

**LETTERS FROM GRANDPA**  
**# 440**

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the unpleasant reality of death, and the happy promise of the resurrection! When God created the heavens and the earth there was no such thing as death. Death came as a result of sin. **"Therefore, just as sin entered into the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, for all have sinned."** (Rom. 5:12) Today, the monster of death remains a relentless enemy! It stalks you before you were even born. In 2020 there were 21,000 stillbirths and over 930,000 abortions reported in the United States. In 2016 there were 20,360 deaths among children and adolescents in the United States. In 2021 there were 695,547 adults who died of heart disease, 605,213 of cancer, 416,893 from COVID-19, 224,935 from accidents, 162,890 from strokes, 142,342 from respiratory diseases, 119,399 from Alzheimers, 103,294 from diabetes, 56,585 from liver disease, and 54,358 from Nephritis. Ultimately you will die for **"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."** (Heb. 9:27 KJV) You may not be good at keeping appointments, but your appointment with death is one you will keep whether you want to or not!

Death is an enemy! (1 Cor. 15:26) It separates us from those we love and threatens our own safety on a daily basis. There is an old story about the man who grew weary of religions and decided to start a new and better religion of his own. He incorporated what he considered the best parts of all other religions and called his new religion *Theophilanthropy*. He trained his disciples and sent them out to evangelize the world. When he failed to have success a friend offered him this advice – *"Get yourself crucified, come back from the dead, and then send out your disciples!"*

There can be no doubt that the resurrection of Jesus played a pivotal role in the growth of Christianity. Paul stated it succinctly: **"If Christ has not be raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith."** (1 Cor. 15:14) Before the resurrection of Jesus his disciples were hidden in an upper room with the doors locked for fear of the Jews (Jn. 20:19). After Jesus appeared to them and showed them many convincing proofs that he was alive (Acts 1:3), these same men became fearless witnesses of the resurrection. Truly, by his death, Jesus **"destroyed him who holds the power of death – that is the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."** (Heb. 2:14-15) The word "martyr," as you know, comes from the Greek word "martus" which means "witness." The "witnesses" of the resurrection were persecuted for their testimony and died as "martyrs." Not one "witness" ever denied what they had seen! The reality of the resurrection transformed those who witnessed it! The reality of the resurrection can also transform anyone!

The "resurrection" of Jesus is the principal doctrine of Christianity! It is the one "sign" upon which Christianity stands or falls (Matt. 12:39-40). The man chosen to take the place of Judas had to be a "witness" of the resurrection (Acts 1:22). Peter on Pentecost preached the resurrection of Jesus and 3,000 were baptized on that very day (Acts 2:29-41). Peter and John were put in prison for preaching the resurrection, but the number of disciples had already grown to about 5,000 men (Acts 4:1-4). Even in the face of persecution the apostles with great power continued to boldly preach the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4:33). Even among the erudite philosophers on Mar's Hill in Athens the apostle Paul boldly preached the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 17:18). There was plenty of evidence for the resurrection, in fact, Jesus had appeared to over 500 people at the same time (1 Cor. 15:6). All the enemies of Jesus had to do to stop Christianity was produce his body, but they couldn't do it.

But, let's look to the future! On the night before Calvary Jesus made an amazing promise to his disciples: **“Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”** (Jn. 14:11-12)

What did Jesus mean that the apostles would do “even greater things, because I am going to the Father?” Please consider that all of the miracles Jesus performed were only temporary. Every sick and crippled person Jesus healed ultimately died! Even Lazarus whom he raised from the dead also died again! Jesus fed the multitudes with 5 loaves and 2 fish but they soon got hungry again. On the next day after making this amazing promise Jesus himself would die for the sins of all mankind. Then **“by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”** (Heb. 10:14) On the very next day Jesus **“Offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down on the right hand of God.”** (Heb. 10:12) After Jesus died for the sins of all mankind and triumphantly returned to the Father in heaven, the apostles could offer the miracle of salvation which lasts for all eternity! This is the world's greatest miracle! It is the “pearl of great price” for which we can wisely invest everything!

The “Gospel”, as you know, involves the “resurrection” of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:1-4). A few days after Jesus ascended into heaven Peter stood up with the eleven and preached the “good news” that Jesus was risen from the dead. As we have said, after that one message about 3,000 people were saved for all eternity (Acts 2:41). None of this was possible until Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and then rose triumphantly from the dead!

Even though you are young, I'm sure you have already had friends and loved ones who have died. My only sister, Aunt Zoanne, just died a few days ago on March 30, 2023. When our daughter, Aunt Mary, was only 4 years old her 4 year old friend, Cathleen Calloway, was run over by a car and killed. This story has become an oft repeated legend in our family to teach obedience as Cathleen was killed running away from her baby sitter who merely wanted her to put on a sweater. As you grow older more of your loved ones and friends will die. Ultimately you will also die! Our only hope to defeat death is in Christ! There are many religions in the world but only one empty tomb!

Lee Strobel, a converted atheist, concludes that there is an “avalanche” of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus! You owe it to God, yourself, and those whom you love, to not avoid this avalanche and to diligently consider that evidence. The angel at the tomb told the truth - **“He is not here, he has risen.”** (Matt. 28:6)

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce