

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 449

Dearest grandchild,

Today letter will be about Hebrews 13:5: **“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”** With all of the uncertainties in life it is great to have a friend who will never forsake you.

Jesus, as you know, was betrayed by Judas, who claimed to be his friend. History has many similar examples of such betrayals. Caesar was assassinated by his friends included his own nephew, Brutus. Benedict Arnold is famous for betraying his country to the British. The Rosenbergs are remembered for selling our atomic secrets to Russia. CIA agent Aldrich Ames sold information to Russia for \$4.6 million that compromised 100 military operations and resulted in the deaths of 10 American spies, Etc.

But let us return to our text. The Greek word translated as “never” in this verse is actually two words - “ου μη.” These two words used together form a double negative as both words means “no”. This is the strongest way possible in the Greek language to emphasize “not ever.” While the English reader sees one promise in the word “never”, the Greek text actually contains two promises. So when the Scriptures promise to “never” leave you and “never” to forsake you, that promise has actually been repeated four times.

But there is also another negative in this one short verse. The word “ουδ” is also a negative word and is translated as “nor” in the KJV. This makes five negatives linked together in only nine Greek words. Michael Odell Cool points out: *“If you translate those nine Greek words literally in the order in which they are written, it would say, in effect: “(Not) (not) (you) (will I leave), (also not) (not) (not) (you) (will I forsake).”* Touche! God is true even if every man is a liar (Romans 3:4).

God knows how we are formed and remembers that we are dust (Psalm 103:14). So when God wanted Abraham to be confident in his promise He confirmed it with an oath. Since there was no one better to swear by, God swore by Himself (Hebrews 6:13-20). Abraham was convinced! The Hebrew letter was written to Christians. They already knew that Jesus was the Christ and that God had kept his promise to Abraham. So in our text God gives these precious believers a similar assurance that He gave to Abraham and promises to “never, never, never, never, never” leave them or forsake them!

Just before being beheaded by Nero Paul wrote to Timothy: **“Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”** (2 Tim. 4:14-18)

The Lord was also with Stephen, the first Christian martyr. As Stephen was being stoned we are told: **“But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’”** (Acts 7:55-56). Normally Jesus is pictures as “seated at the right hand of God” (Heb. 1:3; 12:2). As Stephen was dying, however, Jesus stood up and cheered him on to victory!

Please note that God has never promised to keep us from suffering! Quite to the contrary, suffering is an integral part of the Christian life. Peter wrote: **“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”** (1 Peter 4:12-16)

While Jesus has not promised to deliver us from suffering, He has promised never to leave us or forsake us! Jesus not only suffered, He did so as an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). In fact, Jesus is actually within us and thus shares with us in our suffering. Jesus promised: **“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him to make our home with him.”** (John 14:23) This is why Jesus told those who cared for those who were suffering **“I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”** (Matt. 25:40)

So: **“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”** (Hebrews 13:5)

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce