

**LETTERS FROM GRANDPA**  
**# 243**

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with Johannes Gutenberg who was first to print the Bible. He wrote: *"God suffers in the multitude of souls whom His holy word cannot reach. Religious truth is imprisoned in a small number of manuscript books, which confine instead of spreading the public treasure. Let us break the seal which seals up holy things, and give wings to truth, in order that she may go and win every soul that comes into this world, by her word, no longer written at great expense by a hand easily palsied, but multiplied like the wind by an untiring machine. . . Yes, it is a press, certainly, but a press from which shall soon flow, in inexhaustible streams, the most abundant and most marvelous liquor that has ever flowed to relieve the thirst of men! Through it, God will spread His word. A spring of pure truth shall flow from it; like a new star it shall scatter the darkness of ignorance, and cause a light heretofore unknown to shine amongst men."*

Gutenberg's Bible, as you know, resulted from the "moveable type" printing press. As the above quotation indicates, his primary reason for his printing press was to print the Bible. The Chinese invented printing long before Gutenberg's but they didn't have moveable type. Dr. James Dobson (Dec. 1999) pointed out that the cable TV network A&E aired a series focussing on the 100 most influential people in the last 1,000 years. They interviewed various scholars, politicians, and theologians and sought to identify those people, good or bad, who impacted our world between A.D. 1,000, and 2,000. The list included such famous men as William the Conqueror and George Washington. Such famous women as Joan of Arc and Marie Curie. **Johannes Gutenberg was at the very top of the list of the 100 most influential people of this millennium,**

Gutenberg's Bible was in Latin and was published in three-volumes, It was completed in Mainz in 1455. It is known as the Gutenberg Bible, the 42-Line Bible, or the Mazarin Bible. Since the Bible was in Latin, Gutenberg first printed a small 32 page Latin Grammar that the Bible might be understood. The Bible, however, remained the focus of his efforts and was the first major work to be produced on his press. Historians believe there were 200 Gutenberg Bibles printed, but only 47 are known to exist today. Most are torn and tattered, but three "perfect" copies have been found, one of which is in the Library of Congress. Gutenberg's Bible is regarded by many as the finest book of all time. He spared no expense or attention to detail in printing the Bible. He used the most expensive paper, ink, and artwork, for his desire was to honor God. In fact, he went bankrupt in the process. His motivation for printing the Bible was to glorify God, not to make money.

Someone has praised the power of the printed page with these words: *"The printed page never flinches, never shows cowardice, it never is tempted to compromise, it never tires, never grows disheartened. It travels cheaply, and requires no hired halls. It works while we sleep, it never loses its temper, it continues to work long after we are dead. The printed page is a visitor which gets inside the home and stays there. It always catches a man in the right mood, for it speaks to him only when he is reading it. It always sticks to what it has said and never answers back. It is bait permanently left in the pool."*

- John Wycliffe is known as the Morning Star of the Reformation. He translated the Bible from Latin into English around A.D. 1382 but it took around 10 months for a scribe to make a copy. Unfortunately the "church" didn't believe the common man should have the Bible. Wycliffe

died in 1384 but years later was condemned as a heretic on May 4, 1415 at the Council of Constance. His corpse was dug up and burned, and his ashes cast into the River Swift.

- William Tyndale translated the Bible into English from the Greek. He said: *“I will cause a boy who drives a plow to know more of the scriptures than the pope”*. For the “crime” of translating the Bible for the common man he was burned at the stake on Oct. 6, 1536.
- John Rogers translated Matthew’s Bible in 1537. He too died as a martyr, killed by the vicious Queen Mary. She killed so many that historians call her “Bloody Mary”.
- On Oct. 16, 1555 Bloody Mary also had Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley burned at the stake. Latimer’s last words were: *‘Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grace, in English, as I trust shall never be put out’*.
- It is this kind of religious tyranny, as you know, that caused the Pilgrims to flee to America.
- During these days there were a number of English Bibles: Wycliffe’s Bible, the Coverdale Bible, Matthew’s Bible, the Geneva Bible, the Bishop’s Bible, and the Rheims and Douay Bible. None of these Bibles, however, were authorized by the King.
- In 1611 the Bible was finally authorized by James the King of England. This version is known as the King James Bible.

I have mentioned Gutenberg and these other heroes of the faith to encourage you to read the Bible. You owe it to God, to these faithful martyrs, and to yourself. Please read and study the Bible every day! **“Study to show yourselves approved unto God” (2 Tim. 2:15).**

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce