

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

253

Dearest grandchild,

Wikipedia states that about 7% of people in the world are atheists or agnostics. This would be from 450–500 million. While there are many reasons why atheists do not believe in God, one common objection to God involves the presence of suffering. When an innocent child gets cancer, for example, some will vow never to believe in God. I'm sure you have heard of the "serenity prayer". It goes like this: "God help me to change the things I can change, to accept the things I cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference". Dare we ask how anything we think affects the reality of God? God is, or is not, regardless of what we think. What we "think" has absolutely no bearing at all on the existence of God. Fortunately, God is good even though He temporarily allows Satan to do evil. If you really want to know what God is like, look at Jesus, for: **"In Christ all the fulness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Col. 2:9)**. It is hard for any rational person not to like Jesus!

Jonah foolishly thought he could escape from God by traveling to Tarshish (Jonah 1:3). How utterly childish. The presence of God fills the universe (I Ki. 8:27). He is "Omnipresent"! David wrote: **"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast" (Ps. 139:7-10)**. No matter how hard you try, you can never escape from God!

The Hebrew people believed in God, but many "ignored" Him. Like many of us, they got so busy with the temporal things of earth that they lost their focus on God. The writer of the Hebrew letter therefore asked this pointed question: **"How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3)** How would you answer this question?

It is sometimes possible to escape from earthly rulers. "The Long Walk" is a popular book about one of the most famous prison escapes of the 20th century. In 1941, while imprisoned in the far north of Russia, Slawomir Rawicz (a Polish soldier) and six friends, escaped from that Soviet gulag during a violent blizzard. The group consisted of Rawicz, two other Polish soldiers, a Latvian landowner, a Lithuanian architect, and an American engineer. On their 4,000 mile walk to freedom in India they were joined by a 16 year old Polish girl. 11 months later they arrived in India in March 1942. Regrettably, four of the escapees died en route.

In 1970 the Reader's Digest chronicled the incredible escape from Cuba of Armando Socarras Ramirez. The article was titled "Stowaway". 17 year old Armando, and his 16 year old friend Jorge, longed for freedom and planned to stowaway in the wheel wells of a DC 8 on a non-stop flight from Havana to Madrid. They knew that flight #904 would stop momentarily before taking off on Havana's 11,500 foot runway. Hiding in the grass they sprinted to the plane to take their positions. Armando was 5'4" and weighed 140 lbs. His presence in the wheel well prevented the wheel from retracting properly and a warning light informed the pilot that something was wrong. The pilot reported the problem to the tower and recycled the gear. Climbing at 170 mph thousands of feet above the ground Armando was hanging on for dear life. This time the warning light went out and Captain Valentin Vara del Rey settled down for the 8 hr. 20 minute flight. There were 147 passengers "on board" and a crew of 10. When they landed in Madrid the frozen body of Armando plopped to the ground. Security guard Jose Rocha Lorenzana, was the first to reach him. Dr. Jose Maria Pajares, who cared for

Armando, called his survival a “medical miracle”. Armando made a complete recovery and went to live with his uncle in New Jersey. Armando believes Jorge missed the flight and wound up in jail.

Yes! It is often possible for creative men to come up with some ingenious plan to escape from some earthly ruler, but how can anyone escape from God? The answer is, “you can’t”! If there is a God, and I am confident that there is, there is absolutely no way for anyone to escape from Him!

You didn’t ask to be born but you were. You may not want to die, but you will. These are realities that you cannot change! Remember! We need to accept the things we cannot change. To do otherwise is to deny reality. On April 12, 1961 Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first man to orbit the earth. In a universe that is billions of light years across, traveling a couple of hundred miles into space is a rather modest achievement. Yet atheist Gagarin bragged that he had been into the heavens and did not see God. Now he has! On March 27, 1968, 38 year old Yuri Gagarin died in a fiery plane crash. It was only a routine training mission. It should have been safe! It wasn’t! He didn’t escape!

There is an old joke about the man who jumped off the Empire State Building. He was quoted as he passed the 35th floor: “Everything is all right so far!” I assume everything in your life is also all right “so far”. “So far”, however, is too short sighted. Remember Hamlet’s speech about whether to “be or not to be”. As he contemplated suicide he dared to consider the possibility of life after death. Just thinking about it gave him pause. Every thinking person also needs to “think” and “pause” in the same way.

As we mentioned earlier, God revealed His nature to mankind in the person of Jesus Christ. Why would anyone ever want to escape from Him?

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce