

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with "apologetics". No! This word doesn't mean to apologize, it means to make a systematic defense of something you believe. It is actually a transliteration of the Greek word "apologia" which is found 8 times in the New Testament Scriptures. In the King James Version it is translated 3 times as "defense", 3 times as "answer", 1 time as "answer for one's self", and 1 time as "clearing of one's self". Today, "apologetics" is commonly used to refer to a systematic defense of the Christian faith.

Peter used this word when he encouraged God's elect to always be ready to give an "answer", that is, "a rational defense" for the hope we have in Christ. He wrote: **"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15).** We should not only have hope, but we should also be able to give a reason for our hope.

Juries are not required to make judgements beyond "any" doubt, but beyond a "reasonable" doubt. Similarly Peter wants us to be able to give a "reasonable" explanation for our hope. Idolatry is not reasonable. Isaiah made fun of idolators (See Is. 44:6-20). The idolator cuts down a tree and cooks his dinner with part of it and then makes an idol to worship with another part of the same tree. This is not reasonable. An early disciple named Minucius Felix also made fun of idolators in his day. In a document dated around 210 A.D. he wrote: *"The mice, the swallows, and the bats, gnaw, insult, and sit upon your gods; and unless you drive them away, they build their nests in their mouths; the spiders weave their webs over their faces. You first make them, then clean, wipe and protect them, that you may fear and worship them. Should we view all of your rites, there are many things which justly deserve to be laughed at – others that call for pity and compassion".*

Man's ability to reason presents a problem for evolutionists. Darwin himself wrote: *"With me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind, which has always been developed from the mind of lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy... Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?"*

Darwin was honest enough to question his own theory. He knew that men are different from monkeys. The Scriptures, of course, put man in a unique category separate and apart from all other creatures. The heavens declare the "glory" of God (Ps. 19:1), but only man is made in His "image" (Gen. 1:27). You can reason with a man but not with a monkey. Neither can a monkey graduate from medical school or successfully perform a heart transplant. Certainly a monkey cannot hear and believe the Gospel and surrender his life to God. Man's ability to reason does make him unique. One Bible word for "reason" is "dialegomai" from which we get our English word "dialogue". It is used repeatedly in the book of Acts to describe Paul's approach to evangelism. (See Acts 17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8, 9; 24:25; etc.) Paul did not climb into a pulpit and shout down the message of Christ, he looked unbelievers in the eye and established a dialogue with them. He talked, and he also listened. He "reasoned" with them about righteousness, self control, and judgement to come (Acts 24:25).

There are, of course, limitations to our reasoning powers. Select any stranger, for example, and try to understand him scientifically. No matter how many lab reports you receive you cannot really know that person until he reveals himself. An MRI cannot tell you whether someone is a philanthropist

or a homicidal maniac. Similarly, the world in it's wisdom did not really know God until He revealed Himself. While our finite minds cannot completely comprehend anything that is infinite, God still revealed a great deal of Himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the "Word" of God! That is, He is the vehicle by which God communicates His nature to mankind. In Jesus Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead in a body (Col. 2:9). We can know God because He chose to reveal Himself to us. We also have hope beyond the grave because of the resurrection of Jesus. Peter called our hope a "living hope" and wrote that God has **"given us new birth and a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3).**

The word Cryonics comes from the Greek word "kryos" meaning "cold". According to Wikipedia, in the year 2014 some 250 people put their hope in "cryonics". After they died they had their bodies quick frozen to temperatures of minus 320.8 F. Their "hope" is that medical science can someday thaw them out and fix whatever killed them. Another 1,500 made arrangements to be frozen after death that same year. Is this reasonable? Even if you could be brought back to life would you want to live forever in an 80 year old body? Placing your hope in Cryonics is not reasonable!

Christianity by comparison, promises brand new life. Our resurrection is illustrated by the planting of a seed. Just as a lowly seed can disintegrate into the dust and then produce a beautiful flower or a towering tree, so also our lowly bodies can also produce new bodies that are majestic and wonderful. And yes, we do have an example upon which we can rest our hope! There is plenty of historical evidence that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead. His resurrection is even more remarkable in that it was predicted in the Scriptures centuries before it came to pass. Jesus died, was buried, and rose again "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1-3). No other fact provides a more reasonable explanation for the growth of Christianity.

There is an old story about a man who started his own religion. He selecting what he felt were the best parts of many faiths and called his new religion "Theophilanthropy". He trained a dozen disciples and sent them out, but without success. A friend suggested that he might have better luck if he got himself crucified, arose from the dead, and then send out his disciples. Touche!

Don't ever let anyone rob you of the reasonable hope we have in Jesus Christ.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce