

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

June 9, 2019 was Pentecost Sunday. June 16, 2019 is Father's Day. This letter will try to learn lessons from both. The word "pentecost" means "fiftieth". After the Sabbath of the Passover week the Jews were to count 50 days and then celebrate Pentecost (Lev. 23:15-16). Thus Pentecost always came on Sunday. It was on this day that the church was established (Acts 2:1). When the Ten Commandments were given the Feast of Pentecost had not yet been established, but Jewish scholars insist that it was the first Pentecost, 50 days after the Sabbath of the first Passover in Egypt.

The difference between these two days is dramatic. For example, when the Law was given 3,000 died (Ex. 32:28) and when the church was established 3,000 were saved (Acts 2:41). Big difference! The Law written on tablets of stone was cold, rigid, and inflexible. The symbolism is significant. There is no life in a stone. Thus the Old Covenant was, and is, a covenant of death (2 Cor. 3:7). The followers of Jesus, by contrast, were not known for law, but love (Jn. 13:34, 35). Big difference! The church is like a family not a court room. God is our Father and all of us are brethren. God is good! Jesus said it like this: **"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Lk. 11:11-13).**

This is where Father's Day comes in. Jesus taught His disciples to pray to God as though He were their father (Matt. 6:9). Even more remarkable, the Holy Spirit emboldens believers to call God "Abba" or "Daddy" (Rom. 8:15). The devout Jew never thought about God this way. The New International Dictionary of the New Testament states: *"Nowhere in the entire wealth of devotional literature produced by ancient Judaism do we find 'abba' being used as a way of addressing God."* The Hebrew word for "father" is "ab". It occurs 1195 times in the O.T. Scriptures, but only 15 times in a religious sense, and never as a personal father. They considered God the "father" of their nation, but not their personal father. Such a "thought" was "unthinkable". Remember when the Ten Commandments were given God was unapproachable. He was far away on the top of Mt. Sinai. In fact, any person or animal that even touched the mountain was put to death (Ex. 19:12-13). To the devout Jew, God was so high and lifted up that only a special person like Moses could meet with Him. Thus, when Jesus said to pray to God like a "father" He was dropping a theological bombshell. The Jews were so afraid of God they wouldn't even attempt to pronounce His name. It was deemed "ineffable", that is, a name too sacred to even be spoken. Christians, by contrast, come boldly into the presence of God and call him "Abba" "Father". How beautiful! How different! How wonderful!

It is obvious that Law does not reflect the nature of God. The Law is a "shadow" and not reality (Heb. 10:1). God is reality and not a shadow (Ja. 1:17). Shadows always change, but God never changes (Mal. 3:6). The change of the priesthood required a change of Law (Heb. 7:12), but, as we have pointed out, God doesn't change (Mal. 3:6). The Law is without mercy, but the mercy of the Lord endures forever (Ps. 136 KJV). The Law was given through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:18). There is always a way around Law, but never a way around love. Jesus was crucified because of the Law (Jn. 19:7). Even though the Prodigal Son had sinned and did not deserve forgiveness, his loving father forgave him anyhow (Lk. 15:11-32). Let us thank God for being a loving father!

We repeat, God did not give the Law to reflect His nature, but as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24). If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. In Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead in a body (Col. 2:9). You do not need a lawyer to talk with your father, and you do not need a lawyer to talk with God!

I'm sure you are familiar with the serenity prayer: *"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference."* I am convinced that there is a God, but obviously we have no control over whether He is good or bad. If we could have the God of our dreams, however, I am convinced that He would be just like Jesus. William E. H. Lecky was an Irish historian and philosopher. He died in 1903, which was the year your Great Grandfather H. B. Mouton was born. In Vo. 2 of Lecky's *History of European morals* (pages 8, 9) he wrote: *"It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but also the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the disquisitions of moralists"*.

Praise the Lord! Jesus is God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). Happy Father's Day!

Love,

Grandpa Boyce