

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

375

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the message delivered by the heavenly host when Jesus was born. This "great company" of angels appeared to shepherds, praising God and saying: **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests" (Lk. 2:14)**. Notice that the promise of "peace" is not for everybody. It is for "men on whom his favor rests". Jesus Himself predicted "wars and rumors of wars" (Matt. 24:6). The disciples were like sheep in the midst of wolves (Matt. 10:16). In our last century we not only had two "world wars" but over 250 other wars as well. It was perhaps the most deadly century ever. Jesus promised them peace, but not as the world gives (Jn. 14:27). All wars will cease when Jesus comes again, but for now his peace is reserved for those who are saved.

Consider, for example, the long standing hostility between Jews and Gentiles. It was done away with "in Christ"! Paul wrote to the Ephesians: **"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility (Eph. 2:13-14). His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility" (Eph. 2:15-16)**. In Christ there is absolutely no hostility between Jews and Gentiles!

For a modern day example of hostility let us consider the famous feud between the Hatfields and the McCoys. It all began over a razorback hog and a litter of pigs. Floyd Hatfield and Randolph McCoy both claimed to be the owner. The case went to court and Hatfield won. McCoy, however, accused Hatfield of lying and Hatfield hit him with a rock. When Johnse Hatfield secretly married Rose Anne McCoy it was almost more than the Hatfields could stand. The hostility between the two clans escalated and when election day came (Aug. 7, 1882) everybody got "lickered up" and three McCoy brothers stabbed Ellison Hatfield 26 times and then shot him in the back. Two days later the three McCoy brothers were all dead. The Hatfields had spared the court the trouble of a trial. The victims were tied to paw paw bushes with leather thongs and their bodies were riddled with bullets. Randolph was in a kneeling position with the top of his head blown off. Tolbert died with a bloody hand in front of his face and a bullet in his brain. Phamer was swinging from his armpits like a sack of grain.

The leader of the Hatfield clan was William Anderson Hatfield, better known as "Devil Anse". He was a tall and heavily bearded man who had once been an officer in the Confederate Army. It was said that his eyes glowed and his nose was hooked like a scimitar. He had 13 children and they all lived in a log cabin that was built like a fort. It was fashioned out of 23 foot timbers that were 2 feet thick. The door was 12 inches thick and made of solid oak. A draw bridge was over the stream in front of the cabin and a guard was posted around the clock.

On Sept. 4, 1882 a circuit court for Pike County convened and 20 men were indicted. Judge Findley of Williamsburg explained why no one was convicted. When the defendants were armed with double barreled shot guns and a belt full of revolvers it was suicide for a judge to find them guilty. While war raged in the mountains Judge Findley didn't hold court for two years.

In 1888 the Hatfields set fire to a McCoy cabin. When Allifair McCoy tried to put out the fire she was murdered and her mother was clubbed in the head for trying to help her. Calvin McCoy was

also killed in the attack. This time the court dared to find someone guilty and on Feb. 18, 1889 Ellison Mounts was hanged for the murder of Allifair McCoy and thousands showed up for the occasion.

Since a virtual war was taking place in the mountains the newspapers picked up the story. While the violence continued the governors of two states debated about who had jurisdiction. Typical of the violence were the deaths of Elias and Troy Hatfield. They both died in a dispute and gun fight with an Italian liquor salesman. Troy was mortally wounded but on the way down he shot the salesman three times: once between the eyes once in the heart, and once in the stomach.

Virgil Carrington Jones was a reporter for several prominent newspapers including the Wall Street Journal. He not only covered the feud, but also explained how the feud came to an end. Jones said that the feuding guns were stacked when Devil Anse Hatfield was baptized into Christ in the cold clear waters of Main Island Creek. Johnse and Cap also confessed Christ and went down with him into the watery grave of Christian baptism. The deep roots of bitterness would take some years to fade away, but peace ultimately prevailed because of Jesus Christ.

This is the “peace” that the angels announced on the night that Jesus was born.

- First, we have peace with God. **“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1)**
- Then we have peace within ourselves. Jesus said: **“I have told you these things, so that in me you might have peace. In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33).**
- Then we have peace in the church. In the church people from all ages, nations, and backgrounds can live in complete peace and harmony with one another as they did in the Jerusalem church. In the church **“All the believers were of one heart and mind” (Acts 4:32).** Remember! **“God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33).**
- Finally we seek to bring this same peace to everyone with whom we come in contact. Jesus said: **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God” (Matt. 5:9).**
- In this regard let us all determine to be “sons of God”!

“Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you” (2 Thess. 3:16)

Shalom,

Grandpa Boyce