



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" MARK 16:15

NOVEMBER 1995

FROM US TO YOU

This is the month of Thanksgiving, and advertisers are busy promoting the season with images of motherhood, home, and fancy food. Yet for most of you reading this, Thanksgiving is just another reminder of life behind bars, where the food is bad and loved ones are separated or nonexistent. Many of you, especially our younger readers, have felt trapped in a hostile world where love is just a word used for manipulation and power. You see no beauty in life, and the season becomes a lonely time of pain, rejection, and fear. The more joy you see in others, the more you are reminded of the lack of it in your own life. We could tell you about the beauty of God's creation, but it wouldn't help! In order to sense joy, you need first, to receive inner peace, peace as a river (see Isaiah 48:17-18), peace that only God can give. To many of you this seems impossible, and you are in deep emotional turmoil. On the outside you may appear tough and fearless, but on the inside you know you are lost and very alone. All hope seems hidden away. While others enjoy Thanksgiving, you feel cheated and left out. Some of you have blamed your plight on your environment, or on the lack of a father, or the death of a loved one. This month's article "When Death Strikes The One You Love" may seem strange in a month where God's blessings are the primary focus. But blessings cannot be seen by those of you so far from the Light that you live in darkness (see Matthew 4:16 and John 8:12).

*"All we like **sheep** have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6 KJV). This world is like a large forest, filled with hidden dangers and many wild beasts. It's a dangerous place for a little lost lamb, but it's even more frightening in the dark (Isaiah 42:16). Do you feel like a lost lamb hiding in the woods? Are you hungry for truth, and tired of living with fear? Like a lamb hiding in the shrubs, the uncertainty is troubling. Then a sound pierces the night as wood cracks beneath a foot. Many of you have lived with fear so long that you have been willing to do anything to fit in, to belong somewhere, to someone. Some of you have joined street gangs, others have robbed, murdered or raped. But the pain is still there. You can destroy people, but you can't shake the ache in your soul. You become angry, hostile, fly into a rage, and hurt those you love. Yet you can't unload the burden you carry (see Matthew 11:29). No one appears to understand or care. This world is not a friendly place because it is in rebellion against its Creator (see Genesis 6:5). As families gather to enjoy the season, are you consumed by an emptiness so deep that all hope seems gone? Nothing has filled the void in your heart, although you've tried hard. It's a hole the shape of a Shepherd looking for the lamb He loves, and nothing else will suffice! You may look tough and strong on the outside, but the Lord sees your heart (see 1 Samuel 16:7). He knows your life. He feels your pain. Perhaps you've even

tried praying, but to no avail.

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness" (Isaiah 59:1-3 KJV). In short, there is a gulf between you and your Creator so deep and wide that you cannot cross it. No matter what you do, you cannot buy back your salvation, because you are a slave to sin (see John 8:34, Romans 7:14, and 2 Peter 2:19), and slaves belong to their masters. They do not own property because they are considered property, mere merchandise (Romans 6:16). If you're unsaved, that's what your master, Satan, considers you. That's why life seems so cheap. Death floods the world like a morbid cloud hovering over the ungodly. *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23 KJV). *"For the wages of sin is death..."* But there is hope, because *"...the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 6:23 KJV).

You may be living in darkness so deep that you cannot see the path behind you. But if you could, you would see a crimson trail of blood, and thorns that have pierced the Shepherd's flesh as He seeks His little lost lamb. You may feel so far away from God that you can't even imagine Him loving you. *"But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. ...I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (Matthew 9:12-13 KJV). *"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:6-8 NIV). It is so that we may *"...become children of God -- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God"* (John 1:12-13 NIV). This month most Americans are enjoying the harvest, but the harvest that God is concerned with is the crop of souls He purchased (Luke 10:2-3) at Calvary (Luke 23:33)! The forest of sin is deep and foreboding for a little lost lamb, but the Lord is our Good Shepherd because He came here *"... to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10 KJV). May the blessings of God be with you this holiday season, so that you too may say, *"...The LORD is my shepherd... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me... Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever"* (Psalms 23 NIV).

In His love, we remain, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*



When Death Strikes The One You Love

By Anne Kaestner

In October of 1988 my husband and I were on vacation in Massachusetts and had gone to Salem for the day. That evening, we decided to eat dinner at a nice restaurant in the heart of the city. It was in the ladies room of the restaurant that I saw another customer, a woman in her early thirties. She had spoken to me first, complimenting me on a sweater I was wearing. Nevertheless, I realized that there was something desperate about her. I hadn't intended to witness to her because she seemed unstable, but I offered her a little tract and instantly she became annoyed. "Just tell me what that says," she replied, belligerently. "I don't want to read it." I began to relay the message of salvation but before I got any further than the love of God, she became even angrier. "Don't tell me that God loves me," she replied, her eyes blazing. "I loved my mother so much and I prayed so hard that God would let her live and yet she died when I was twelve years old. If God loves me why would He let my mother die?" Obviously this wasn't a good time to answer such a complex question, so all I got out before being interrupted was, "Because of eternity..." The anger flashed in her eyes as I tried once again to tell her that God loves her, and when I tried to touch her hand in a comforting way, she became downright hostile. "Don't touch me," she screamed. "I don't want your filthy hands on me. Who wants your cooties?" She looked like she was thinking about hitting me. But the more she grew angry at God and at me, the more hurt I could see in her. It was the pain talking. And the love of God welled up in me and I had the most incredible feeling of concern and compassion toward her that I knew was coming from the Holy Spirit inside of me. So, I stood my ground, and I decided that even if she had hit me, I would have just kept loving her, and telling her how much Jesus loves her. Eventually something broke, and she was nearly in tears. She stopped for a second and said, "Give me a hug." I hugged her for only a couple of seconds when she pulled away again and reverted back to her anger. She ran out of the bathroom on the verge of tears. She'd been hating God so much that she couldn't bear to hear how much He loves her.

Many people fall into this category. God allowed someone they loved to die, and it made them bitter toward Him. They can't comprehend how a God of love would take away the person who means so much to them. (See Genesis 22:1-18.) The problem is that most folk don't understand God or eternity. For we humans only see the past and present, but we cannot see into the future. God sees the past, present, and future! He not only sees what we will become in Him, He also knows how our life, and our death, will affect others. Missionaries have been killed many times for this reason. I've been reading a book entitled "John and Betty Stam." It is about a young missionary couple who were led by God to China. They were only 27 and 28 years old, and Betty had just given birth to a baby girl. Many times, when someone is strong in their relationship with God, the Lord prepares that person for death, by letting them know that He is planning on bringing them home to Heaven. Simon Peter knew that his departure was short to arrive (2 Peter 1:10-15), as did Paul (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Likewise, John Stam knew that God was about to call him home, and his young wife with him. It was certainly on his mind because he wrote an Easter article for a student magazine on the theme of "...*Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*" (John 12:24 KJV). En route to their place of execution, the Communist leaders who held the Stams, stopped off at a small post office with their

captives. The clerk asked John where they were heading, and John responded, looking at the Communist soldiers, "I don't know where they're going, but we're going to Heaven." They went to their violent and bloody death with "... *the peace of God, which transcends all understanding...*" (Philippians 4:7 NIV).

My paternal grandmother had that type of peace when she died. She was only twenty-four years old when she became widowed with two small boys and a third, my father, was on the way. She had been left nearly destitute during the Great Depression. In those days there were no government programs to provide money or food stamps for her. Her name was Anna Riccio. Her parents were immigrants to America from Italy, but she and her sons were born in the United States. Anna's husband, Angelo, had left his farm in Caballaria, Italy, and had traveled to the United States in search of a better life. He and Anna had married when she was only nineteen. Angelo learned English well enough to get a good paying job as a machinist, and things looked good for the family, especially when they discovered that their third child would be born close to Christmas. Then disaster struck and Angelo caught Spanish Influenza. But he worried about supporting his family, and continued to go to work even when he was desperately ill. Then he caught Pneumonia and died while still in his thirties. Anna had no one to turn to. Her mother had passed on several years earlier and her father and other relatives were as poor as

she was. She tried to find solace in her religion, but that didn't work either. The church soon discovered that Anna no longer had any money to pay tithes, and that she was so busy trying to support her family that she couldn't get involved in fund raising activities. The final insult came when one of the nuns told Anna's oldest son one day, "Tell your mother that if she can't afford to support the church, she can't afford to be Catholic." No mother, no husband, no financial resources, no job, no government help, no relatives to turn to, no church. All doors seemed to be closing to Anna, but that did not stop her faith in God. A neighbor invited her to a Salvation Army service, and that was where Anna surrendered her heart to Christ!

Some time after that she ended up at Ridgewood



Angelo and Anna Riccio

Pentecostal Church in Queens, New York. It was there that God took her to an even closer walk with Himself, and she received His Baptism in the Holy Spirit! It wasn't easy over the years, and Anna never remarried, but nothing would shake her faith! As a result, God provided for her (Exodus 16:4, 1 Kings 17:4, & Luke 12:22-28). He enabled her to take in some sewing assignments, working out of her home for a local factory. Her sons also got jobs before school, selling pretzels and newspapers, and bringing their pay home to their mother. Eventually World War II came along, and Anna's sons went into the military. Her youngest, Eugene, spent some time in England where he met my mother, Winifred. After the war, in 1948, Winifred traveled to the United States with her mother, and she and Eugene were married. A year later Winifred went back to England on a short vacation to visit relatives, and refused to return to the United States. Eugene loved his bride so much that he moved to England in order to live with her and her mother. There he got a job and remained in England for nine years. I was born first, and two other children followed.

Then, one day, Eugene received a startling letter from his brother Edward. It informed him that their mother was dying of lung cancer and if he wanted to see her before she died, he had better hurry home. The doctors only gave Anna six months to two years to live. Eugene rushed back to New York, but Winifred refused to leave England. She

felt she could wait it out, and that after her mother-in-law died, her husband would return to her, but Anna didn't die. Two years later she was still alive, and Eugene was threatening a divorce and planning to take custody of his children. Anna had been praying for her grandchildren since my birth. She prayed for our salvation, and asked the Lord to let her see us before she died. Her prayers reached Heaven like a sweet incense (see Revelation 5:8), and in 1961 she was united with the grandchildren she loved. It took drastic measures to get my mother to finally move to the United States, but she eventually acquiesced. During those early years, Mother was sullen, morose, and in deep mourning for her country and her relatives. The following year, I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord, at Ridgewood Pentecostal Church during the Summer of 1963. Grandma was getting sicker all the time, but nothing would shake her walk with God! One day, when the doctor came to examine her, he insisted that my mother be with him as he wanted another woman present. Later that evening I heard Mother tell Dad how the doctor had finished examining Grandma and then how he had shaken his head, indicating how little time she had left. Much to my mother's embarrassment, Grandma raised her hands over her head and shouted in a loud voice, "I'll be with you soon Jesus. I'm coming home!"

One day I went upstairs, to Grandma's part of the house, to visit her. She was beaming from ear to ear. I sat down on her couch and then she looked at me and stated, with an expression of pride and total joy, "Anne, God has told me that He's going to give you a great ministry." Grandma died in 1965. She had the most peaceful look on her face even in her coffin. I'm not aware of anyone who directly came to the Savior as a result of Grandma's life, other than me. But every soul that Jesus reaches through Bible Believers Fellowship, Inc. will be added to her account in Heaven!

This is exactly what the Lord was speaking of when He said, *"...Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"* (John 12:24 KJV). What if Angelo had lived? God knew that Anna wouldn't have come to know Jesus as her Savior. What if Grandma had lived a long life?

Then my dad would have stayed in England and I wouldn't have come to the United States, where I accepted Christ. What if I had never become Born Again? My husband, Eric, says that he wouldn't have come to the Lord either. Damnation is so horrible that if only one lost soul escapes the eternal flames of Hell (Matthew 5:29-30, 10:28, 23:15, 23:33, Mark 9:43-50, Matthew 5:13, and Luke 12:5) and instead, goes to Heaven, it will be well worth the earthly cost, whatever that cost may be!

Years ago I heard about a young Christian woman who fell in love with a member of the "Hell's Angels." She tried witnessing to him, but to no avail. He loved her, but he wanted no part of her God. She had prayed for him endlessly, but nothing she could do would move him toward Jesus. Her love for him was far stronger than mere human attraction. It was a love that came from the Holy Spirit who dwelt in her heart! Then, one day, she was with the young man and she began to cross the street. Suddenly, up from behind came a vehicle so quickly that no one saw it coming. Her body was tossed up into the air, and when she came down, she knew she was dying. Her boyfriend ran to her, cradling her head in his arms. "It's alright," she whispered to him. "I'm going home now! I told God that I wanted you in Heaven **whatever the cost!** This is **His** will!" As he looked on with grief, holding her head against his chest, he saw her spirit leave her body, dressed in a robe and a crown! (See 1 Corinthians 9:22, 2 Timothy 2:5 & 4:8, James 1:12, Revelation 6:11 & 7:9, 13 & 14 and 22:14.) She ascended to Heaven. As a result, the man's heart broke. He turned his back on his past and accepted Jesus Christ as

his Savior and Lord. He gave this testimony before a crowd of thousands in the early 1970's. The woman was one little corn of wheat. In her life she couldn't bring the man she loved into the family of God. He was firmly implanted in Satan's domain. But her death plucked him up by the roots, and turned his life around. Not only did he come to Jesus, but his testimony is still touching hearts and lives today!

Then there's another account about a man who lived a century ago. When he had been young, he was a regular church goer, and thought of himself as a Christian. He was willing to give God a little corner of his life, but not all of it. He and his wife were farmers and they had a little boy. He was the only child they were able to have. It was as if the sun rose and set on the child, so special was he to his dad. Then, when the boy was about five years old, he died of a sudden, unexpected disease. The farmer stopped going to church and was no longer interested in anything to do with Christianity. He became angry and bitter toward God. He stayed like that and his hardness grew deeper each year. He had a grudge against the Lord because God took his son (John 3:16). As the years passed many things changed. One day a new preacher came to town and he was opening a church in the area. He happened to hear about the farmer and decided to visit the man in the hope of persuading him to come to church. A number of people told the preacher that it was a useless task because the farmer's heart was so bitter. The minister chose to try anyway, and decided to make the trip all the way out to the farm. This was back in the days when people used horses and buggies or carts, as there were no modern methods of transportation. A storm was starting to blow in and the more the preacher drew closer to his destination the worse it



got. It was too late to turn back because he had already gone so far, so he continued the trip all the way to the farm. When he arrived he saw some activity in the barn. He walked toward it and saw the farmer. The minister introduced himself. Then the farmer told him about one of his cows that was still out in the pasture. She had resisted his attempt to bring her in earlier. Now it was getting colder and her little calf was with her.

The farmer knew that he had to ride out and bring them safely back to the barn or they would freeze to death. The minister asked if he could go along and help. So the two men got into the cart and rode out to the meadow. It was a considerable trip and the cold wind was blowing hard. It had already started snowing and was turning into a blizzard. When they finally got to the cow the farmer jumped out and tried to pull her toward the cart, but she would not cooperate. They tried pushing the cow but she wouldn't budge. As the wind got worse and the temperature dropped, the farmer went over to the calf, picked him up, and put him on the back of the cart. Then, securing the gate, he got into the vehicle. The minister turned to him and said, "You can't leave this cow out here. She will die." The farmer responded, "No she won't." So they rode back to the barn. They finally arrived, and they were in the process of putting the calf into the stall when they suddenly heard a disturbance outside. The farmer went and opened the back door and, in the distance, galloping at full speed toward them, was the cow. She came charging in, then walked rapidly until she found the stall with her calf and she entered into it. Instantly something clicked in the preacher's head as God spoke to his heart, and he said to the farmer, "Now I know why God allowed your boy to die so long ago. Your son is in Heaven, and the only way that Jesus could get you into the safety of His Kingdom was to bring your child in first!" The farmer began to cry and, as tears started rolling down his cheeks, he said, "I know it. I know it." He repented of his sins and for all the years of anger he'd harbored toward God. Then he asked the Lord to cleanse him of

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all unrighteousness (Isaiah 1:18) and to take control of his life.

Lastly, I want to tell you about Maureen and Jerome. The following is as Maureen wrote it in her own words: "Approximately 12 years ago I met a young man of 19 who had just been released from a New York State Correctional Institution. At the time, I was a criminal justice student. Therefore, I had become very interested in this person. As time went on we fell in love. I knew we were destined for each other and I was going to save this soul. At a very tender age, I was not only experiencing my own identity crises but feelings of rejection from family, friends, and the person whom I love so dearly loved crime, drugs, and guns more than me. Yet I was determined not to give up. As I continued my studies, we married, had 3 beautiful children, and my husband was constantly in and out of institutions. I shall not go into detail of the feelings of that phone call "Maureen, I've been busted again"; or a husband being gone from home for days and imagining the worst; or bringing a newborn home by yourself in a cab; and endless experiences being married to the devil. Yet I never gave up. I knew of a decent, loving, sincere, gentle man that lived beneath this hard, hatred and inconsiderate being. For years I tried everything I could and knew to bring this person out in him. It seemed that each time I would reach a certain point but he would fall back into the devil's hands again. About two years ago I thought I had reached my goal, but one day when our lives were beautiful, or at least I believed so, the devil walked into my house. While I was at work he left once again for the "better life" and a week later I received that phone call again from Erie, Pennsylvania, charged with armed robbery. I could not believe it, maybe years ago yes, but not now after he changed so. Again I bailed my husband out and while he was on the streets, he began attending charismatic meetings and reading the Bible. On the day of our sixth wedding anniversary my husband was sentenced to 6½ to 15 years imprisonment. I was full of hate, anger, loneliness, and left with more responsibilities than one deserves. This happened 9 months ago, and while he continued reading the Bible in prison, he received the Holy Spirit and speaks in tongues. I thought for sure he had become a "Jesus freak" or "Holy Roller." Ironically, 3 months after Jerome was sentenced, I was appointed a Correction Officer in New York State.

"One night, as I was working, I picked up one of Chaplain Ray's books "Where Flies Don't Land" and, at home, began reading it. I couldn't put it down. I finally understood what my husband was trying to explain to me. During this time I was in a state of confusion and was debating on a divorce. After reading this book, I contacted some Christian friends and, shortly after, went to visit my husband with the children after not seeing him for nine months. I had seen how he changed, and that being that I knew existed in him was finally brought out, and I realized only Jesus was able to do it, not me, nor therapists or counselors. I had finally reached my goal through Jesus. After this experience I find myself renewing my Christian belief and trust in God and I thank God for sending my husband to prison again. I find myself more contented and at peace yet I know I have not yet received the Holy Spirit. I believe Jesus will reunite us again soon to share this experience and live in a good Christian family life. I believe that because of all of this, and our new predicament with Jerome finding Jesus and myself being a Correction Officer, that He had, and still has, a plan for us in our new lives. I do not know what it may be, yet I won't give up on my new goal."

In December of 1986 Jerome finally got out of prison and was

reunited with Maureen and his kids. A few days later, Maureen died in a traffic accident on December 12, while she was helping to transport prison inmates to a new facility. After that occurred, Jerome lost custody of his children. He had made a commitment to live for Christ no matter what came his way, but he had no idea how soon his faith would be tested! As the Lord often does when He wants to use

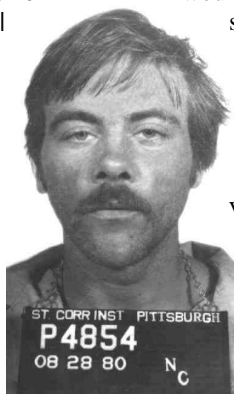
someone, Jesus took away everything that had been important to Jerome, his home, family, and children. Moreover, the

Lord insisted that Jerome learn humility before He would use him (see John 13:4-17 & Luke 14:8-11). Jobs were so hard to get, especially for an ex-convict, that Jerome took a job cleaning up after the handicapped, wiping up vomit and cleaning latrines (see 1 Peter 2:21-23, 1 Peter 5:10, and 1 Timothy 2:3). Then, in 1993, when we first moved into our current office building, I got back to the office one day after an appointment. When I walked in I saw a tall stranger in a jogging suit standing in our hallway, talking to Eric and a staff member. It was Jerome. He had heard about our ministry and felt led to visit us. He didn't know where we were located, but started heading

in the general direction someone had pointed him in and we were the first building he stopped at! Later that year, we hired him to work as our shipping clerk and he is still sending out your newsletters and other Christian material today! Jerome brought in Maureen's testimony to ask us if he could photocopy it and, when I read it, I knew I could use it in this article. He not only agreed, but supplied us with photographs as well. As for Maureen's death, he wanted me to tell you that the only way he survived it, spiritually, was through continual prayer and the study of God's Holy Word.

There is a peace that Jesus can give that transcends even the deepest of pain! For we don't always know the reasons why God allows events to occur as they do, but when we love Him enough to trust Him (see Proverbs 3:5-7), the Holy Spirit gives us a tranquillity that the world couldn't possibly understand! St. Paul wrote of such a peace (Philippians 4:6-7) while he sat chained, hungry, and half naked, in a filthy prison dungeon. He knew of human misery! He also wrote, "...*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him*" (1 Corinthians 2:9 KJV). He was aware of the suffering of his brothers and sisters in Christ, but unlike most Christians today, Paul knew that

suffering is a part of proclaiming the Gospel (see Matthew 23:34-35, Acts 5:40-41, 16:22-25, Hebrews 11:35-38, and Acts 7:57-60), for, as believers, we live as aliens and pilgrims (Hebrews 11:13, 1 Peter 2:11, John 18:36, & 1 John 2:15-17) in a hostile world, as light (Matthew 5:14) in the midst of darkness! But Paul knew that whatever we endure for Christ, we who love Him, are never alone (Hebrews 13:5 & Matt. 28:20). He knows about it (Psalm 34:15 & Proverbs 15:3), and His love goes with us. As Paul wrote to that early church in Rome, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 8:35-39 KJV).



Jerome Callanan in 1980



Jerome & Maureen Callanan in 1983



Jerome Callanan in 1995 at BBFI