



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

April 2020

FROM US TO YOU

Sadly, the world is panicking right now because of the coronavirus. If you're an American, you may have felt as if everything was going fairly well in your life. The unemployment situation had greatly improved. The stock market was on a roll. You may have felt like life was getting better. Then, suddenly, it's as if the foundation beneath you disappeared and you're probably wondering, "what happened?" But what was the foundation you were standing on? If you're a Christian, was it the rock of your salvation, Jesus Christ? Or was it sinking sand? Jesus said, "...everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash" (Matthew 7:24-27 NIV).

Were you trusting in the carnal things of this world, like money? "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch" (Proverbs 11:28 KJV). Was it your family? A man we used to know once told Eric, "I could never put God before my family." It wasn't long after that we heard that his wife divorced him and his daughter went to live with her mother. If you're a Christian, Christ must come first! Jesus said, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn 'a man against his father; a daughter against her mother; a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' 'Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me'" (Matthew 10:34-38 NIV). Many people have experienced a recent death in their family. It's always sad to lose someone you love. But if both you and the person who died love and serve Jesus, you will see them again (John 11:25-26, 14:2)! Were you trusting in friends? So, did the prodigal son. Yet in the end, he lost everything, including his friends. Only his father's love remained. However, that didn't help him until he humbled himself and returned to his father (Luke 15:11-32).

Some people have a "but" relationship with Christ. Jesus said to a "...man, 'Follow Me.' **But** the man replied, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' Still another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; **but** first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.' Jesus replied, 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God'" (Luke 9:59-62 NIV). When Jesus says, "Follow Me," there is no looking back. The Lord knew that the man whose father died was spiritually dead and

did not go to Heaven. So, Jesus was telling the man not to go back for the dead, but to keep walking with Him before it was too late! Let the spiritually dead members of his family bury the physically dead man. God delivered Lot and his family from the city of Sodom before destroying it. His angels warned them not to look back. Lot's family left all their worldly possessions behind. "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19:26 NIV). When the Lord tells you to follow Him, He does not wait around for you. You must be ready to move when He says so.

Jesus gave His disciples a metaphor prophecy of the Rapture of the church. The "Rapture" is a word the church uses to describe the prophecy of Jesus returning for His beloved flock, to take us out of this world to a safe place (1 Corinthians 15:51-57, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Revelation 4:1-2) before God brings tribulation on the earth (see Matthew 24:14-24). Jesus used ten virgins to figuratively describe the condition of the church in these last days. For the church is considered the "Bride of Christ" (Mark 2:19-20, Ephesians 5:31-32, 2 Corinthians 11:2). When Christ, the bridegroom, comes back for His collective bride, half of them will have the Holy Spirit guiding them, symbolized by the oil in their lamps, which illuminates their way. Half of them will not. However, those who don't have oil consider themselves Christians. Yet they are not living for Christ (Matthew 7:21-23, Revelation 3:14-22). It is just lip service (Mark 7:6-7). So, they have no Holy Spirit light in them to guide their way in the darkness. "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet Him!' Then

all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with Him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' But He replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour" (Matthew 25:6-13 NIV).

The coronavirus is a warning God is using to get people's attention. For Jesus said, "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife!" (Luke 17:26-32 NIV).

In the love of Christ, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*



When All Things Work Together

By Anne Kaestner

Two thousand years ago, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christian church in Rome saying, "...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28 KJV). The longer I have been living for God, through Christ Jesus, His Son, the truer this scripture has become in my life. Many times, over the years, I have wondered why I had to endure some difficult trial of faith, or some particular annoyance. At the time that I went through it, nothing made sense about the situation. I couldn't possibly see any good that could come out of it. But whenever I continued to love and trust the Lord, despite circumstances (see Proverbs 3:5-6), everything turned out for the best in the end. Sometimes it takes years to discover the reason. However, eventually, I realized why it had been necessary to my spiritual growth, and I learned so much from the experience. "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief" (Ecclesiastes 1:18 NIV). You see, we Christians miss out on so much when we don't trust God in difficult times. None of us like going through the valleys and pitfalls of life, but if we don't go through the valley, we don't reach the mountaintop. And if we don't fight the battle, we don't get the victory. And God wants His children to be victorious in Him!

In Old Testament times, when the Israelites fought their battles, they never fought them on the mountaintops. The battle was always in the valleys. When little David fought the giant, it was in the valley.

All the big strong soldiers of Israel were frightened of Goliath. But David, who was just a shepherd boy, stepped forth in faith, got out his slingshot, and aimed his rock right at the giant's head. In this case, the rock David used was symbolic of Christ. Remember what Jesus said to His disciple Simon Peter. Jesus asked the disciples whom they thought He was. And Simon spoke up and said, "... 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by My Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this **rock** I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven'" (Matthew 16:16-19 NIV).

There is nothing that pleases God more than when we are willing to step out in faith! Jesus is the rock of our salvation. When the Israelites were thirsty in "...the Desert of Sin... after they had come out of Egypt" (Exodus 16:1 NIV), God provided them water out of a rock. God told Moses, "I will stand there before you by the **rock**... Strike the **rock**, and water will come out of it for the people to drink..." (Exodus 17:6 NIV). "They all... drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and **that rock was Christ**..." (1 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV. Compare with John 19:34). So, the rock that David used to kill the giant was symbolic of Christ! Simon Peter's faith was built on the **rock** of Christ. The Catholic church misinterprets this and claims that Peter was the first pope. He was not. The teachings of Peter and Christ are diametrically different from the teachings of the Catholic church! The rock that Christ would build His church upon was not Peter, but the **faith** that Peter demonstrated!

Jesus makes this even clearer when He says, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of **Mine** and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the **rock**. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it

did not fall, because it had its **foundation on the rock**. But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash" (Matthew 7:24-27 NIV). The big strong men of Israel saw the giant and were terrified of him, because they didn't have faith in God to protect them. And they didn't have faith because their hearts weren't right with the Lord. Even David's own brothers resented him, the way Joseph's brothers resented Joseph.

Those who don't have faith in God often resent those who do. "When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, 'Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle.' 'Now what have I done?' said David. 'Can't I even speak?'" (1 Samuel 17:28-29 NIV). It's not what you say to people that makes the difference. It's your lifestyle! David loved the Lord, and trusted Him. David, therefore, had faith. His brother, Eliab, didn't. And Eliab was probably inwardly ashamed of himself for not being stronger. For Eliab was trusting in his own strength, not the Lord's. When we have Christ in our heart we reflect His light (John 8:12) and holiness to the world (Luke 8:16). And those without Christ don't have that light to illuminate the sin in their own hearts (Luke 6:39). So, when they see someone

like David, or Joseph, or Simon Peter, the light coming from them shines into the dark areas of the other person's heart. That makes them aware of their own sin (John 3:19-20). And they resent the one with faith (John 15:18-19). However, David eventually became ruler of all Israel (2 Samuel 5:3).

Peter wrote a letter to the early church. Referring to Christ, he said, "as you come **to Him, the living Stone**—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him—you also, like **living stones**, are being built into a spiritual house to

be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:4-5 NIV). People these days seem to think that the church is the mediator between God and man. It is not! "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man **Christ Jesus**, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time" (1 Timothy 2:5-6 NIV). The true church is made up of repentant sinners. "This righteousness from God comes **through faith in Jesus Christ** to all who believe. There is no difference, for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:22-24 NIV). Jesus called His own disciples evil (Luke 11:13).

The religious leaders, in the days of John the Baptist came to him in order to be baptized. They had it in their heads that they were righteous because they were descendants of Abraham. But their ancestry was based on their first birth into this world. However, Jesus said that wasn't good enough. As He told Nicodemus, "...I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is **born again**" (John 3:3 NIV). John knew what a bunch of phony hypocrites they were. And, "...when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce **fruit** in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these **stones** God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already



at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce **good fruit** will be cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matthew 3:7-10 NIV). The word “Peter” means “pebble” or a piece of a rock. Christ is the rock, and those who are redeemed through Him, are “pebbles” who came out of that Rock.

How do you produce good fruit? Now here’s a different metaphor. Jesus told His disciples, “*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned*” (John 15:5-6 NIV). The only way to get to Heaven is to produce good fruit for God. And it can only be good enough for God if it is produced through faith in Christ. The good fruit Jesus is speaking about is honesty, a sweet spirit, kindness, compassion, peace, joy, and freedom from anxiety (Galatians 5:22-24). That doesn’t come through the church (Acts 7:48-51), or good works (Ephesians 8:8). It comes through Christ! Now I don’t want you to get confused, because that doesn’t mean that we don’t do good works. It just means that we don’t do the choosing of what we will and will not do for God. The good fruit is produced through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Because when we cling to Christ, and obey Him, “...we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, **which God prepared in advance for us to do**” (Ephesians 2:10 NIV).

As John the Baptist made clear, the baptism in the Holy Spirit only comes through Christ. However, Jesus said, “... before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58 NIV). The Person we know as Jesus Christ existed as God the Son in Heaven long before He came into this world. “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men*” (John 1:1-4 NIV). Jesus said, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega...who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty*” (Revelation 1:8 NIV). God the Son was probably the one who spoke to Old Testament prophets. In the midst of all his misery, Job knew who Christ is. He said, “*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*” (Job 19:25-27 NIV).

Abraham didn’t get his righteousness through a religious institution. He lived in a world of idol worshippers. “*Consider Abraham: He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.*” Understand, then, that those who **believe** are children of Abraham” (Galatians 3:6-7 NIV). In other words, their righteousness comes through faith in God and His Redeemer (1 Timothy 2:5-6). But when we love Christ, confess our sins to **God** (not a religious leader) and live for Him through the new birth, we are no longer a part of this world system (John 17:6-9, 1 Peter 2:5) that is run by the devil. Jesus said, “...When ye pray, say, *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth*” (Luke 11:2 KJV). So, if you are a reborn child of God, “...you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts... But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it

is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:1-5 NIV).

And as a child of God, you will be hated by those who want to live for the things of this evil world. Remember what Jesus said to His followers, “*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you*” (John 15:18-19 NIV). An example of this is Joseph. Like David, he was a little shepherd boy, the youngest of his brothers. Like David, Joseph was hated by his brothers. He was ridiculed, mocked, and attacked by them. Despite it all, he continued to trust God. He was sold as a slave to some Midianites (Genesis 37:28). Still he continued to trust God. When the Midianites took Joseph out of his native country, to Egypt, a land filled with sinful pagans, things looked bad but Joseph continued to trust God.

Then, slowly, events in Joseph’s life began to improve. He was purchased by “...Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard” (Genesis 37:36 NIV). Nevertheless, “*The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned*” (Genesis 39:2-4 NIV). You see, if you love and serve God, and obey His laws in all you do, no one can take you away from Him! Joseph was sold and taken away in chains. He was hated by his brothers be-



cause they were hypocrites. They claimed to be righteous because they were descendants of Abraham. But Joseph was special to God because he was anointed. And the anointed of God are hated far more than lukewarm believers (Revelation 3:16). God said, “*Do not touch My anointed ones; do My prophets no harm.*” He called down famine on the land and destroyed all their supplies of food; and He sent a man before them—Joseph, sold as a slave. They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons, till what he foretold came to pass, till the word of the LORD proved

him true. The king sent and released him, the ruler of peoples set him free” (Psalms 105:15-20 NIV).

No one could separate him from the Lord! Even today, there may be times when you are forced to go somewhere that you don’t want to go, and you lose control over the circumstances of your life. But, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the early Christian church in Rome, “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 8:35-39 NIV).

Paul had been writing to Christians who were suffering unspeakable persecution because they broke the Roman law and dared to love and serve God through Christ Jesus. Whole families, including the children, were being arrested and tortured in order to stop the spread of Christianity, which was beginning to grow among the people. I once heard a pastor twist this scripture around in order to support a doctrine of demons (1 Timothy 4:1). He said, “If you’re a Christian, you should never have any more problems in your life. You should never be sick. You should be wealthy all the time. And if you aren’t successful, healthy, and prosperous,

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then you're not living by faith, because the Bible says, "We are more than conquerors in Christ." There are few times in my life when I have ever been so angry! It was about all I could do to stop myself from standing up and saying to the congregation, "Whatever you do, don't believe him! Paul didn't write that to Christians who were getting everything they wanted. He was sending that message to believers who were being crucified, fed to lions, and burned alive, all because they refused to give up their faith and devotion to Jesus Christ."

What Paul was saying to the believers was, "Don't fear the Romans. They can take away your children, they can take away your life, they can burn your body to a crisp. But that's all that they can do. In that very hour of testing, God will give you a peace within and the spiritual strength to resist them all the way to the end. That is, until you finally arrive home, where He'll be waiting for you in glory! For nothing they do can stop Him from loving you, or tear Him from your heart and life." Faith is not about prosperity in **this** world, because, "*Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world...'*" (John 18:36 NIV). Faith is when you love and trust God no matter what happens, and you remain faithful to Christ until you are reunited with Him in Heaven. Another example is Daniel. He was made a prisoner of war, and his manhood was taken away. He was made a eunuch. "...*The king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes*" (Daniel 1:3 KJV. Also, see 2 Kings 20:18). However, Daniel eventually became the "...*the third highest ruler in the kingdom*" (Daniel 5:29 NIV). For he trusted God, even when he was put in the lions' den (Daniel 6:1-28).

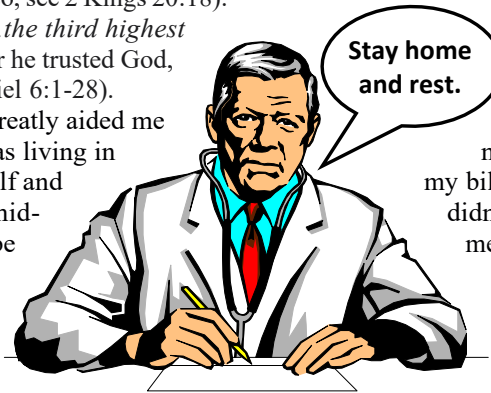
Since I learned this law of faith, it has greatly aided me in my walk with God. Long ago, when I was living in Staten Island, I was totally supporting myself and had my own apartment. It was during the mid-1970's. At the beginning things seemed to be going well. I had just started a new job in midtown Manhattan and my daily commute on the ferry got me to work much faster and cheaper than my previous railroad commute when I lived with my parents. And I no longer had to share a bedroom with my younger sister. However, my electric bill turned out to be a lot more expensive than I had expected. I knew I was moving into an all-electric apartment, including the heat and cooking. But the superintendent had told me that my electric bill would average about \$30 a month. Yet it shot up to about \$180 a month during the winter season! That was in addition to my \$215 a month rent. Even so, there was so much going on in my life at the time that I couldn't deal with any more stress. So, I just paid the bills as they came in and decided to remain there until the two-year lease was up.

To add to the turmoil, my boss suddenly announced to me one day that he wanted me to take a course two evenings a week at the New York Institute of Credit. He had persuaded the company to pay for it. I wasn't thrilled about this new intrusion on my free time, but I realized that it could open new doors for me in the business world. So twice a week, after work, I attended class. By the time class was over it was no longer rush hour, and the streets were far more deserted. I felt a bit apprehensive as I waited alone at night for the bus that would take me to the ferry. Little did I know back then, that God was watching out for me even though I had become too wrapped up in "...*life's worries, riches and pleasures...*" (Luke 8:14 NIV). On school nights, by the time that I finally got home, and had a chance to eat dinner, it was close to nine o'clock. With all the rushing around and new responsibilities in my life it was definitely not a good time for me to get sick. I was depending on myself

for everything from bill paying to grocery shopping.

Nevertheless, sick I was. Worse still, a blood test revealed that I had mononucleosis! It was so frustrating! I was concerned that I might lose my job, and then how would I pay my rent? And what about all the money that my company had paid toward my tuition for the night school? After awhile I used up all my sick time and I was no longer getting my salary. The personnel office at work arranged for me to go on disability. But that only brought in a fraction of what my salary had previously been, and the bills were starting to pile up. I had no idea how I would even pay my rent, and I was too sick to do much about the situation. I used up the little bit of strength I had every week dragging myself to the doctor's office and to pick up groceries on the way home.

After five weeks the doctor said I should stay home another week and then return to work. But I was afraid that if I stayed out any longer I would lose my job. So, I took the bus to the ferry and ferry across to Manhattan. Then I caught the train to midtown. That was my commute to work. After working all day, I had to return home the way I came. I lasted one day, and then got even sicker again! Altogether I was home in bed and not able to work for three months! My worries got worse! The bills started to arrive, however, I didn't have the money to pay them. I had a little bit of money in the bank, but my account was at the Manhattan branch. I felt like sticking my head under the bed covers and hibernating. But I knew that wouldn't help. Now this was the 1970's and banks didn't have



the options they do today. I couldn't pay my bills by credit card, since you had to be there in person to do that. Then one day I got an envelope from the bank. There were blank checks in it. This was something I had never seen before. Now I would be able to pay my bills by check and charge it to my credit card! I didn't realize it at the time, but God was protecting me in ways I never expected.

Eventually I was well enough to return to work just in time to find out that I had been laid off! No longer was I getting disability money! I signed up for unemployment compensation but I wouldn't see any money for at least two weeks. During that time, I was hungry and didn't have any money to buy food. I looked in my refrigerator and it was practically bare. I opened the freezer and the only thing it had in it was some meat I had purchased from a butcher before I got sick. They were individually wrapped steaks. When I had first bought them, I cooked one of them and it tasted terrible. They were expensive steaks, so I just left them in the freezer. Now, several months later, I was desperate enough to try one of them again. I cooked it and it was delicious! God knew before I even bought the steaks that I would be needing them a few months later. Even though I was in a backslidden state, all things were working together for good to help me survive. However, I was still left with some large credit cards bills, which Eric paid off in 1979 just before we got married!

I didn't know that the Lord had plans for my life, and I would be "...*called according to His purpose*" (Romans 8:28 KJV). I finally realized years later, why I had been through all that. It had been to strengthen my faith! And I now know how God was watching over me and keeping me safe even back then. It made me aware of how much He loves me. The faith that I learned through that experience would be so important to this ministry. For "...*faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Hebrews 11:1 KJV). "*And without faith it is impossible to please God...*" (Hebrews 11:6 NIV). Because, as believers, "...*we walk by faith, not by sight*" (2 Corinthians 5:7 KJV).