



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

April 2021

FROM US TO YOU

You may have heard the phrase before, “What’s this world coming to?” It was probably said by your parent or grandparent who remembered how things changed in their lifetime. Growing older gives one a perspective that younger people don’t have. However, even young people can look at old television shows like “Leave it to Beaver” and see how schools have changed over the last fifty or sixty years. In those days there was no worry about students going around shooting or stabbing others in the school, or Covid 19 fears. The biggest crimes were skipping a class or chewing gum in the classroom. Unfortunately, things will probably get worse in public schools. For Christianity has been taken out of the curriculum and atheist liberals are teaching pagan religions instead. Other television shows from that era were so concerned about maintaining a moral approach that actors playing married couples were never seen in the same bed together. Even Lucille Ball and Desi Arnez, who were married to each other in reality, had separate beds on television. In fact, even cartoon characters, like Fred and Wilma Flintstone, each had their own bed! Shows like Dragnet emphasized how dangerous smoking marijuana can be. Now it’s legal in many states! Shows like “Highway Patrol” illustrated the dangers the police face every day in keeping us safe in America. These days the police are vilified in some media.

Society has changed in many ways. In old episodes of the “Loretta Young Show” men who fell in love with the characters she played proposed marriage to her before the end of the show. These days shows never end that way. In real life, couples in love are more likely to live together first. We cannot compare current shows because we do not watch them. The sex, blasphemy, politics, and immoral influences are not of any interest to us. Many will attempt to justify the degradation of society by saying, “times are changing.” However, God never changes! Jesus said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Rev. 22:13 NIV). Laws have changed. Technology has changed. Advances in medicine and aviation have changed. However, human nature has not gotten any closer to our Creator. We, as a society, have gone the other way. Despite all the blessings that God has given us, Satan has not had any difficulty drawing people further away from Christ.

As children, we remember seeing old issues of “National Geographic” magazine from the nineteen fifties or sixties. They had pictures of natives in island cultures all over the world in the type of places that Christian missionaries went to reach heathen tribes with the Gospel. The tribes’ people would be dressed in very revealing attire with bodies pierced with cheap jewelry and many tattoos, even on their faces. Decades ago this used to be shocking. Now it is common place on beaches and public parks on warm summer days! As for the native tribes, missionaries have said that once they received Christ as their Savior and Lord, even their appearance and clothing changed.

Pagan tribes had their own various religions. However, religion is only man’s attempt to reach out to God. Pure Christianity is not a religion. Because it’s not about man reaching up to God. Mankind can never reach God through human means (1 Timothy 2:5). Pure Christianity is about God reaching down to mankind, through His own Son, Jesus! God has provided us with a set of rules to live by after salvation. And we have been warned in the Bible the consequences of not following them (Revelation 21:7-8). The problems are temptation and ignorance. “...One is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:14-17 NIV).

Religion doesn’t do anything to solve those problems, and in fact, it sometimes makes them worst. Many false religions attempt to disguise themselves as Christian. They do that by starting with a pagan base and covering it with a sprinkling of Christian terms and phrases. Unfortunately, there are more counterfeit or lukewarm (Revelation 3:16) Christian religions than the real thing! As the Apostle Paul told the church leaders in Ephesus, “...I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!...” (Acts 20:27-31 NIV).

Paul told the Corinthian church, “...I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve” (2 Corinthians 11:12-15 NIV). Even Jude warned, “...certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord” (Jude 1:4 NIV).

Have a nice Easter everyone, and remember, Easter is not about bunnies, chocolate, egg hunts, or Spring flowers. It is about God’s great love for sinful mankind, and His amazing sacrifice that astounds even the angels. So, this Easter, keep your mind on the cross and your hearts on Christ, all year long.

In our Master’s service, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*



LOST IDOLS

By Anne Kaestner

In 1985 my husband, Eric, and I went on vacation to Hawaii. We decided to visit the large mall in Oahu one day and sat down in a nearly empty coffee shop. The only other customer was an attractive man, who looked like he was in his late thirties or early forties. He was sitting near the front of the shop, occasionally gazing out the window toward the mall. He seemed to be deep in thought and rather melancholy, and I could see he was sad and worried about something. I said to Eric, “that man looks a lot like Kris Kristofferson.” But then I dismissed the idea right away. “It couldn’t be,” I told myself. “Kris Kristofferson doesn’t have a beard [He usually didn’t in those days], like that guy does. And besides, what would Kris Kristofferson be doing over in Hawaii? He’d be in Hollywood or Nashville.” When Eric briefly left the table for a few minutes, the man occasionally glanced over in my direction but didn’t say anything. Neither did I. But I remember thinking that he looked really upset. We finished our meal and left the restaurant but he remained there. A week or so later, we returned to New York. I didn’t think about the man any more until about four months later when I saw an advertisement for a television movie starring Kris Kristofferson. The actor seemed to play a doctor and wore a beard for the part which was filmed in Hawaii! I never saw the movie. He was forty-nine years old at the time.

For decades now, the only music I intentionally listen to is Christian. I had heard the song, “Why Me Lord” sung by other artists. However, it wasn’t until recently, on the Internet, that I found out that Kris Kristofferson had written it in 1972, thirteen years before the movie was made in Hawaii. Apparently, it was his biggest hit. He describes the circumstances that led up to him writing the song as a “religious experience.” Apparently, Kristofferson, during a low period in his life, attended a church service one day led by Rev. Jimmie Rogers Snow. At some point in the service, the pastor asked the question, “Is anybody feeling lost?” Kristofferson describes what happened. He said his hand went up and Rev. Snow asked him if he was ready to accept Christ into his life. As Kristofferson explained it, “I’m kneeling there and I carry a big load of guilt around... and I was just out of control, crying. It was a release. It really shook me up.” The words to “Why Me Lord?” the song he wrote after the experience, say: “Why me Lord, what I have ever done to deserve even one of the pleasures I’ve known? Tell me Lord what did I ever do that was worth loving You or the kindness You’ve shown? Lord help me Jesus I’ve wasted it so help me Jesus I know what I am. Now that I know that I’ve needed You so, help me Jesus my soul’s in Your hand. Try me Lord if you think there’s a way I can try to repay all I’ve taken from You? Maybe Lord I can show someone else what I’ve been through myself on my way back to You. Lord help me Jesus... Jesus my soul’s in Your hand.”

First, I’m going to answer the question, “Why me Lord?” Because I am sure other people have wondered about these questions themselves. The Bible says, “*The Lord is... patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9 NIV). As for the words, “Lord help me Jesus I’ve wasted it so help me Jesus. I know what I am.” Jesus said, “...*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*” (Luke 5:31-32 NIV). “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23 NIV). As far as God is concerned, none of us would have any hope of peace with God

(Philippians 4:7), or escaping the fires of Hell, without repenting of our sins and accepting Christ as our Lord and Savior. “*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Timothy 2:5 NIV). False doctrine will teach you that you can get to Heaven by obeying God’s laws and being good. But Jesus called His own disciples “evil” (Luke 11:13). He said, “*Why do you call Me good?... No one is good—except God alone*” (Mark 10:18 NIV)? Even the tiniest bit of sin will be enough to keep you out of Heaven. Jesus said, “...*unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:20 NIV). The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were meticulous about washing their hands before a meal and maintaining the ceremonial laws of God. However, their hearts were not right with God.

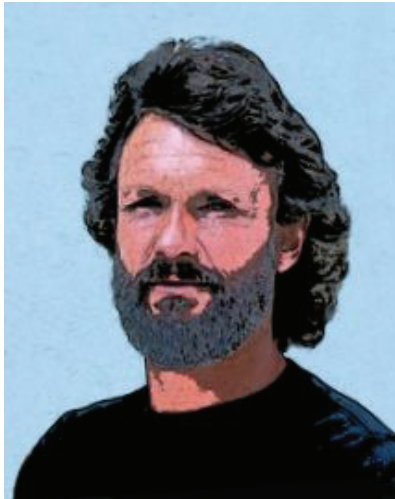
“*As He taught, Jesus said, ‘Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely’*” (Mark 12:38-40 NIV). These false religious leaders, hated Jesus

because He exposed their hypocrisy. He said to them, “*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel*” (Matt. 23:23-24 NIV). In other words, they prided themselves on keeping the ceremonial laws, like hand washing and eating only kosher food. But they ignored the more important parts of the law, like showing compassion and kindness to others. Jesus said to them, “*You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him.*

When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44 NIV). These men hated Jesus so much they plotted to kill Him (Mark 14:1, Matthew 26:4).

Now for the question, “Why me Lord, what I have ever done to deserve even one of the pleasures I’ve known? Tell me Lord what did I ever do that was worth loving You or the kindness You’ve shown.” The answer is nothing. There is no good deed we can do to buy our salvation. The Bible tells those who were redeemed by Christ, “...*it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast*” (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV). Then the song says, “Lord help me Jesus I’ve wasted it so help me Jesus I know what I am. Now that I know that I’ve needed You so help me Jesus my soul’s in Your hand.” The answer is that God knows what all of us are hopeless, pitiful, doomed sinners, unless God intervenes. However, He did! It is impossible for us to save ourselves, because we are children of Adam and Eve. And therefore, we were born of their contaminated blood and inherited the terminal disease of sin. That’s why you feel a compulsion to do what you know is wrong. For sin separates us from God. That’s because we were all originally born slaves of the devil (John 8:34 and Romans 6:6), who is the current ruler of this world system (Ephesians 2:1-2) until Jesus comes back to reclaim it (Revelation 19:11-21).

However, God saw how desperate a situation we were in and had



compassion on us. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him”* (John 3:16-17 NIV). God knew that the price for our salvation could not be paid for in material value, but only through the suffering and shed blood of a perfect human being. That leaves all of the rest of us out because we have all been born through Adam’s bloodline and are, therefore, sinners. There was only one person who was perfect enough to have blood pure enough to shed in redemption for our sin. That person was God’s one and only Son, the most precious thing He had! So, God’s own Son left all His power and glory as God (the second person in the Holy Trinity) in Heaven when He left His beloved Father, and took on human form in order to take our punishment for us. All His miracles were not performed through His own power. Jesus had to rely on the Holy Spirit for that. He, who created us (see John 1:3), humbled Himself for us. He was severely beaten, tortured (Mark 15:15-20), bled, and died for us. It was because He loved you and me so much! For we could never pay such a high price ourselves. *“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ...”* (1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV).

It wasn’t because we were worthy of it. It was because it was the only chance we had of deliverance from slavery to the devil, Satan.

“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. Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!” (Romans 5:6-10 NIV). That being said, you and I owe a debt to God that we



could never repay. However, God does expect something from you once you have repented of your sins and asked His forgiveness through Christ the Lord. You can’t pay for your sins, but you have to pay the maintenance of keeping your faith. God expects you to *“...leave your life of sin”* (John 8:11 NIV. Also, see John 5:14). In order to do that you must walk in His light. *“When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’”* (John 8:12 NIV).

So how do you do that? You start over spiritually! Once you have repented and come to Christ for redemption, you are now Born Again in Christ (John 3:3). *“...To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to 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). And that’s where the pit lies that many fall into (Matthew 15:14). They don’t know how to give up the past and walk in the light of Christ. Christ didn’t save you from your sin so that you can sin with impunity. You must *“...live by faith, not by sight”* (2 Corinthians 5:7 NIV). It’s the only way you can remain saved. To return to your past life of sin is like the proverb, *“... ‘A dog returns to its vomit,’ and, ‘A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud’”* (2 Peter 2:22 NIV). Remember the words of Jesus to the church, *“Remain in Me, and I will remain in you...”* (John 15:4 NIV). You can’t please God unless you are attached to Christ, spiritually. Jesus compared us to branches and Himself to

a vine. He told His disciples, *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful”* (John 15:1-2 NIV).

The fruit God wants us to grow is that which He grows through us. It is pure and holy because it comes from the Holy Spirit inside of the redeemed person. Therefore, it demonstrates the difference in us between the way we live and the way unsaved people live. As a result, they feel the gentle nudging of the Holy Spirit to come to repentance and receive salvation in Christ. However, for most Christians, living by faith is very hard to do. Because if you are in a job that requires you to engage in activity that is sinful, or could lead to sin, you must leave it and trust God to find you another job, one that is of His choosing. That’s how people fail the test after accepting Christ as their Savior and Lord. It’s because they’re still making all their own choices instead of trusting God to lead them. Decades ago I used to watch the “700 Club.” One day Pat Robertson spoke about the late Efreim Zimbalist Jr. Apparently, Zimbalist had claimed to be a Born Again (John 3:3) Christian, and said he had accepted Christ as his Savior. However, Robertson said that Zimbalist had taken an acting job that required him to be naked in bed with another actress. Robertson said he asked him, “How could you do a scene like that since you are a Christian?” Zimbalist replied, “Because I’m an actor. That’s what I do.” And that’s the kind of situation that separates a Christian from Christ, our only hope of salvation.

Again, it is like a *“...A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud”* (2 Peter 2:22 NIV). After repentance and salvation, you are supposed to be a *“...a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”* (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV). Jesus spoke to His own disciples, who had repented of their sins and accepted Him as their Lord, and He compared them to branches and Himself to the Vine. He told them, *“Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. 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 15:4-6 NIV). In other words, you are never going to grow good spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22-24) for God unless you remain in Christ. He will never leave you if you remain in Him (see Hebrews 13:5). However, you can leave Him, the same way Adam and Eve did. They were perfect originally; the way God sees you when you repent of your sin and accept Christ as Savior and Lord. But, knowing the difference between right and wrong, they deliberately chose not to obey God and became separated from Him.

Hearing this, immature Christians are going to have thoughts of panic going through their heads. They will ask, “But I have to make a living. I can’t leave my job as a bar tender, belly dancer, professional ball player, professional model, etc. I have to pay my rent/make mortgage payments, or I’ll starve. What about my family? I have to support them. Is it Christian to let them go hungry in order to please God?” The answer is no, it’s not. What’s unchristian is to not trust God enough to wait for Him to show you what you should do. The question is the type of thing Jesus was talking about in His parable of the Sower. The seed of faith is sprinkled on the earth (meaning human hearts). But only one fourth of the hearts it fell on kept it and grew good fruit. The heart of the one who doesn’t trust God to supply for his needs and those of his family, *(Continued On Page 4)*

is compared to seed that "...fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants" (Matthew 13:7 NIV). "The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22 NIV). You love your family. God loves His own Son, but He allowed Him to die horribly for you. Don't you think He cares enough about your family to supply for their needs? See Matthew 6:24-34 and 10:28-33.

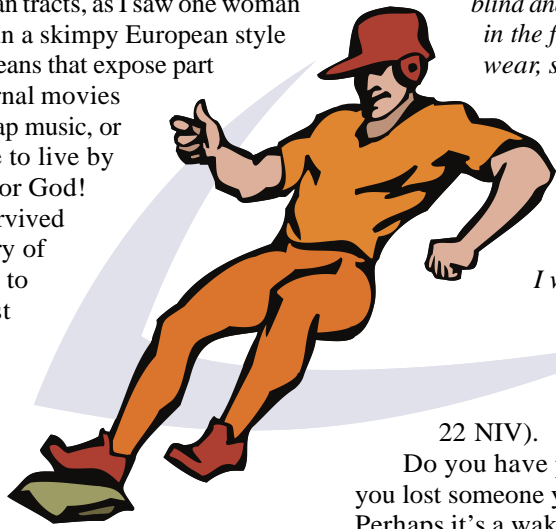
It is human nature for people to want to control their own lives. That's because they have been used to doing so before coming to Christ. They want salvation, but they also want to make their own decisions as well. They may follow Christ up to a point until the spiritual testing comes along and the going gets rough. Then they want to be a back-seat driver. "For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1 Peter 4:3-5 NIV). It's not a one-way street. God will do His part, but you have to do yours. As a Christian, you cannot walk around on the beach in a sexy bikini bathing suit handing out Christian tracts, as I saw one woman do. If you're a man, you don't dress in a skimpy European style bathing suit either, or walk around in jeans that expose part of your buttocks. You don't go to carnal movies or shows. You don't listen to rock or rap music, or anything similar. It's not impossible to live by faith. It is vital if you want to live for God! Others have left their past lives and survived the tests of faith. Remember the story of Job (Job 1:1-22). You will be tested to find out whether you will trust Christ or not! If you will not trust Him, He cannot grow good fruit in you, and you will be "...like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned" (John 15:6 NIV).

When someone who has been saved by Christ depends on their carnal job to make a living, they are not living by faith. They are relying on the world! "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:6-10 NIV). Some people think that by staying what the world considers an idol, and talking about Christ, they can reach the young people and influence them toward Christianity. However, it doesn't work that way. For they are continuing to act as an idol!

Does this mean that a someone who has been considered an idol by thousands cannot become a Born Again (John 3:3), Spirit filled (John 20:22, Acts 19:1-7) minister of the Gospel? No! Billy Sunday (1862-1935) was a famous baseball player who turned from the ways of his past when he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

He did not focus his ministry on his own past worldly success, then tack on a Christian label. He repented of his past life in this world and chose to live by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). When he quit baseball in 1891, he was at the peak of his career. But he gave it all up for Christ! That year Sunday had set a record of 90 bases stolen in 116 games. The Philadelphia Phillies offered him \$400 a month. Cincinnati offered him \$500 a month. Yet he took a "Secretary of Religious Department" job for the YMCA for \$83 a month. In 1894 the Pittsburgh Pirates offered him \$2,000 a month to return to baseball. Sunday took a job as an advance man for Evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman, making \$40 a week! When God calls someone to preach the Gospel, He tests them severely. Sunday passed the preliminary tests of faith and God eventually gave him a huge ministry.

When you accept Christ as your Savior and Lord, that is not the end of your responsibility to God. It is only the beginning. Jesus doesn't want any fair weather, wishy washy, lukewarm servants. I believe He was speaking to today's well fed and educated church in formally Christians nations, when He gave this warning, comparing them to the Laodiceans. "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of My mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 3:15-22 NIV).



Do you have problems causing you grief right now? Have you lost someone you love? Are you suffering financial hardship? Perhaps it's a wake-up call from the Lord. Thousands of dollars are spent on idol worship every year in America. However, the more you find out about the idols, the more pity you feel for them. Not many are really happy. A few years before he died, Peter Falk was interviewed on television. He said, "People think that success brings happiness. But it doesn't." Elvis Presley was a prisoner in his own home. He couldn't even look out of his windows due to the idolatry of some of his fans. He had to use a computer monitor. My Dad once knew a man who saw Marilyn Monroe prior to appearing before her audience. He said she looked miserable. However, as soon as she stepped out on stage her whole persona changed and she seemed to light up. The man said he thought to himself, "What an actress." She was only 36 years old when she died. Nothing in this world is even close to what we can have in Christ. There is no comparison!

The Apostle Paul had everything the world of his day considered desirable. However, when he learned the eternal truth of God, he gave it all up for Christ. He said, "...whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith" (Philippians 3:7-9 NIV).