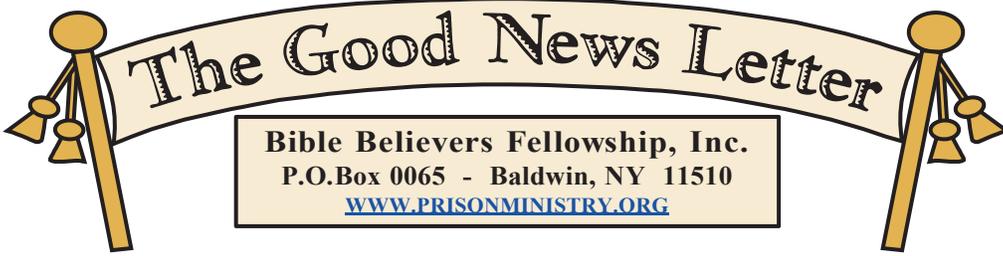




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TAX-EXEMPT

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

April 2023

FROM US TO YOU

It's spring time; a season of renewal. Flowers are popping up. Trees are starting to bloom again. The birds are returning from their winter hibernation. And Easter is on Sunday, April 9th. Things change in nature. All is reborn. And it is God's will that we, God's prized creation, be reborn as well. In the days of Jesus, this confused a man named Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee who sought for Jesus privately. "He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.' In reply Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.' 'How can a man be born when he is old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!' Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at My saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.' 'How can this be?' Nicodemus asked. 'You are Israel's teacher,' said Jesus, 'and do you not understand these things?'" (John 3:2-10 NIV).

Jesus was referring to Old Testament scripture such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 that prophesied the coming of the Messiah and His holy redemption. Even Bethlehem, the town in which He would be born was given (Micah 5:2). So Jesus was telling Nicodemus he should have known this. Even Job knew that he needed a Redeemer, and needed to be born again (Job 19:25-27). The point is that we are eternal beings. This life is very short. Like the poem says, "Soon this life will all be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." So, no matter what problems you may have right now they will seem so small compared to eternity. Because some day, all of this will be over. Only your body will die. Your spirit will live forever. Frankly, we originally planned this message to be more of a pep talk during difficult times. A true Christian can always take solace in Christ, the Rock of his salvation (1 Corinthians 10:4) and the knowledge that eventually, in Heaven, God "...will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!...' " (Rev. 21:4-5 NIV). And we will see our Christian loved ones who will be waiting for us there.

However, the Holy Spirit has revealed to us that many reading this message have not been Born Again (John 3:3) and do not have their names written in God's book of life. Bible prophecy refers to a trial in Heaven, and all of us will be there. "And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from His presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small,

standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10-15 NIV).

So, how do you become Born Again and have your name written in God's book of life? You have to realize that you are a sinner. "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him [Christ] the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6 NIV). "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23 NIV). You have to repent of your sins to God. That means in prayer to God, not your priest! Your priest may be a very nice person, but he did not die for you on Calvary to pay for your sins. Do it in humility, on your knees if possible. You have to repent of your sin and ask God to forgive you. Then you have to ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and life and accept His salvation. Then get into a habit of studying the Bible daily. And find a good Holy Spirit filled church that will teach you how to live for God. Then, no matter what life brings your way, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil" (Proverbs 3:5-7 KJV). And pray and worship God daily. Take your troubles to God in prayer, and thank Him for the good things He has done in your life. If you stay faithful to the



Lord you will grow good spiritual fruit for God (John 15:1-8) and become an overcomer for Christ. As such, "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4 NIV). Once you accept Christ as your Savior and live for Him, you become a target to the devil. For no one can see serve two masters (Luke 16:13). "Now if we are children [of God], then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:17-18 NIV). "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).

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

Why Do Christians Have to Suffer?

By Anne Kaestner

The question has been asked by many believers, “Why do Christians have to suffer?” The thought behind the question is, “I’m a good person. I’m a child of God. I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. God loves me. The Bible says so (John 3:16). Therefore, I don’t understand why my life suddenly got so much harder since I repented of my sins and accepted Christ as my Savior?” Sooner or later, most new Christians invariably have had one thing in common, some type of emotional or physical suffering! Many of you never would have turned to Jesus if you hadn’t been brought low, to a place of desperation, and such misery that you cried out to God for help. And that’s when He heard you and changed your life. And, if you were sincere, you haven’t been the same since, have you? Initially, after you’d been serving the Lord for a little while, things really started looking up. You gained peace and joy and love in your heart, and other blessings started to flow too, for awhile. And then, all of a sudden, the bottom seemed to fall out! Perhaps a close relative died, or your husband or wife asked for a divorce. Your children may have turned against you. Suddenly you started receiving persecution and harassment from other people, and usually the ones who will give you the biggest hard time, are the “religious” types. It was the same way with Jesus, with the Pharisees and Sadducees (John 8:40)! You have probably been wondering what went wrong. You hear preachers who tell you that a Christian is a “King’s Kid,” and you’re supposed to get everything you want and be on top of the world! And Satan whispers in your ear that God has rejected you. He has the power to stop all your problems. So why hasn’t He done so? Why hasn’t God been doing your will lately? Why is He allowing you to go through so much suffering? It is not a unique question. Job asked it thousands of years ago, and I am sure Joseph (mentioned in Genesis chapters 37-50), asked it, and Daniel as well. They were all righteous people, who went through very difficult times, after they turned to the Lord. Why was this? In each case the reasons for their suffering were different. But they all had one thing in common; they gave God glory!

First, understand that God doesn’t exist to serve you. You exist to serve Him! Secondly, do you think that you’re a good person? Jesus said, “...*No one is good—except God alone*” (Mark 10:18 NIV). “*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him [Jesus Christ] the iniquity of us all*” (Isaiah 53:6 NIV). “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23 NIV). The Bible says “*A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all*” (Psalms 34:19 NIV). However, that doesn’t mean that your deliverance will come right away. It may take months, years, or decades, or it may not be something that is good for you in the long run. And that’s why it doesn’t happen. You have to just trust God (Proverbs 3:5-7). The fact is that Satan will test us to see if he can turn you away from Christ. Because we are expected to grow good spiritual **fruit** for God (Galatians 5:22-24). Jesus said, “*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. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 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.** If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you*

Why am I suffering so much?



wish, and it will be given you. This is My Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples” (John 15:1-8 NIV).

Once you choose to live for Christ the devil views you as his enemy. He will attack you in various ways and then tell you that God did it. Will you have the faith to trust Christ and live for God anyway, despite the attacks? Or will you stop living for Jesus and get burned off as withered branches? Jesus will never turn His back on us, but we are free to turn from Him, as many fools have done to their peril. “*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).

Just because something unpleasant happens to you, don’t automatically assume that the devil is getting the victory. A lot of times God allows Satan to go just so far as to achieve the Lord’s own goal. So don’t get the idea that God is on your side. The only side that

God is ever on is His own! The secret is for you to be on the same side that He is on! There are times when we go through some deep valleys (Psalm 23:4) even though we’re living for Jesus. But when we feed our souls daily with Christ (John 6:56, and Matthew 26:26), God will fight for us. And, “*...if God is for us, who can be against us?*” (Romans 8:31 NIV). No one is stronger than God (Luke 12:5)! In Biblical times, battles were never fought on the mountain tops, they were fought in the valleys! Yet if you don’t go through the battle, you don’t get the victory, and God wants us

to be victorious through Christ! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego trusted the Almighty all the way to the fiery furnace. God said to Satan, “Go ahead, throw them in your furnace. But I’ll get the victory!” It looked for sure like they were going to be burned alive for trusting God. However, “*...Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God*” (Daniel 3:24-25 KJV). You see, there may be times when you, as a child of God, may find yourself in the midst of a spiritual furnace (Proverbs 17:3 and 1 Peter 1:7) but if you put your hope and trust in Jesus, He will be right there with you all the time! God’s children were in the fire, but it didn’t hurt them! And the fire burned off the ropes with which they had been tied, and set them free! Yet they were in no rush to leave the furnace. They were marching around in it, shouting praises to God, glorifying their Creator. They were having a real old-fashioned Holy Spirit glory session, for the Son of God was with them!

When we, as Christians, think about suffering, Job comes to mind. The book of Job explains clearly why God doesn’t always help us when we suffer. “*In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters*” (Job 1:1-2 NIV). Job was a very rich man because God had blessed him so

abundantly. In fact, the Lord was so proud of Job that He bragged to Satan about him. *“One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, ‘Where have you come from?’ Satan answered the LORD, ‘From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.’ Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.’ ‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’ Satan replied. ‘Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.’ The LORD said to Satan, ‘Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.’ Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. One day when Job’s sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, a messenger came to Job and said, ‘The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!’ While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, ‘The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!’ While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, ‘Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!’ At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship”* (Job 1:6- 20 NIV).



Over the millenniums, people have committed suicide over far less than that. But not Job. Then Satan came back to God feeling defeated. However, he was certain he could still make Job miserable enough to curse God. So He asked God for permission to attack Job physically. God was certain that Job would remain faithful to Him. So He acquiesced. Satan then inflicted Job with such a painful and probably itchy skin condition that his face swelled up like a pumpkin. Yet, despite the fact that Job didn’t understand why all this was happening, he remained faithful to God (Job 19:25-27). However, in his despair and misery he said, *“I loathe my very life; therefore I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God: Do not condemn me, but tell me what charges You have against me. Does it please You to oppress me, to spurn the work of Your hands, while You smile on the schemes of the wicked? Do you have eyes of flesh? Do you see as a mortal sees? Are Your days like those of a mortal or Your years like those of a man, that You must search out my faults and probe after my sin—though You know that I am not guilty and that no one can rescue me from Your hand? ‘Your hands shaped me and made me. Will You now turn and destroy me? Remember that You molded me like clay. Will You now turn me to dust again?’”* (Job 10:1-9 NIV).

Consequently, in the end, Job was blessed with twice as much as he had lost during his time of testing. Joseph and Daniel went from being a slave (Joseph), and a prisoner of war (Daniel), to second (Joseph) and third (Daniel) rulers in their respective kingdoms! When Moses came to the Lord, he had been used to living in a

palace. In fact, it is generally believed, that Moses was directly in line to be Pharaoh of Egypt! But, *“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw Him who is invisible”* (Hebrews 11:24-27 NIV). Have you ever said, *“If God really loves me, why is He letting me suffer so much?”* But the Bible states, *“...My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son”* (Hebrews 12:5-6 NIV).

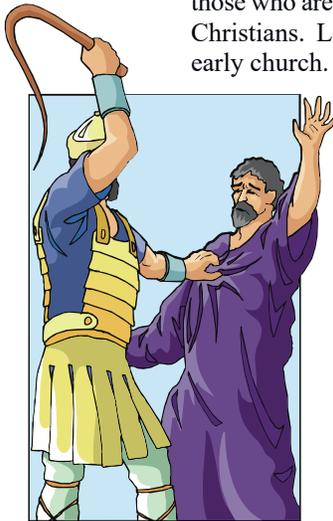
For example, when I first came to this country, from England, I attended school in Queens, New York. Shortly thereafter, I became a newly reborn Christian (John 1:12-13 and John 3:3). Then, when I was eleven years old, my mother went back to England for a four-month visit and took me and my two siblings with her. I was enrolled in school there. In my American school, the kids used profanity in order to fit in with the crowd. I never did. However, away from the influence of the church that led me to Christ, and surrounded by “Beatlemania” and other worldly influences, I began to backslide. So one day when we were outdoors, during physical instruction, I used one word of profanity while speaking to another girl. I thought it would make me more popular. But the opposite occurred! The girl told other girls what I had said and one by one they took turns running up and attacking me. Some would punch me and run away. Some would kick me and run away. I was in tears and feeling badly bruised. But that cured me of ever using bad language again (Eph. 5:5)! Stupidly, I had taken my eyes off of Christ and listened to *“...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world...”* (Rev. 12:9 KJV. Also, see John 8:44). Satan’s lies always have bait with a hook.

However, when true Christians suffer, it’s not always because we are being punished by God. Sometimes the Lord wants to teach us something. The most important lessons my husband and I have learned have not been through any man-made institution, but through the hardest, most enlightening educational system there is; God’s! It took Jonah three days in the belly of a large fish, but he finally learned to obey God. It took a blinding light from Heaven that took away Saul’s eyesight before Jesus was able to show him that he was fighting God with his persecutions. Then Saul wised up and became the Apostle Paul, one of the greatest prophets of all time! It took the death and destruction of thousands of people before Israel finally repented of its sin and turned back to God (see Psalm 78 and Hebrews 3:16-17)! When God is blessing people they are less likely to serve Him and love Him as they should. So, despite the fact that He doesn’t like to cause His people pain, if God loves you enough, He will allow events to occur in your life that will bring you low enough that you will finally smarten up and turn to Him. Because, whatever we experience in this lifetime cannot compare with what awaits the person who has once lived for God and then turns away from Him (see Hebrews 10:26-39). Even Jesus learned obedience from God through His suffering. For, *“during the days of Jesus’ life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered”* (Hebrews 5:7-8 NIV). We have not received the anointing and understanding we have from God through anything coming **(Continued on Page 4)**

Why Do Christians Have to Suffer? (Continued From Page 3)

from men, but through the suffering God has allowed us to endure because of the calling He has placed on our lives. All my life God has been preparing me for this ministry. Every bit of emotional and physical pain I have endured has had a beneficial effect on my relationship with God. There are some people who can suffer terrible things, but instead of drawing them closer to Jesus, the things they suffer cause them to become angry and bitter toward Him instead. God cannot use that type of person. It took me a very long time to learn all that I know of God today, but every single lesson was learned through failure, mistakes, painful experiences, loneliness, despair, and frustration! How many of you, who have finally come to accept Jesus as your Savior, would have done so if you had not gone through some rough times? People will try everything else. God is very patient. But finally, when they come to the end of themselves, and there is no place else to go, they will very often go to God. Others would rather die than repent. But you who have humbled yourselves enough to let go of your own will, and allow Jesus to finally come into your heart and do His work through you, have not accidentally been led to this place of repentance. Jesus was there all the time, waiting for you to finally let go, and have Him take over.

The Apostle Paul was a very educated man. But as far as he was concerned everything he had learned before coming to Christ he considered less than worthless in comparison to what God had taught him, not through book learning, or man-made educational systems, but through a personal experience with Jesus 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. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death" (Philippians 3:7-10 NIV)! Too many Christians today want to receive an anointing from God so that it will make them look good. To have the ability to heal people or have them fall backward when they are prayed for, is like having God's personal "Seal of Approval" on them and their ministry. But God does not give His anointing to such people. Those who appear to have it and are not putting Jesus first in their lives are either faking it with an Elmer Gantry type approach, or they have demon spirits helping them out, and are counterfeiting the works of God, just as the Pharaoh's magicians counterfeited many of the miracles that God performed through Moses (see Exodus, chapters 4-10). Despite the fact that God had chosen and anointed David to be King of Israel, he spent many years living in caves, and hiding from King Saul, who was trying to kill him, before David was finally ready for the job! The Lord had a lot of things to teach David first. And David learned the same way the rest of us learn from God, through pain and suffering! "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief" (Ecclesiastes 1:18 NIV). Many of the Psalms David wrote at that time, demonstrate the frustration and fear that he suffered before God was ready to raise him up and make David King of Israel. And even then, David committed a terrible sin in his old age with Bathsheba, the wife of another man. It wasn't during the tough, difficult times of suffering that he sinned against God. It was during the times of blessing! Very often your suffering will keep you from



backsliding and losing your salvation!

Unfortunately, the more God gives people, the more they want! Those who love Him the most are often people who have lost everything. It is a false doctrine that teaches that life will be a bed of roses for you once you accept Jesus as your Savior. That's just not true. In fact, in many cases, that is when you'll find your troubles will only just begin. The devil isn't going to bother with you much when you're already on your way to Hell. But once you accept Jesus as your Savior, Satan will fight like mad to get you back! Do you feel temptations, and troubles all around? So did Jesus. And He was humbled for us! And no one who walked this earth, ever suffered more than God's Son did for you and me (Hebrews 2:9)! "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:14-15 NIV). You see, many people have the whole premise of suffering backward, because instead of viewing God as someone who has purchased us, and in fact, we belong to Him, they somehow feel that God belongs to us, and therefore He should do our bidding! How much do you love Jesus? Do you love Him enough to suffer for Him? Or will you sit around feeling sorry for yourself, setting such a bad example for Christ, that those who are not believers will see you and have no desire to become Christians. Let's look at the example of Peter and the apostles of the early church. They had been warned not to preach Christianity (see

Acts 4:13-21), but they kept doing it anyway. So they were brought in before the counsel, humiliated, and beaten publicly for their decision. "His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 5:40-42 NIV). They knew what it was to have true Christian victory. But we see so little of it these days! We've been in churches where women have felt God has let them down because He gave them a

boy baby instead of a girl, or because their spouse hasn't become a Christian yet. In most cases, I don't blame the spouse! These Christian women go around with big scowls on their faces, and looking full of gloom. Frankly, it's depressing just being around them. Their sole focus is on themselves, not Jesus! And you men are just as bad! Have you been bothered by the fact that God has allowed your neighbor to have a better house and car than you have? And he's not even a Christian, right? If so, that sin of covetousness has been growing in your heart (see Exodus 20:17). You've allowed bitterness and resentment to set in because you're drifting away from God, and back into the world (1 John 2:15-17 and 1 Timothy 6:10). How can God use anyone like that? And if He gives you what you want, you won't love Him anymore. You'll just keep asking for more. Because once you've got the taste of the world in your heart, no matter how much of it you get, it never satisfies!

As a new believer, you were "Born Again" (see John 3:3). But far from being the end of your commitment to Christ, that's just the beginning! God can't use "Babes in Christ" (1 Peter 2:2) to really get the job done! Only spiritual fire will burn out all the impurities, and make a brand-new person of you (Proverbs 27:21 and Psalm 19:9-11), ready to go into spiritual battle for Him! For, "The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart" (Proverbs 17:3 NIV).