



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

August 2019

FROM US TO YOU

Here on Long Island it's a hot summer, and probably that way in most of the country. So is the political climate! For not since the civil war has America been so polarized! The danger is that politics is dividing our country. And Jesus said, “...any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall” (Luke 11:17 NIV). Both the Greek and Roman Empires were at one time very great. Much of Europe and the United States were patterned after aspects of Greek and Romans cultures. The United States government was formed based on the Greek idea of democracy. The term “senate” comes from the Latin word *senātus*, which was a Roman system of government.

Yet both the Greek and Roman Empires each reached their zenith of power and then fizzled out. Greece was divided into four parts after the death of Alexander the Great and was eventually conquered by Rome. The western part of the Roman Empire was destroyed by Germanic tribes in 470 AD and the eastern part was destroyed by the Ottoman Empire. At the height of their power, neither could be conquered by anyone else. They had the strength that comes with unity and a common purpose. Yet they fell apart from within. There came a time when the older generations died off and their children gained power. As the younger generations gained control, they had their security and freedom handed to them. They hadn't fought the battles their forefathers fought. And their leaders grew up with the wealth and privileges that comes with being a part of a strong heritage. Consequently, they became soft and decadent.

Despite the warnings of the Apostle Paul, immorality and the worship of idols were a big part of their lifestyle. Homosexuality had become part of their culture, along with pornography, prostitution, fancy food, and sports. It was then that these two great empires began to crumble from within. In many ways they were like the United States and the western world today.

The Greeks and Romans lived in a world of idols and human philosophy. Paul was deeply troubled that the church he started in Rome was slowly being influenced by the evil culture around it. He warned them not to follow humanistic philosophies that reject Christ. He said, “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man...” (Romans 1:22-23 NIV). “Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they

are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them” (Romans 1:26-32 NIV).

The Roman educational system was based on the Greeks and has greatly influenced modern universities today. The Greeks considered themselves great achievers. Ideas developed by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle are still highly prized in modern institutions of higher learning. The Athenians considered themselves very sophisticated. That was the atmosphere in Greece when Paul went there. As far as they were concerned, they already had all the answers. It was in Corinth that Paul had more success in starting a church. For they were not as sanctimonious as the Athenians. Writing to them about the experience, he reminded them, “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him” (1 Corinthians 1:26-29 NIV). That means that God uses things and people that the world considers inferior, or of low position, to spread His Word. He used simple fishermen like Peter and John to spread the Gospel (Acts 8:14 and Matthew 4:18-22). He used a shepherd boy named David to kill a giant (see 1 Samuel 17:48-50). God even



used a donkey to rebuke Balaam (Numbers 22:21-30, 2 Peter 2:15-16). Because the teaching of the gospel is not something you can understand from a theological perspective (1 Corinthians 3:18-20). It has to be taken by faith (Hebrews 11:6)!

Like today, the intellectual men of Paul's time tried to persuade the people though human philosophies, to reject the gospel. Like today, they were “always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7 NIV). It's sad that so many formally Christian nations have turned to manmade wisdom (1 Corinthians 3:18-20), and neglected the simple truth of the Gospel. The devil's tactics never change. He has taken over the majority of modern education, mass media, and most of human society. It is God who made the United States great. Therefore, we need to unite in Christ, or even this once godly nation will fall! As Paul told the Corinthian church, “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NIV).

As for us, we stand with Joshua, who said, “...choose you this day whom ye will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15 KJV).

In the Lord's service, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*

Religious Pride and Hypocrisy

By Anne Kaestner

I was at the supermarket one day when the cashier in my line turned to the cashier at the next register and, in an angry voice, said, "If you have a problem with me, then you have a problem with God too, because He made me." The other woman was fairly quiet, but the angry cashier kept provoking her by saying, "I've given you something to think about haven't I? Do you hear me?" I knew it wouldn't do any good to remind her that Jesus taught us to be humble of spirit, not arrogant and hostile (Luke 14:9-11. Also, see 1 Corinthians 4:12-13). She was definitely in the mood for an argument, and the other cashier looked very uncomfortable, for the world doesn't know how to handle it when they confront religious hypocrisy. Christians, it's not what we say to people that leads them to Jesus. It's when they see His light reflected in our lives (Matthew 5:14 and John 8:12), and the good fruit that He brings. That's when hearts are touched and drawn to Christ in conviction and repentance! This isn't the way of the world today, but it is God's way.

The world may think that you are foolish if you love and serve Jesus Christ, "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto Him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Corinthians 2:14 KJV). The truth of God cannot be found in deep intellectual thought. It is found in faith (Mark 11:22-23, Matthew 16:13-19) and love (1 John 4:16, 1 John 4:19, and 1 Cor. 13:1-13) toward our Creator. That's why Jesus said, "*...unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven*" (Matthew 18:3-4 NIV). God cannot put His Spirit into us until we are willing to relinquish the worldly spirit we were born with. That's why we have to be Born Again (John 3:3) spiritually. We have to be willing to give it all up, and let go of the world's hold on us.

Jesus said, "*...no man putteth new wine into old wineskins; else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins: but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins*" (Mark 2:22 ASV). We have to be reborn Christians (see 2 Corinthians 5:17), totally emptied out of our worldly past. That way Christ can sterilize us and make of us new wineskins. Because that is the only way that He is able to pour the "*...new wine*" (Acts 2:13 KJV) of His Holy Spirit into us! And without the Holy Spirit in us, we are not truly capable of serving God! When we belong to Him, He must make the decisions in our life, not us! Unfortunately, too many people will not relinquish their own self-will. They want to do things for Him. They want to make their own decisions and choices regarding what kind of a ministry they will have, where they will live, how they will dress, who they will marry, where they will work, what they will or won't do for God, etc. People, this is not what it means to be Christ-centered. This is self-centered!

God isn't interested in the good works that we think we are doing for Him. As King David prayed in tears, after his terrible sin with Bathsheba, "*O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise*" (Psalms 51:15-17 NIV). Worldly humans can still do good works, but the world isn't going to Heaven (1 John 2:15-17). You might think that you are going to build a great university or hospital for God, and help lots of needy people. But, "*...unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over*

the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain" (Psalms 127:1 NIV).

Jesus tried to teach His disciples this by washing their feet (John 13:1-17)! The Disciples of Christ were typical of many Christians today. "*At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?' He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven'*" (Matthew 18:1-4 NIV). Many years later, when the Apostle Peter was mature in his walk with God, he wrote a letter to new believers in Christ, passing on to them the lessons Jesus had taught him. He said, "*...rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good*" (1 Peter 2:1-3 NIV).

The fruit the Holy Spirit "*...is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other*" (Galatians 5:22-26 NIV). True faith in God does not look at circumstances

or listen to the "wisdom of men" (1 Corinthians 1:19-20, 2:1-14) when it conflicts with the will of God. "*'For who has known the mind of the Lord that He may instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 2:16 NIV). What does this mean? Paul was writing to the Christian church in Corinth, Greece. These were new, fledgling believers who had been Born Again, but they were not mature in their walk with God.

Like most Christians today, they still had a lot of the world in them. Consequently, God wasn't able to pour His Spirit into their hearts in full measure, anymore than a man can pour a full glass of wine into a glass that is already two thirds full of soda. God wants to take up residence in the hearts of those who love Him. However, He doesn't want the devil as a housemate! So Paul was trying to teach them God's ways. But first, he had to undo the damage that this world had already wrought on their minds. Any construction contractor will tell you that it is much easier to build a new house on land that has not previously been used than to knock down an existing structure and build from scratch. In those days, Corinth, Greece, was a very sophisticated city. It was a seaport that had become prosperous through international trade. The Greeks thought of themselves as great philosophers and writers. They worshipped the material world, especially education and aesthetic pursuits. Even the word "aesthetic" comes from the Greek word "aisthetikos." Beauty and grace wasn't just a perception to them, it was a goddess named Aphrodite.

The Greeks lived in a world filled with gods and goddesses of their own making (see Deuteronomy 32:17-18, Psalm 96:4-5, Daniel 5:3-31, Zephaniah 2:9-11, Romans 1:18-32, 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, and Galatians 4:8-9). This was the culture of the people, and they had become very proud of their achievements. But their culture had been based on idolatry! In the world we live in today, the ancient architecture of Greece is still highly praised. My husband, Eric, and I visited some of the ancient ruins when we were in Greece in 1984. However, the most beautiful of all were the temples, such as the Parthenon, that were built for the worship of Greek gods! In many respects, the Greeks were a lot like Americans today. They lived for pleasure and knowledge.



Sports had become to them, an obsession. The world-wide Olympic competitions that are held today, originated in ancient Greece. Their purpose was to glorify, entertain, and worship Greek gods.

This was the lifestyle that the new Christians in Corinth had been born into it. They had come to Christ, but habits from the past are hard to break. For their philosophy, their culture, had been indoctrinated into them since childhood, and until they came to Christ, they had not known any other way to live. Paul's job, was a difficult one. He, and other Christian evangelists, had to convince the Corinthians that God would never be able to grow good fruit in them until their old nature was changed. When we repent of our sin, and are Born Again, we don't instantly become perfect. We just change directions! But any new Christian has a long way to go in his walk with God before the Lord will be able to grow fruit in him. That's because fruit doesn't pop up instantly from seed. It takes time to grow and develop. It takes tender nurturing and loving attention before it is able to produce even the little buds that eventually blossom into fruit.

It is the Holy Spirit who teaches the Christian what God expects from him or her (John 14:26). He can do this in many ways, but primarily He uses mature Christians, and their good examples, for this purpose. However, the Lord can't use them until He is able to grow good fruit in them. It is a part of the process that God brings us through as He slowly cultivates the hearts and lives of those who love Him. For it takes many years of hard work for our Heavenly Gardener (see John 15:1-8) to grow good fruit in us. That's why I discourage new believers who are anxious to begin their own ministry right away. When a landscaper plants trees on a property they are usually seedlings that come from the nursery. They have already been carefully developed and grown from seed. That process alone takes a long time. But when he plants that seedling on the site, it's still not ready to grow good fruit. For fruit comes from mature branches, not from little seedlings that are still struggling for their own survival!

The gardener watches the tree carefully, and tends to its needs. At times he has to prune the branches when they are moving in the wrong direction, or even cut off a limb that becomes a problem. It's a slow, painstaking process, but it is the only way that he can grow good fruit! Many winters pass by, many hot summer days, and the gardener may wonder if the tree is worth all the effort. But he's already invested so much time and work! Years go by before that little baby tree gets big enough to form buds. But then one day, the gardener sees the early signs of fruit on the tree, and when the fruit is finally ready to eat, he knows that it was worth it all!

Now what is Satan's part in this? You don't think that he is going to sit idly by and let that fruit develop for God without putting up a fight, do you? The fruit of the Spirit of God is deadly to Satan's evil kingdom! That fruit, when it has blossomed to maturity, will become a mighty weapon in the arsenal of our Redeemer! So Satan is going to do everything he can to see that the seed of faith God plants in the heart of His children never grows fruit. The devil is very resourceful in his methods of achieving this goal. (See Matthew 13:3-9 & 17-30.) But his favorite tool is pride! The new church in Corinth was very close to Athens, Greece, which was a center of deep intellectual study. The Athenians were very proud of their culture, for in the eyes of the world, it had achieved great prestige. Athens was a city filled with universities, culture, and the beginnings of a democratic society. It was famous for its philosophers, such as Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates, who were the forerunners of psychology and psychiatry today (see 1 Corinthians 2:1-5). However, Paul knew that "...the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise

in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain" (1 Corinthians 3:19-20 KJV).

Nevertheless, the Greeks thought of themselves as being very wise and enlightened. Yet they were living so far away from the true Light, Jesus Christ (John 8:12), that their eyes had become accustomed to the darkness. So they had no illumination to see their own sin. This same attitude infiltrated the church in Corinth. These were new believers who had a long way to go before God would be able to grow good fruit in them. But they didn't understand that. Like many people today, the Corinthians wanted salvation. They were willing to give up some of their past in order to please God. But they wanted to please God on their terms! Yes, they wanted redemption in Christ, but they also wanted to bring along all the baggage from their past and add it onto their walk with God. Therefore, Paul had a difficult time getting it through to them that God wasn't interested in their great worldly success or all their human wisdom. It was all built on a bad foundation (Matthew 7:24-27), and the whole thing had to come down if they really wanted to live for God!

Just like most people today, their culture was sacred to them! For it was interwoven with their pride. Therefore, they were very offended by Paul when he told them that God wasn't interested in all that they had achieved and acquired in the world. It hurt their feelings. So they sent Paul a letter telling him how much he had wounded them by his remarks. This, of course, saddened Paul, who was in prison

for preaching the Gospel. It wasn't his desire to hurt them anymore than it is God's desire to cause us pain. He could have done what many pastors do today, and softened his message by compromising on the Word of God. But Paul loved them enough to tell them the truth! The Corinthians saw themselves as being cultured, educated, and refined. But Paul saw them as Jesus saw them, as weak, vulnerable lambs in need of protection from all the false teachings among them!

In fact, when he was in Ephesus, Paul was so concerned about God's sheep, that he entered into battle, spiritually, with demons he referred to as wild beasts (1 Corinthians 15:32) in order to protect the Lord's flock (2 Peter

2:12 and Jude 1:10). Therefore, he knew that if he didn't preach unto them the whole Gospel that God had given to him, savage wolves (false prophets - see Matthew 7:15) would arise among them, who would lead God's Corinthian sheep astray, just as they would with the Ephesian church (Acts 20:25-32). Therefore, after receiving the angry letter from the Corinthians, Paul let the matter rest with the Lord. All he could do was pray for them. But then something happened. The words of Paul (probably 1 Corinthians 5:1-13) finally began to take root in the hearts of the Corinthians' Christians. And they wrote back to Paul telling him that they finally understood what he had been trying to tell them.

God had brought them under conviction, and they had repented of their sins! Now they were able to see how much Paul loved them. Paul wrote back to them saying, "even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death" (2 Corinthians 7:8-10 NIV).

During these last days, the same thing is true! For we also live in a very cosmopolitan country. As with the Greeks, education, sports, and culture are highly prized in our society. **(Continued On Page 4)**



Religious Pride and Hypocrisy (Continued From Page 3)

Items of ethnic heritage have become very popular in recent years, especially religious items, such as totem poles, masks used in the worship of pagan gods (see Deuteronomy 32:16-32), and statues of ancient idols (Exodus 20:4). Anything that glorifies this world system is antithesis of the Kingdom of God (1 John 2:15-17)! Don't be shocked at the huge salaries paid to the idols of this world, whether they be stars of sports, entertainment, politics, or even religion. None of this is a new phenomenon. The early Christian church went through the same temptations and tests that the church is going through today. The Apostle James was so concerned about it that he wrote a concerned letter to new believers, saying, "*You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God*" (James 4:4 NIV).

James wasn't calling them adulterers because they were being unfaithful to their spouses. He was calling them adulterers because they were being unfaithful to Christ! Paul wrote to the Corinthians in the same way (1 Corinthians 6:15-20). However some of them were actually committing physical immorality, as well as spiritual perversion (see 1 Corinthians 5:1)! Amazingly, there are Christians today who actually think that they can engage in illicit sexual activity and still serve God! The church has become so corrupt that, in some cases, even homosexuals have become ordained and claim to serve God! (See 1 Corinthians 1:18-32.) Paul is telling the church that it is impossible to live in this kind of sin and still get to Heaven! You cannot serve two masters, God and this world! He said, "*Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NIV).

When we are not willing to be spiritually fertile, the Lord is unable to grow good fruit in our hearts and lives. Because unless His seed of faith is able to sprout deep roots, it will not grow properly (Matthew 13:1-6 & 18-21). If it doesn't grow right, it won't produce good fruit. Remember that our bodies were made from the "dust of the ground" (see Genesis 2:7), common garden soil. Hard crusty earth is not capable of growing fruit. A person may have been through the Born Again experience, but unless God is able to grow good fruit in their heart and life, they will lose their salvation (John 15:4-6)! Jesus summarized all the commandments into two simple laws, "*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these*" (Mark 12:30-31 KJV).

These days, false and backslidden prophets have been leading the Lord's people in the wrong direction. Instead of the world seeing a love, joy, and peace in Christians, a confrontational attitude has taken place. This is primarily a result of "hirelings" (John 10:11-15) who have, all too often, led the Lord's sheep off of the "straight and narrow" (Matthew 7:13-14) by merchandising and politicizing the Christian faith. When believers are led away from the straight and narrow, they are no longer able to walk by faith. "*And without faith it is impossible to please God...*" (Hebrews 11:6 NIV).

Most Christians underestimate what it means to walk by faith. False doctrines regarding faith have been promoted. The Apostle

Peter would have been livid if he had seen how modern day Pharisees have tried to profit from the redemption that Christ purchased for us with His own blood (1 Peter 1:18-19 & Acts 8:9-23). Christians have also been told to have faith in the healings of God as well. Now I am a firm believer in the physical healings that God can bring upon those He chooses to heal. But not everyone who loves Him is always healed! And it has absolutely nothing to do with their faith. Even the Apostle Paul, who had been used by God to heal many people (Acts 14:8-10, 28:7-9) could not be delivered from his own physical affliction, which he called a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). He prayed three times about it, and begged God for deliverance, but the Lord would not heal him from it. There was no doubt that Paul had faith, but God allowed Paul to suffer with his thorns anyway. However, the Lord did tell Paul why He wouldn't heal him.

Paul had been given tremendous gifts and wisdom from the Holy Spirit, but Paul had a weakness that Satan would be able to take advantage of, if the Lord had not kept Paul humble. That weakness was pride! Therefore, even though Paul spent most of his adult life in chains and imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel, that would not have been enough, on its own, to keep him from backsliding (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Pride is the worst sin of all, because it was the original sin. It is the number one stumbling block that the devil uses to keep Christians from walking by faith. For faith is built on humility, trust, and reliance on the Lord. Whereas, the fruit of pride is self-reliance and self-love, which is diametrically in opposition to the Christ-centered life! So much rested on that one man, Paul. He wrote half of the New Testament! He was the primary apostle chosen by God to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, which constitutes the majority of Christians today! Therefore, the Lord told Paul, "*...My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness...*" (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV).

Not everyone who wants to be healed is healed. Not every prayer we pray to God is answered. But real faith is trusting God and knowing that His will is best in our lives, whether we understand His reasons for it or not! True faith is blind. And the Christian who really has faith is going to remain humble during the good times and the bad. "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose*" (Romans 8:28 NIV). When you have faith in God, the Lord can work miracles in your life, because you stop trusting in your own wisdom or judgment, and you no longer worry about circumstances, or what other people tell you. You trust God, no matter what! That is the only way that God can truly grow good fruit in us.

However, without this type of faith, Satan will grow religious pride instead, and create weeds in God's garden (Matthew 13:24-30), the hearts of those who think they love Him! Not all false prophets started out that way. Some of the most dangerous are the ones who were originally living for Christ, but subsequently rebelled against Him as a result of pride (Proverbs 16:18 and 2 Peter 2:15-22). They were usually faithful to God through all the hard times that they and their ministry went through at the beginning. But after God blessed them and made them prosper they forgot that it was the Holy Spirit who made their ministry great. They allowed the seed of pride to take root in their hearts, believing that they became successful as a result of their own wisdom, talent, or ability. Nevertheless, when we really love Jesus, we trust Him to direct our lives during the good times and the bad, and we never allow the praise or affection of others to distract us from the will of God! (See Acts 14:11-15.)

