



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

August 2020

## FROM US TO YOU

This is a bittersweet time for Christians. We have all had to deal with problems associated with the Corona virus. That has created a domino effect with financial problems, domestic woes, and death of loved ones. However, when you love and serve Christ, God is stronger when you are weaker. No matter what problem the enemy brings, *“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). In other words, God is greater than any hardship Satan can bring against us. And He has a way of turning the devil’s own attacks against him. An example of this is found in Acts 16:22-36. No one likes to deal with trouble and affliction. And we are no exception. Just this year, we have had severe physical and financial problems. Have you noticed how the enemy attacks harder when you are most vulnerable? Just as our financial situation was at its worst, our appliances began to break down. It started with our dishwasher. Then the large air conditioner in our dining room broke down at the start of a New York heatwave. And just as we were thinking nothing else could go wrong, our only car died on us! Albeit it was twenty-two years old, and we were grateful that it lasted that long. But even that was gone.

The situation seemed desperate. We needed our car! However, our faith was stronger than the situation. Needless to say, we did a lot of praying. Then Eric began to browse the internet. Our dealership had a Dodge Dart selling at a great price, and it was only five years old. Still it was more than we could afford. We had over a year’s worth of pay checks we couldn’t deposit because our funding has been so low they would have bounced. Thank God for the Corona virus stimulus checks. They came at a time we really needed them! *“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). It’s just another example of something bad happening, but God turning it around so that something good would come out of it. We went to the dealership trusting God to turn the situation around somehow. We knew that with our terrible credit rating, the chance of getting any credit was impossible under normal conditions. However, we serve the Lord, and He specializes in making the impossible happen! For *“...with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible”* (Matthew 19:26 NIV).

We found the car we wanted, but to buy it we needed a miracle! The dealership manager was not very optimistic. He spent a lot of time crunching numbers into his computer. He shook his head negatively, “With your credit score, it’s going to be hard. You’re probably going to get an interest rate of 24%, if you can get credit at all,” he told us. We waited in his office, with hope, faith, and praying inwardly. He continued, “Even some people with great credit have to pay 24% interest. But you...” His voice trailed off and he shook his head in a discouraging way. We sat, we waited what felt like a very long time. But he was persistent. Just then, our salesman walked into his office. The manager sat back in his chair, away from the computer. “Look at this interest rate,” he told him. The way he said it, we expected

the news to be bad. Then he looked at us and said, “7.32%. Someone must be looking after you.” Anne responded, “Thank you Jesus!” The credit manager came to the door, grinning. He saw the number on his computer. “That’s a glitch,” he said, laughing. “Are we still going to get it?” Anne asked. “Sure! I got a credit approval number here,” the manager replied.

We picked up the car two days later. That’s one less problem to worry about, for the moment anyway. But Satan doesn’t get discouraged easily. Like everyone else, the problems always persist. As we prepare this issue, Eric’s wrist is giving him a lot of pain since he sprained it cutting down some vines in our garden. And his sciatica is a frequent affliction. As for Anne, you may recall the toothache we mentioned in our May 2020 issue. It happened at the worst possible time, during the Corona virus shutdown in New York! We thank God that the situation in New York has improved, and Anne finally saw a dentist. Two teeth were removed several weeks ago. We have a good dentist, but her mouth still hurts a lot. So please pray for our afflictions including persistent back pain for both of us. But praise God anyway. *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all”* (Psalms 34:19 KJV). Anyone can serve God when all is going well in their life. However, only those who really love Him, will pass the trials and tests of faith, and glorify Him during their bitter struggles.

The Apostle Paul had more than his share of trials of faith (2 Corinthians 11:23-33). Yet still, the Lord gave him an extra affliction that Paul called a “thorn in the flesh.” Paul wrote, *“To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2 Corinthians 12:7-10 NIV). We know that sounds like Paul’s statement conflicts with itself. But what he is saying is that when he is weakest in his own human power, the Holy Spirit is stronger in him.

It’s similar to the message Peter was trying to convey, when he told the persecuted Christian church of his day that their suffering refines them, and draws them closer to Christ. He said, *“These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls”* (1 Peter 1:7-9 NIV).

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



# A False Sense of Security

By Anne Kaestner

My mother died in April 1993. She thought of herself as a Christian all her life, for she was British and her generation considered England a Christian country. She would often attend Women's Aglow luncheons where they would have female Christian speakers. Mother always believed that her good works would get her to Heaven (Ephesians 2:8-9). She and my Dad took a special interest in young people from their church. Mother would entertain them in her home and invited some of them to spend Christmas with her family. One day she proudly told me that she had cooked a turkey for her church even though she had not felt well. Mother also had a Catholic friend named Catherine. When Catherine was dying, mother would go over to her apartment and take care of her. She would even clean up the mess Catherine made on the floor when she had diarrhea. But Mother had a dark side too. When I was a little girl I would hear her and her mother, whom I called Nanny, talk about my American grandmother, Anna. Even as a young child I could hear the acidic tone of their voices and the hatred as they spoke of her. At that age, I never understood why they disliked her so much. When I asked the reason, Nanny would just say that she was "very religious." Grandma was a very strong Christian who loved Jesus so much that she would embarrass my mother with what Mother called "her fanaticism."

Anna was just nineteen years old when she married a young Italian immigrant named Angelo Riccio. Jobs were hard to get in those days, especially for recent immigrants. Nevertheless, Angelo got a good job as a machinist. They had two sons, Edward and Vincent. Then Anna got pregnant again, with another son. Life was good for a while. Then things suddenly took a turn for the worst. Angelo caught the Spanish Influenza and he died before his third son was born. Anna called her new son Angelo after his father. He would eventually become my Dad. Anna was destitute. She was a widow at only 24 years old. There were no welfare programs in those days. Her other relatives were just as poor as she was. So, she sent her young sons out to work selling pretzels and newspapers in the morning before school. And Anna sewed men's trousers at home for a local factory. One day a nun at her church sent Edward home with a raffle book and orders to sell it for the church. Anna was dismayed. Her church knew her family was just scraping by. Every free moment her boys had was given to helping them survive. "Tell her that you don't have time for selling raffles," she told Edward. The boy returned with a message from the nun, "Tell your mother if she can't afford to help support her church, she can't afford to be Catholic anymore." Anna expected her church to be more understanding. Anna's neighbor took her to a Salvation Army meeting one day and that's where she repented of her sins (see Matthew 3:2) and accepted Christ as her Lord and Savior (John 14:6).

Eventually she began attending meetings at the Ridgewood Pentecostal Church in her neighborhood. At once she noticed the love and support from the congregation. The people there were so different. The congregation took an active part in the meetings. There was singing and a sermon but the people would praise Jesus out loud and speak in other languages (Mark 16:17) with such ecstasy on their faces. Anna looked forward to going to church. She sensed something spiritual at the meetings, the holy Presence of God. God became more than some way off deity to her. And she developed a relationship with the Lord that drew her even closer to Him. John the Baptist spoke of this. He said, "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to

carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor, gathering His wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:11-12 NIV). This anointing is called, "the Baptism in the Holy Spirit." The fire is spiritual, not physical. "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29 KJV). The Lord spoke of this anointing to His disciples. "...Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you.' And with that He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:21-22 NIV).

His breath made it all the way up to Heaven. Jesus had paid for our sins and was about to return to Heaven. After He left them, His followers gathered together in an upper room on the day of Pentecost, praying, as He had taught them. Jesus had promised them a new comforter (John 14:16-17, 26, 16:7) who would be with them after His departure. That's when the breath of the Lord returned to them with power and glory. "...They were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:1-4 NIV). "Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven... Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?'" (Acts 2:5-8 NIV). These foreigners were totally perplexed by the Christians, because the Holy Spirit had filled them with so much enthusiasm and they spoke in languages they had not learned through normal means. "Some, however, made fun of them and said, 'They have had too much wine.' Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: '...These men are not drunk, as you suppose. ...No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy'" (Acts 2:13-18 NIV).



Angelo and Anna Riccio

I have emphasized the words "last days" because there are those who teach that this Baptism in the Holy Spirit was just something for the early church and not available today. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "...I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3 NIV). By the term, "Born Again," Jesus meant that you have to repent of your sins (Matthew 4:17) to God (Luke 11:1-2) and accept the salvation He has offered us through the blood of His Own Son, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). It means that your sins will have been paid for by Christ and you are starting life as a new person dedicated to God and living for Him (Philippians 1:20-21). The world has it wrong when they say, "We are all God's children." That's not what the Bible says! Speaking of Jesus, it says, "He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet 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 1:11-13 NIV). The Lord's own people, the Jews, would not accept Him as their Savior. Yet all who **become** children of God, through repentance to God the Father, and asking His forgiveness are.



If you are a child of God, “...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). A gift doesn’t do you any good unless you receive it. You have to change directions and “...leave your life of sin” (John 8:11 NIV). After repentance and accepting Christ as your Savior and Lord you are reborn spiritually. If you die right away you will go to Heaven. However, most people go on living for decades after that. So, it’s like the Jews when they were delivered by God out of Egyptian bondage. For living in sin is living as a slave to sin (John 8:34). Yet Christ can set you free (Romans 8:2).

Pharaoh didn’t give up his slaves easily (Exodus 7:13-22). And Satan’s not going to give up his children either. He hates God, and so he hates everyone whom God loves. “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” (John 3:16 NIV). Therefore, Satan is going to use all his resources to get you back. God will never leave or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). But you can leave Him by returning to your old life of sin (2 Peter 2:20-22). Therefore, God will allow you to be tested (Jeremiah 6:29, John 15:1-2, and 1 Thessalonians 2:4). Because He doesn’t want any lukewarm believers (Revelation 3:16). Jesus said, “...whoever disowns Me before men, I will disown him before My Father in heaven. 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 10:33-38 NIV).

Love your daughter. Love your son. We are even supposed to love our enemies (Luke 6:27) when you serve God. But don’t put them before Christ! Because Satan will even try to turn your friends and family against you if he is able to. The closer you get to Christ, the further you will get from the ways of this world (John 17:6-16). We have to live in this world. Yet Christ must always come first! So, we have to live by faith (see Romans 1:17). That’s where the Baptism in the Holy Spirit comes in. “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’” (John 3:5-6 NIV). The Apostle Paul discussed the difference in Acts 19:1-7. The gift of tongues, that often accompanies this gift, is also explained by Paul. He said there are times when we are so upset that the right words we want to use in our prayer to God just don’t come to mind. So, “...the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Romans 8:26 NIV). Anna survived even during the Great Depression because she lived by faith. She never remarried and her sons grew into men just in time to be drafted into World War 2. All three sons survived the war but only Angelo married and had a family. As an adult, he legally changed his name to Eugene. But everyone called him Gene. He and my mother, Winifred, met in England while Gene was stationed there during the war. Everyone called my mother Winnie. In 1948 she came to the United States to marry Gene at “Ridgewood Pentecostal Church.” She moved into Anna’s house, which Anna had managed to buy. Winnie got a job at a shoe factory because she didn’t have a high school diploma. She said it was the only job she could get at the time. Yet she resented working in a factory because

she had an office job when she was in England. She also resented living with her mother-in-law. But Gene couldn’t afford a home of his own.

After a year Winnie had saved up enough money to return to England for a short visit. However, once there, she refused to return to the United States. A year later Gene left his mother, his job, and the life he had known in America, and went back to England to be with her. He moved into his mother-in-law’s apartment where Winnie lived, and he got a job. He would remain in England for 9 years. I was born in England when my mother was 25 years old. Two years later my sister, Penny, was born. Then, when I was five years old, my brother, Eddie, was born. Anna had visited England at the time of my birth. I was her first grandchild. Nanny had many grandchildren. But Anna loved me deeply right from the start. She had to return to the United States but she took me with her in her heart. The years went by and Anna’s earnest prayers for me continued. Every Christmas we would receive a big box of gifts from her and my Uncle Eddie. It contained beautiful children’s clothes for my sister and me. Anna prayed for my sister and brother too. But I seemed to hold a special place in her heart. She wondered if she would ever see her grandchildren again. She worried that we would never hear about salvation. I believe she prayed, “Lord, whatever it takes, please let me see my grandchildren again before I die.” Mother was very pregnant with my brother, Eddie, when a letter came one day from Uncle Eddie. Anna

had lung cancer and the doctor had given her six months to two years to live. Ironically, she had never smoked a cigarette in her life. The letter said if Gene wanted to see his mother again before she died, he would have to come back to the United States quickly.

Eddie was about six weeks old when Gene left. He said he would not come back to England to live again and that Winnie should bring his children and return to the United States shortly after. My mother’s plan was to stay in England and wait for Anna to die. Then she expected Gene to return to her. The letters went back and forth between them. Two years went by and Anna’s health continued to deteriorate, but she remained

alive. Then Winnie got another letter. Gene had seen a lawyer and was threatening divorce. Winnie finally brought herself and their three children to America. Anna finally saw her grandchildren again. But her health and her pain grew worse every day. She owned a two-family house. We lived downstairs. She lived upstairs.

In those days, Mother hated every day that passed in America. She hated the fact that I was starting to speak with what she called a “Yankee” accent. She got angry at my sister one evening for eating her dinner the American way. And she slapped me across the face one afternoon because I pronounced a word with a New York accent. Winnie missed her mother, her siblings, and England. However, she was impressed with the love she saw in the way that people from Anna’s church would visit her frequently. Mother would have to go out to the vestibule to open the doors for them. One day a lady from the church showed up carrying mops, cleaning material, and a bucket. Over dinner, I heard Mother tell my Dad, “Did you see your mother’s bathroom today? It’s spotless!” On another occasion two young women showed up with about ten children approximately the age of my sister and me. They were from a “Release Time” group at the church. They came to sing to Anna.

Sister Sarah, the leader, talked my mother into letting us attend their meetings. Someone would drive to our house every Wednesday and take us to the church. I was impressed with how honest the children were there. And I liked getting out

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Gene and Winnie Riccio

## **A False Sense of Security** (Continued From Page 3)

of school an hour early to go there. It was so different from the Sunday School I had attended in England. My mother had sent me there to “keep grandma happy.” At Sunday School in England, it was assumed that everyone who attended church were Christians, and even most who didn’t, because England was considered a Christian country. However, Jesus wasn’t taken for granted at Release Time. They would talk about how you need to be “saved” so you wouldn’t go to Hell when you died (Revelation 20:10-15).

People think children are so sweet and innocent. But I was a brat. Both my parents believed in spankings and discipline, and I was punished whenever they thought I deserved it. However, I felt even the spankings, were done with love. Of their three children, I was the favorite and was given more privileges than my siblings. I loved my parents very much. But I resented my little sister. I alone had been doted on until she came along. I played the part of the big sister when I had to, but I was jealous of the attention I had to share with her. And I felt a desire to turn people against her. Then when I was about ten years old that changed. My mother got a card from the church inviting my sister and me to attend Daily Vacation Bible School during my summer vacation. Now getting time off of school to attend church was fine. However, having to spend two weeks of my summer vacation getting up early and going to church was another thing entirely. I cried, I begged, but to no avail. Mother never went to that church herself. She said it was too fanatical. Nevertheless, Penny and I had to go. And that’s where I accepted Christ as my Savior and Lord! Everything changed in my life after that. I no longer resented Penny, and I wanted to be kind and caring to everyone. Decades later my mother told me how my sister had said a friend of mine noticed the difference. After I came to the Lord, she had said to my sister, “What’s the matter with Anne? She always used to argue about everything. Now she’s so nice!” However, something else changed too.

Not only was my attitude to others different, their attitude toward me was too. No longer did I feel the love and caring from my parents that I had gotten used to. The nicer I tried to be to them, the more angry they became toward me! The demonic influence that had caused me to try to turn other people against my sister now seemed to be working through my mother against me! The more I tried to love my family, the more they turned against me. But I felt love from the church and their Christian example. And I received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit at their summer camp when I was 12. Grandma was thrilled when she found out! She told me God had told her that He would give me a big ministry. She died that year. When my parents came to pick me up from camp they told me they decided to move out to Long Island. My mother had a friend named Kay, who was very worldly and also resented my love for Christ. One evening Kay and her husband, John, were visiting my parents. I was in my bedroom, and couldn’t hear their conversation. Then suddenly, I heard a knock on my door. It was John, and I sensed he was intoxicated. “Don’t listen to what they are saying about you,” he told me. “You’re a wonderful, beautiful girl, and they are wrong.” I hadn’t thought about it much at the time. But years later, it became part of a puzzle that explained people’s actions toward me.

Eventually, my family started attending a Pentecostal church on Long Island. Yet, even there, I did not feel the same love and devotion for Christ from the congregation that I had felt at the church in Queens. Mother began to fit in through socializing. She would invite people to her house, and everyone would tell me what a wonderful Christian

mother I had. Mother had what Paul described as “*having a form of godliness but denying its power...*” (2 Timothy 3:5 NIV). Yet her resentment toward me hadn’t changed. Mother would carry my Dad’s Bible with her when she went to her Aglow meetings, but I never saw her reading it. The years went by and eventually I got married. Eric’s mother, Gerry Kaestner, was not a Christian. She was an alcoholic and it took a few years for us to get used to each other. Eric accepted Christ as his Savior and Lord the first year we were married. He said it was my example and influence. Gerry eventually learned to abstain from the alcohol. And she began to like me and was very generous toward me, especially at Christmas. But she would often say how much she wished she had the “gift of fortune telling” (Jeremiah 27:9-11, Malachi 3:5, Acts 19:19, Galatians 5:20, Revelation 9:21, 21:8, 22:15). She remained interested in the occult.

In 1989, we began this ministry. Eric thought for sure my parents would support us, at least emotionally. But he felt his mother would be against the idea. Yet the opposite happened. My mother had wanted to be a successful writer but never made it. So, she resented my writings for the ministry. The first four years I worked on a volunteer basis. Strangely, Eric’s mother was delighted. She gave me a big hug. Now Eric was able to leave a job he hated and work full time for the ministry. Up until 1992 most of the donations we received were from her. And she began reading the newsletters. Mother did too, and she told me, “Anne, I always thought if I could be a successful writer, I could buy my mother her own house.” I responded by saying, “Well



Gerry and Anne Kaestner

I guess that’s the difference between you and me Mother. You wanted to succeed for your mother. I want to succeed for God.”

One day Eric got a letter in the mail, asking him why he wanted to marry me. It was from my mother. She said he could do better. Eric was furious, but he didn’t respond. One day Eric came home from his mother’s house. “I straightened my mother out,” he said. “Your mother has been calling her up and saying things about you. My mother thought we were having problems. I told her, “I don’t have any problems with Anne. It’s her family that is the problem.” Gerry was

confused because she had heard that they were supposed to be Christians. After all, Mother liked to attend church. It was the center of her social life. Eventually, her and my Dad moved to Delaware. And Mother told me that she had terminal breast cancer. I told her, “Mother, if it were me, I’d be thinking, ‘I’m going to see Jesus soon, and the Apostles, and Abraham...!’” “I know Anne. I know more than you think,” she replied sadly. We visited my mother two months before she died. I could sense a spirit of death around her. There was a bad snow storm a few days before she died and we were unable to get to Delaware before her death. At her funeral, Eddie’s wife told me that seconds before she died, her face had turned totally white. Sounded like she had seen something terrifying! At her funeral everyone told me how lucky I was to have such a good Christian mother (Luke 6:26).

Five years later, Gerry was in great pain. A day or two later, we saw her at the hospital and she was thrilled with excitement. The doctor had told her she had colon and liver cancer, but the pain was gone with the help of strong medicine. I’d never seen her so happy. She seemed to be bubbling over with joy. She told us that she been telling the nurse about our newsletter. That evening God told me that the next time I saw her I must lead her through the sinner’s prayer. I saw her a day or two later. While we were talking with her, I felt the Lord demand of me, “Don’t wait any longer. DO IT NOW!” Gerry was happy to comply. A day later she was comatose and 4 days later she died. At her house we saw her reading glasses on the bed-stand sitting on top of our May-June 1998 issue of “The Goods News Letter.”