



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

AUTUMN 2004

FROM US TO YOU

As we prepare this issue, it feels like déjà vu all over again. Twelve years ago there was another President George Bush running for a second term. We had just fought a war in Iraq. The economy was in bad shape. There had just been a major hurricane that had hit Florida. And conservative Vice President Dan Quayle was asked if he would support his daughter if she had an abortion. He replied, "I'd support my daughter." This time it was conservative Vice President Dick Cheney who was asked about homosexuality. He replied that he has a gay daughter and that he supports her on the gay marriage issue, saying "Freedom is freedom for all." However, homosexuality is a sin against God (Jude 1:7-8)! And the Lord's position is not going to change (James 1:17) or be affected by the political and social winds of the nation (Ephesians 4:14). *"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"* (1 Corinthians 6:9 NIV). As a result of the sin in our nation, we are living in dangerous times. The Department of Homeland Security has stated that a new terrorist attack in the United States is likely to occur before the November election. Yet, those of us who love Christ know that *"...our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against... spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (Ephesians 6:12 NIV).

In other words, it is not really people who plan the strategy of evil that results in terrorism. There is an unseen spirit world (Rev. 12:9) and we humans are the pawns that are manipulated and motivated by it! It is impossible for us to fight against this spiritual darkness on our own. They are far stronger than we are! That is why we need to depend upon the Lord (see 2 Chronicles 20:15, 2 Corinthians 10:4). God has his own Heavenly army (Joshua 5:13-6:2) waiting to help us as soon as we, as a nation, humble ourselves before Him and acknowledge that without Him, we have no power at all (Matthew 28:18). This nation was a wilderness when the Pilgrims and Puritans came here. They were seeking a new home where they would be free to live according to the Word of God and not depend upon the man-made traditions (Mark 7:8) of the established church. People from other nations began to follow, each attempting to escape from some sort of misery, poverty, or injustice. Eventually Africans were brought here as slaves, where God knew that many of them would accept Christ as their Savior and be freed from the bondage of sin (John 8:34 and 2 Peter 2:19). For Satan is the real oppressor! In fact, it was because of the faith and dedication of those Americans who trusted in Jesus Christ that God blessed our nation and made it strong. *"...We have heard with our ears, O God... what You did in their days, in days long ago. With Your hand You drove out the nations and planted our fathers; You crushed the peoples and made our fathers flourish. It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your face, for You loved them"* (Psalms 44:1-3 NIV).

In every war the United States fought up until Korea, the Lord

brought us victory. However, this nation has stopped depending upon Jesus Christ (Psalm 78:32 thru 79:13). If there is one thing the Lord hates it is when people take credit for the blessings He has bestowed upon us. In his "State of the Union" speech President Bush told the nation that we would prevail because of our military and our weapons. When we heard those words, we knew that there would be trouble ahead (Psalm 33:16-20)! King David knew how he had won his battles. All the army of Israel was terrified of Goliath, but little David put his trust in the Lord. He was not afraid to go up against the giant by himself. For he knew that he was not really alone (see 1 Samuel 17:45-47). Winning our battles would be easy if we, as a nation, put our confidence in God (Exodus 14:14, Deuteronomy 1:30, 3:22). But, without the Lord, we have no hope! The pagan nations put their trust in their idols. However, Christians have drifted so far from Christ that churchianity has replaced Christianity in most of the nation! The main article for this issue, **"Contending For The Faith"** goes into more detail on this subject.

America has prevailed this far because of the blessings bestowed upon us through the fervent prayers of those who came before us and honored God. If this were truly a Christian nation, we would not have to fear terrorists. They would be afraid of us! King David never had to torture anyone to get information out of them. He just inquired to the Lord and God told him what to do (1 Samuel 23:4, 30:8 and 2 Samuel 2:1, 5:19, 5:23-24). People wonder why there is so much crime and evil in society. It is because people no longer fear God! Too many ministers have been portraying the Lord as if He were a big genie in the sky. Christians come away with the idea that God exists to serve us instead of the other way around (2 Kings 18:12, Judges 2:10-22, Psalm 36:1-4, Matthew 10:32-39, Mark 9:33-35, Galatians 1:10). It has gotten so bad that Halloween has replaced Christmas as the favorite holiday of American children. Many churches promote this evil (Deuteronomy 18:9-13, Isaiah 47:12-14, Revelation 21:8).

On a personal note, we want to thank those of you who have been praying for this ministry. Our funding has improved this year and shows signs of increasing next year. Yet we continue to need the prayers and support of our brethren in Christ. Pray for our nation. And pray for our President, that he will return to the Lord (Matthew 11:28-30, Psalms 9:9-10). Remember those who *"...drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ"* (1 Corinthians 10:4 NIV). Drink deeply of the water from that cleansing flow (John 19:34, John 4:14, Psalm 36:8-9, Psalm 46:4, Isaiah 48:21, 49:10). And if you remain on that Solid Rock, no matter what torrents of hail, wind, and storm may blow against you (Matthew 7:24-25), He will hold you tightly in His loving hand (John 10:28). Remember the **faith** of Simon Peter (Matthew 16:13-17). Also, see Acts 4:8-13, 1 Peter 2:4-9). For Jesus said, *"...Upon this Rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18 KJV).

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



CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

By Anne Kaestner

Are you confused in your walk with the Lord? Have you been wondering why so many people have been getting mad at you lately, since you humbled yourself before God? Do you feel the greatest hostility coming at you from those who claim to be Christians (Matt. 7:21)? Do you find that the closer you get to Christ, the further you get from everyone else (Matthew 5:10-12, 1 Cor. 2:14, & 2 Timothy 3:12-13)? It hurts when you want so much to have fellowship with other believers but are met, instead, with disdain and contempt. Jesus said, *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you... No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed My teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because... they do not know the One who sent Me"* (John 15:18-21 NIV. Also, see 1 John 4:5-6). The church that Christ shed His precious blood for (1 Peter 1:18-19) should be holy (1 Peter 1:15-16)! But only a tiny fragment of holiness remains in the church today. If you are a part of that holy remnant, you are going to feel the pressure of the world coming against you from one side and the counterfeit church (Galatians 1:6-7 & 2 Corinthians 11:13-15) from the other. The Apostle Paul warned the elders at Ephesus, *"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"* (Acts 20:29-30 NIV. Also, see Matt. 7:15). The same thing has happened in the church today!

That's why those who love the Lord find themselves constantly at odds with *"...men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain"* (1 Tim. 6:5 NIV). Such people are *"...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power..."* (2 Timothy 3:4-5 NIV). Without the power of the Holy Spirit, they have no true godliness at all (John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 2:16, Galatians 1:11-12). So they invent their own! *"In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up..."* (2 Peter 2:3 NIV. Also, see Jeremiah 23:16-22, 25-27, Ezekiel 13:1-9, & Mark 7:6-7). In fact, worldly doctrines have become so pervasive in the church that they have diluted the purity (2 Cor. 6:6 and 1 Timothy 4:12) of God's Word. Paul warned us of a seducing spirit (2 Corinthians 11:3-4) that seeks to invade the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27 and Ephesians 4:12). This is exactly what has happened! Some may say, "The Christian church today is a big, enthusiastic group. They love the Lord, buy Christian products, influence elections, and worship Christ in huge gatherings." Exactly! It's all show and no substance! It's the Pharisee attitude in Luke 18:10-14, the spirit that says, "Aren't I holy! Look at my bumper sticker." But it doesn't fool God (1 Samuel 16:7)! I know that the world often refers to people as "devout Christians." But what does the world know about true Christianity? Jesus said, *"...My kingdom is not of this world..."* (John 18:36 NIV). Moreover, this world has a vested interest in drawing people away from the truth (see John 14:6). For it is currently being run by *"...the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"* (Ephesians 2:2 KJV). That is Satan, not God (John 8:44)!

It's not that people don't worship God anymore. The media is full of churches and large crusades where you see people standing with their hands stretched up to Heaven and tears streaming down their faces. But Jesus said, *"...These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men"* (Mark 7:6-7 NIV). Christianity today

has become elitist! This counterfeit faith (Galatians 1:6-10) has become pandemic! Then, when disaster strikes (Amos 4:7-11), because the Lord wants to wake up His wayward flock, people ask, "Why is God doing this to us? We are good, church going Christians." However, Jesus said, *"...No one is good except God alone"* (Luke 18:19 NIV). *"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags..."* (Isaiah 64:6 NIV. Also, see Isaiah 59:1-2). Due to all the false doctrine, most of the church does not know how to live by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16-17). They live by their own sinful cravings (1 John 2:16-17)! Paul outlined the difference in Galatians 5:19-25. They think they are "saved" and are going to Heaven because they once repented of their sins and accepted Christ. However, they did not follow their commitment up with a **changed** life (Matthew 18:3)! Jesus said, *"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"* (Luke 6:46 NIV. Also, see Matt. 7:21-23). The Western church has been so blessed by God that it takes Him for granted. Like rich kids who have inherited wealth from their parents, they do not appreciate the suffering believers went through over the centuries in order to preserve the purity of our faith.

Speaking of His latter-day Laodicean church, Jesus said, *"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... 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... Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent"* (Rev. 3:15-19 NIV. Also, see James 5:1-5). Such people are spiritual adulterers, unfaithful to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2 & James 4:4). This always results in hypocrisy (see Matthew 23:15)! Have you noticed how much the lukewarm church attacks the world? It is because, by comparison, it feels righteous! This is the kind of hypocritical judging Jesus was speaking against in Matthew 7:1-5! However, the church uses this scripture as a defense against self-incrimination! As Christians, we are **not** supposed to judge the world (John 3:17, 12:47)! We are to judge those in the church (Matthew 7:15, Luke 17:3, & 1 Corinthians 5:1-13)! But the self-righteous don't want to be compared to God's standards. So they find excuses to whitewash their sin (Matthew 23:27, Acts 23:3. Also, compare Ezekiel 13:10-15 to Matthew 7:24-27). *"They have left the straight way and wandered off... Blackest darkness is reserved for them... If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning... Of them the proverbs are true: 'A dog returns to its vomit,' and, 'A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud'"* (2 Peter 2:15-22 NIV. Also, see Matthew 7:13-14).

Christ can deliver anyone from sin, no matter how vile that sin may be. But He cannot do anything with the **proud** hypocrites who, through their church attendance and social programs, think they can buy their way into Heaven! Pride was the original human sin (Genesis 3:1-6)! The only thing worse is hypocrisy added to pride! Nothing gets in God's way more than those who claim to love Him, yet do evil in His name! When Jesus was on earth, He never had any trouble with the honest sinner (Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:36-50), even the demon possessed (Matthew 15:22-28, 8:16, Mark 16:9). It was the religious phonies He had all His problems with! They hated Him so much that they wanted to kill Him (John 8:40)! If you love Christ, you defend His Gospel and His holiness! You *"...contend for the faith... For 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 1:3-4 NIV). These phonies promote their own ideas about righteousness and condemn the world. They do this in the name of Christ, thereby setting up a barrier of anger and hostility between the Lord and those He came to redeem (Matthew 9:12-13). So, "...Do not let anyone lead you astray... He who does what is sinful is of the devil... The reason the Son of God appeared was to **destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin...** Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God..." (1 John 3:7-10 NIV. Also, see John 14:23-27).

Are you frustrated at the lack of faith today? Has the Holy Spirit enabled you to see His way so clearly that you wish you could share your joy with the church? Instead, you feel ostracized and abandoned by it. Christ hasn't abandoned you. The hypocrites have (Matt. 6:1-5, 23:25-28)! Jesus told them, "...you do not believe because you are not My sheep. My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:26-27 NIV. Also, see John 8:47). So if the Light of Christ (John 9:5) beams brightly in your heart (John 8:12), anyone caught in that beam will feel God's conviction. You don't even have to say anything. Your humility (Colossians 3:12, 1 Peter 5:6), honesty, and kindness (see Luke 6:27-28) will be evident to all. And they will become angry at you (John 15:18-21). Therefore, those whom God loves, He **separates** (Isaiah 52:11 & 2 Corinthians 6:17). Just as the Lord told the Jews not to associate or make treaties with the pagans (Exodus 23:31-33, Deuteronomy 7:1-4, Ezra 9:1-2), He doesn't want you to even eat a meal with false brethren (1 Corinthians 5:9-11)! If the world associates you with the hypocrites, they will think you are one of them. If you make concessions on your faith in order to please them, you will be compromising on the Word of God. And they will, through subtle means, be able to entice you into their sin (Psalm 106:34-43). God is the one who is bringing the separation between you and the counterfeit church (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)! For salvation does not come through the church. It comes through Christ (John 14:6, Acts 4:12, 1 Timothy 2:5)!

The Church is the Bride of Christ (John 3:28-29). But the Bride has no power to save you! If you love Jesus, you are a part of His Bride (2 Corinthians 11:2). So to say that the church will save you is like saying that you, and fellow Christians, can save yourselves. Don't believe it! Only Christ, our holy Bridegroom, was able to pay for our debts and redeem us (1 Tim. 2:5-6)! It doesn't matter how fancy your church is. The true church is not built on anything this carnal world (1 Corinthians 3:10-14) has to offer. It is built on the Solid Rock of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:8-12 & 1 Peter 2:4-9)! God has said, "...What kind of house will you build for Me? ...Or where will My resting place be? Has not My hand made all these things? You stiff-necked people... You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!" (Acts 7:49-51 NIV). "...My righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him" (Hebrews 10:38 NIV. Also, see Matthew 8:8-12, Romans 1:17, 2 Cor. 5:7, Galatians 2:20, 3:11, & 1 Peter 4:17). Worldly people attend church because it gives them a false sense of security and is their social outlet! And when the hirelings (John 10:12-13) get them involved in good works, it makes them feel that they are pleasing the Lord. Does that mean that we should not do good works? No. It means that we must be recreated in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17) "...to do good works, which **God prepared in advance for us to do**" (Ephesians 2:10 NIV). How are we going to please the Lord if we decide for ourselves what we will and will not do? That's growing your own fruit. It didn't work for Cain (Genesis 4:1-15) and it won't work for us either! We will not get to Heaven unless we bear good fruit. The only way to

do that is to **remain in the Vine**, Jesus Christ (John 15:1-8).

The false prophets are "broken cisterns" (see Jeremiah 2:13), "...springs without water and mists driven by a storm" (2 Peter 2:17 NIV). They act as if they have the life-giving water that will quench your spiritual thirst (John 4:7-15). But they are sanctimonious fools. "...For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while **they themselves are slaves of depravity...**" (2 Peter 2:15-22 NIV). If you love Christ, you have a burden for lost sinners and you don't want anyone to be angry at you, especially those in the church. But stop worrying about hurting their feelings and do not allow them to suck you into their sin! I once knew a young man who had been saved by Christ from a horrible life of drugs, crime, and depravity. One day he pointed out a group of prostitutes and transvestites on a street corner in New York. Then he said to me, "I feel guilty looking down at them. I'm no better than they are. If it wasn't for Jesus saving me, I might be with them." Yes, he could have been. But God had delivered him from that kind of a life so that he could rise above the sin, as Peter rose above the trouble water (Matthew 14:25-32). However, what happened when Peter took his eyes off of Christ and began to look down at the waves and the wind? He started sinking into them! Satan is cunning (2 Corinthians 11:14)! He loves perverting the things of God! And he was able to manipulate the man's compassion to the point where he began to sink back into his sin (see Luke 9:62)! His empathy for the sinner became a stumbling block for him. Because



he began to take his relationship with God for granted. When the Lord redeemed you from your sin, you left your previous lifestyle and worldly friendships behind. However, the world will not understand your faith and the lukewarm church will resent it. In fact, they may force you to make a decision as to whether you will compromise to please them or be kicked out from their midst. Good! Let them kick you out (see John Chapter 9). That's what God wants anyway (John 9:22, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, & 3 John 1:9-10)! He will slice away everything that is coming between Him and you. It's going to hurt. But the only chance you have of reaching them for Christ is by the evidence of a changed life they see in you, and your prayers and petitions to God on their behalf (James 5:16)! All you can do for the sinner is throw them a life preserver (2 Timothy 4:2 and 1 Peter 5:2-3). But if you jump in the water and try to save them yourself, instead of waiting for the Lord (Isaiah 30:18), they will pull you under. And you will drown with them!

As for the false prophets, many of them have high positions in the counterfeit church! Some of them even have the power to deceive their congregations by performing miracles, casting out demons, and claiming to prophesy in the name of Christ (Matthew 7:22, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, 2 Timothy 3:13). The Apostle Paul wrote about this when he said, "**Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth – men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected**" (2 Timothy 3:8 NIV). Jannes and Jambres were the magicians in Pharaoh's court who attempted to counterfeit the miracles that God performed through Moses (Exodus 7:10-12)! I have seen some of these modern phonies on television. They are eloquent speakers. But so was Adolph Hitler, and many other demon possessed despots in history! They have big churches filled with congregations eager to accept their distorted doctrines (2 Timothy 4:3-4). These men receive their power through demons (1 Tim. 4:1-2)! I've seen people in their congregations being "slain in the spirit." It is a term the church uses to describe a situation where the Power of God is so strong upon someone that they fall backwards. This happened to the soldiers who came

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to arrest Jesus (John 18:6). But in the case of these phonies, it is **not** done under the Power of God! One of the problems in the church today is that it focuses too much on the gifts of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 12:8-10) and not enough on the Giver. Jesus didn't say, "You will know them by their gifts." Or "You will know them by their miracles." He said, "*Ye shall know them by their fruits...*" (Matthew 7:16 KJV)! How can people, who claim to be Born Again (John 3:3), be so easily deceived (2 Corinthians 11:2-4)? Satan claims that it is "Christian."

An example of this is "Christian Psychology." It's an oxymoron! Psychology has nothing to do with salvation. It is based on human wisdom and Greek philosophies that go back as far as Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates. When the Apostle Paul preached the Gospel to the people who lived in Corinth, Greece, they already knew about these ancient teachings. But they were still living in sin and demonic oppression! Some of them were even temple prostitutes (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)! The wisdom of their earthly "wise men" could not save them. Only Christ could do that! That's why Paul continually stressed to them, "*...your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*" (1 Corinthians 2:5 KJV. Also, see 1 Corinthians 2:1-3)! Paul loved them enough to tell them the truth! Jesus Christ was all they needed to battle the deceptive forces of darkness! As long as they clung to that Holy Rock of Calvary, God would do the rest. He would fight their battles for them (see Exodus 14:14 and 2 Chronicles 20:15) and outsmart their enemies every time. He would remove their worries and fears (1 John 4:18), leading them by the hand as a loving Father (Hebrews 8:9 & Mark 8:23-25). However, becoming Born Again (John 3:3) does not mean that you are not going to have any more problems. Jesus said, "*I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33 NIV).

What does it mean to be an overcomer (1 John 4:4)? In the early years of our marriage, I attended a crusade that was held by a well-known evangelist. I was with a young couple who went to the same church we did. However, the church had begun to backslide so much that it was no longer interested in bringing "new babes in Christ" (1 Peter 2:2) into the world. Yet newborn babies and pregnant women were elevated to a level of idolatry (Matthew 10:37)! The more I read my Bible and sought the Lord, the more angry the church would become at me! However, God calls those who have been cast aside and devalued by society (1 Corinthians 1:26-29) when they finally come to realize that Christ has not abandoned them. He has been waiting for them to stop looking elsewhere and turn to Him! I was thrilled about the crusade! I had just lost the only baby I have ever conceived, but had grown closer to Christ through the experience. However, all the way there, the driver's wife kept gloating about her pregnancy. I'll call her Jill, but I don't remember her real name. Soon after our arrival, the music began. People were praising the Lord all over the coliseum, including Jill. Her arms were raised and she was worshiping Jesus. The love of Christ bubbled up from within me and I was praising the Lord enthusiastically. Suddenly, Jill turned to me and said in the most patronizing tone, "I'm praying for you Anne, that you will be able to have a baby too." When she said that, it became such a distraction that it ruined my joy. After that a baby started crying several rows behind us and it drowned out everything the minister was saying. It remained that way throughout the sermon!

Several weeks later, we were invited to my mother's house for dinner. My brother was going to be there with his wife and new baby.

I bought the baby a little gift and we headed over there. As we did, the Lord said to me, "You have a peace and joy within you that they will never know. They are happy because they have their new baby. But your joy does not come from anything this carnal world offers. It comes from Me!" This all took place twenty years ago, but that joy is still with me today! As for Jill, I later heard that she had miscarried her baby and was having trouble conceiving again. It's nice to have the good things of this world (Matthew 6:31-33). However, the wisdom that comes through suffering and rejection is of greater value than gold refined in the fire (1 Peter 1:3-9 & Revelation 3:18). So do not be discouraged by the backsliden state of those around you. Pray for them! Keep your eyes on Christ! And resist the temptation to sin (Ephesians 4:26 thru 5:10, 1 Peter 3:11-12)! It may seem for a time that those who live carnal lives are getting more blessings than you. But their time of accountability will come (Psalm 37 and 1 Corinthians 4:5)! Jesus said, "*...No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for Me... will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (...and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life...*" (Mark 10:29-31 NIV). Christ Himself left His mother's home and His siblings and became Shepherd (John 10:11) to a group of fishermen (see Matthew 4:19-20) and a tax collector (Mark 2:14-15). His natural family didn't understand Him at all. They thought He was crazy and wanted to take Him away with them (Mark 3:21 in NIV). Jesus responded by saying, "*... 'Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?' Pointing to His disciples, He said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers. For whoever does the will of My Father in Heaven is My brother and sister and mother'*" (Matthew 12:48-50 NIV).



Jesus disregarded the lack of faith of His relatives and kept His eyes squarely on the goal set before Him. As a result, between the time of His death and His resurrection, "*...Mary the mother of Jesus, and... His brothers*" (Acts 1:14 NIV) finally accepted Jesus Christ for whom He really is, was, and forever will be (see Revelation 1:8), the Word of God made flesh, "*...the only begotten of the Father*" (John 1:14 KJV), and our only salvation (Hebrews 2:3)!

In all the writings of the Apostle Paul, he makes no reference to his original family. It seems that despite all he suffered (see 2 Corinthians 11:23-29), he was abandoned by them. Even many in the church turned against him. In the end, He was left with few friends (2 Timothy 4:9-15). So what about the promises of Jesus to give us a hundred fold gain on the things we lost? The "Prosperity Gospel" folk use this verse (see Mark 10:29-31) to encourage greed and a love of worldly pleasure. Yet at the end of Paul's life his faith was greatly put to the test and, like Jesus, he was forsaken (2 Timothy 4:7-18) by those who "*...loved this present world...*" (2 Timothy 4:10 KJV). They were the forerunners of the lukewarm church of today! Most of those who did remain faithful to Christ were facing their own persecution at that time. Many suffered in their death far worse than Paul, who was beheaded in Rome. But I can imagine their ecstasy when they had their reunion in Heaven! You see, God had given Paul a new family, a new mother, and brothers and sisters who loved the Lord (Romans 16:13-16 and Acts 20:16-38). And Paul received gold that was of far greater value than anything this world has to offer (Proverbs 8:10-11, 1 Peter 1:7, & Revelation 3:17-19). He lost his original home, but was welcomed into the homes of many whose houses became churches of God (see Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, & Colossians 4:15). Paul remained faithful unto the end! For he knew what it means to be a true "King's Kid." And through his humility, obedience, and faith in Christ, he now wears a robe and a crown (James 1:12 and 2 Timothy 4:8)!