



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

February 2020

FROM US TO YOU

In this month’s issue we want to focus on the importance of staying faithful to Christ. With all the pressures of life these days, having the peace and purpose of God in your life is the only way to survive the devil’s attacks. That’s because Satan is extremely angry at this current time because he knows that Jesus will be coming back very soon (Revelation 19:11-16) to reclaim the earth and cast the devil and his helpers into Hell (Revelation 20:1-3, 20:10-15). Everything is progressing right on schedule, as prophecy said it would. So Satan “...is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short” (Revelation 12:12 NIV). This world has been ruled by Satan since Adam sinned against God in the Garden of Eden. He is at the present time “...the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Ephesians 2:2 NIV). You can’t see him because he exists in another dimension much faster than our own. However, God’s guardian angels also exist in that realm and often protect those who love the Lord from the devil’s attacks (Psalm 91:11-12). However, there are other times that our faith will be tested (Proverbs 17:3), so don’t be discouraged.

Remember what Simon Peter said to the persecuted Christians in his day. He reminded them of the glory that awaited them in Heaven. Then he added, “in this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 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**” (1 Peter 1:6-7 NIV). Now compare that to the message that Jesus is giving to His lukewarm, latter day Laodicean church these days.

“You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from **Me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent**” (Revelation 3:17-19 NIV). Things may be going well for you at the moment, but God wants you to love Him enough to remain true to Him in the bad times as well as the good times. So you will be tested at some point in your life, perhaps sooner than you think.

Gold starts out as a rock that is clinging to all the ore around it. The ore is worthless, and symbolizes this world and its pleasures and temptations, which will never last (see Matthew 4:1-10 and 1 John 2:15-17). It is the gold that is valuable, but not while it still clings to that worthless ore. The refiner has to turn up the heat to a very high temperature in order to separate that ore from the gold. Then, when the pure gold is melted by the heat, it is put into a mold. When it is cooled and hardened, then it is ready to be made into something expensive. That’s what Jesus was speaking about in His message to today’s privileged church in the western world. In many nations today, Christians are suffering horrendous misery for their faith. We wrote



about that in our Spring 2017 “From Us To You” section of our newsletter. So don’t become complacent in your faith! Things can change very fast in this world, but God doesn’t! Jesus said, “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 22:12-13 NIV).

That’s why it is so important that you stay close to Jesus. God is bigger and stronger than any demon or even the devil himself. Do not ever make the mistake of taking the Lord for granted. Just going to church does not make you a Christian (Luke 6:46). Repentance, submission, and daily living for Him does! Take the Lord with you, in your heart, when you go to church. God has said, “You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!” (Acts 7:51 NIV). Cleaving close to Christ makes all the difference. God is just one prayer away. Unless you have tried it, you don’t know how wonderful it is to lay

all your stress and confusion before the Lord. People try everything else. That’s why there is so much addiction to alcohol and antidepressants. No shower in the world can wash away the sin in your life. Only Christ can do that (John 14:6)! But God loves you! He wants so much to be the answer to your needs. He can put things right in your life. Just come to Him in sincerity and contrition. Whatever you think the solution is, He may have a totally different way of solving the problem.

People don’t seem to realize how easy it is to become complacent in our relationship with Christ! But just as gravity keeps us earthbound,

worldly temptations seem to have a similar pull on us to keep our minds on the earthly things. Jesus warned us that “...the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful” (Mark 4:19 NIV). Live by faith and allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in your decisions and direction. That gives you an advantage worldly folk don’t have. God knows the secrets of human hearts, their real motives and plans, and how we can avoid the pitfalls when, “We live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7 NIV). Your faith will be tested. “The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart” (Proverbs 17:3 NIV). In the early years of our marriage we took a lot of home videos. It was nice to look back and see how far God has brought us, the things we did and said then that we wouldn’t do now! We recently met some friends that we knew almost 40 years ago. We noticed how far God has brought them as well.

This month we have permission to share with you a [letter we received recently from a former prison inmate](#) and how much she was helped by our ministry. Your donations make such a difference in human lives. We will also gladly accept donations of inexpensive paperback Bibles as our supply is running low.

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

Staying Faithful

By Anne Kaestner

When Jesus was on earth He had lots of followers. They saw Him as a source through which they could attain the things that they wanted, such as healing from a sickness (Matthew 12:15), or freedom for a loved one who was demon possessed (see Matthew 17:18). Like most people today, the folks in those days were fascinated by miracles (John 2:11), and Jesus became to them a type of celebrity. They liked hearing His parables, and would listen for hours as He taught them. For the most part, they saw what they wanted to see in Him. Some saw Christ as a political leader who would eventually free them from Roman tyranny (John 12:13). Others saw Him as entertainment, the way people would visit a magician (Matthew 12:38-39). At times the crowd stayed with Him for days (Matthew 15:31-32), not worrying about what to eat, and the Lord fed thousands of them miraculously with just a few loaves and fishes (Mark 6:41-44).

However, there came a day when *“Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me.’”* (John 6:53-57 NIV). What was Jesus really saying? Was He talking about cannibalism? Of course not! The Lord was speaking in spiritual terminology (Matthew 26:26-29).

Jesus was telling His followers that it was not enough for them to just tag along behind Him. They had to do far more than that. He had to become their total sustenance! They had to depend on Him to guide them by faith (Romans 3:22). He had to be their light in a dark place (2 Corinthians 4:6), their strength when they were weak (1 Timothy 1:12 and 1 Peter 4:11), their compass when they were lost (Psalm 23:1-3), their bread when they were hungry (see John 6:35), and their living water, from which they would never thirst again (John 4:14). So what was the response of the crowd? *“From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him”* (John 6:66 NIV). These were people who had stayed with Him for all the blessings He had to offer them. They were there for the loaves and the fishes (John 6:5-13). But now came the day of reckoning! A manufacturer may give out free samples of his product in order to get people to try it. Most people are willing to take something good that is free. But the manufacturer can't go on forever handing out freebies or he'd go out of business. The whole idea of them is to make the public aware of what he has to offer so that some of them will buy the product. Yes, Jesus had healed the sick and cast out demons, and performed many miracles. But He didn't come into this world for that purpose. He became flesh for us (John 1:1-14) for only one reason, to die in our place (John 3:16)!

Christians today speak of God as if He was Santa Clause! Everything has been twisted around, by that great twister, Satan, so that believers no longer concern themselves with **finding the will of God**, but in looking for ways to get God to do **their will!** Some churches have big signs outside saying “come expect a miracle,” as if God is going to perform a magic act like a magician pulls a rabbit out of a hat! In some cases, the pastors become celebrities, and gain huge congregations. But the Holy Spirit isn't even there! It is the pastor who get the glory. All Jesus becomes is a means through which to become

rich (1 Timothy 6:9-10) and powerful (Acts 20:30). The Lord knew that this would happen and warned His disciples against that type of behavior. He said, *“...Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:43-45 NIV).

Jesus told us that living for Him isn't going to be easy (Matthew 5:11-12), because when we accept Him as our Lord and Savior, we are no longer a part of this world system (John 17:11-15). Instead, we become a part of the Kingdom of God (John 14:1-3 and Matthew 13:49-50). However, a new believer doesn't become perfect right away! It is a long, slow process that the Holy Spirit brings the person through before they can truly be useful to the Lord. That's because, until God can get the world out of a person (John 17:6, Titus 2:12), He is unable to totally fill the believer full of His Spirit! And unless we are filled with His Spirit, we are unable to produce good fruit for the Lord. The more virtuous the fruit, the more Christ is glorified in the life of the individual. This is reason enough to acquire spiritual fruit, but there's even a better reason. It is because without fruit to our credit, Jesus has promised to disown us! (See Luke 6:43-49 and John 15:2.)

I am not saying that we get into Heaven as a result of works.

None of us could ever buy our own salvation in a million lifetimes! The cost is far too high. Nor do I mean to imply that anything needs to be added to the enormous price that Jesus paid for us on Calvary. However, not everyone who calls himself a Christian is going to end up in Heaven (see Matthew 7:21). Not everyone who has gone through the Born Again experience will end up in Heaven! That's because it's not what you do at the **beginning** of your walk with God that decides your eternal destination. It is the condition of your heart at the **end** of

your life that determines where you will spend eternity.

Over and over again Christ and His apostles stressed the importance of remaining faithful to God all the way **to the end** of our lives here on earth (Matthew 24:13 and Revelation 2:26)! When we come to the Lord in repentance (Luke 5:32) and accept Him as our Savior and Master, we become a part of His spiritual church, which is to become the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:31-32, Revelation 21:2). So our commitment to God is like the traditional marriage vow where a husband and wife pledge to remain faithful to one another “till death do us part.” Jesus doesn't have any trouble keeping His end of the agreement. But will His bride stay faithful to Him (2 Cor. 11:2)?

In biblical times a new bride was expected to be a virgin. In fact, she had better be! For if she was not found to be pure and undefiled, she would be taken to the entranceway of her father's house and stoned to death! (See Deuteronomy 22:20-21.) This was the law of God! Christians, the God that we serve is just and righteous, but He is also Holy, Holy, Holy! Therefore, even the smallest bit of sin in our lives would be enough to damn us to Hell forever. That's why it's hard even for the righteous to be saved (1 Peter 4:18). So how then can we possibly live above sin? Jesus said, *“...With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible”* (Matthew 19:26 NIV). The world is full of people who claim to be Christians, but the majority of them are not in total agreement with the teachings of Christ, and don't even read their Bibles regularly (Luke 6:46).

However, as Christians, the closer we draw toward Christ, the



further we will be from the world. That's because this world is run by Satan, "...the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2 KJV). His kingdom does not know light, because there is no light in it (John 3:19-21)! And everyone born into this realm resides in spiritual darkness unless they come in contact with the Light (John 8:12)! However, the very Light that illuminates the hearts and minds of those who come to Christ, is by its very nature, a direct attack on Satan's realm of darkness! For light destroys darkness! So Satan's going to fight back hard! That's why those who truly love and serve Christ are often persecuted by the world. *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us"* (2 Corinthians 4:6-7 KJV).

Here's where we go back to the theme of fruit again. Paul is telling the Corinthian church that we are "earthen vessels" to God! *"For He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust"* (Psalms 103:14 NIV. Also, see Genesis 2:7). Therefore, unless we continually renew our relationship with Him, and grow closer to Him on a daily basis, we will not be nourished by Him. As Isaiah put it, *"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins"* (Isaiah 64:6-7 NIV).

Jesus told His disciples, *"I am the true Vine, and My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful"* (John 15:1-2 NIV). Now, what happens to branches that become separated from the vine? They will no longer be capable of producing good fruit. And, just as grapes are nourished by the vine, our total spiritual sustenance must come thru the blood of Christ (John 15:1-8), or God will be incapable of growing any fruit in us. That is the only way for us to reflect the fruit of His Spirit, which *"...is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..."* (Galatians 5:22-23).

The way that we can be led by the Holy Spirit is to live by faith in God through Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul told us that unless we are living our life as a new creation, the new man or new woman in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17), we cannot bear good fruit for God. Nevertheless, in order to be a new creation in Christ it takes more than lip service (Matthew 15:8-9), more than simply believing in the existence of God (James 2:19), more than good works (Ephesians 2:8-9), and more than an initial repentance (Luke 6:46). *"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires"* (Galatians 5:24 NIV). You simply cannot please God unless the old you has ceased to exist, unless you are a new creation in Christ! How much of the fruit of God's Spirit is actually evident in the church today? We have seen very little of it!

The reason for this is that the church has not been getting its nourishment from Christ! It turns to other means of achieving its goals, such as politics, good works, and social programs. But all they can do, at best, is to treat the symptoms of decay in our society. They cannot get rid of the disease itself because the disease that causes all these other troubles is sin! And sin is not destroyed through politics or social endeavors. All they are doing is putting a band aid on a cancer! Unless you get to the root cause of the trouble, the disease will not only continue, but spread! Moreover, spiritual cancer is not something that you can negotiate with, or cajole, or sooth into submission.

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Cancer is a killer, and the only way to destroy it is to dig it out!

When a doctor digs out cancer in a body, the patient will shed some blood. If all of your blood is shed, you will die, because life is in the blood (see Genesis 9:4). That life originated with God. He breathed it into the body of the first person ever created, Adam (Genesis 2:7). And since *"...God is a consuming fire"* (Hebrews 12:29 NIV), that life became an eternal flame that lives on, even after the human body is destroyed. Therefore, Adam became our original flame that began all subsequent human life. That life we received is present in our blood. However, since Adam sinned against God he, in effect, poisoned the blood that would be passed on from generation to generation. Which is why we need a spiritual blood transplant if we ever expect to be able to live for God! However, the only blood that is pure enough to destroy the disease of sin is found in Christ!

The first Adam doomed all of us spiritually through our first birth, in which we were born into sin. However, the last Adam, Jesus Christ, has made it possible for us to be free from the power of sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:45). Yet we are still living in the devil's domain (Ephesians 2:1-3). So we are continually being re-contaminated with sin, even after we come to God in repentance, through Christ, His Son. Therefore, the only way that we can survive in the filthy, sinful environment of this world is to be continually re-cleansed through the precious blood of our Savior, Jesus (1 John 1:7). This is what Jesus was talking about when He told us to drink His blood and eat His flesh. It means that we must live by faith! We must depend on Him for everything in life! It means we spiritually and unceasingly

crucify that old nature that perpetually tries to resurface in our hearts and lives. And the way we crucify the sinful fleshly nature is to live by faith. If you live daily for Christ, His Spirit will live in you! *"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive"* (1 Corinthians 15:22 NIV).

Jesus said, *"watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them..."* (Matthew 7:15-16 NIV). *"A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire"* (Matthew 7:18-19 NIV).

When Adam chose to obey his wife rather than God he poisoned the bloodline for all the rest of us. When the Lord died on Calvary, *"...one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water"* (John 19:34 NIV). He is the fountain of God that gives us life, and nourishes us as a vine nourishes its branches (John 15:4-5). However, God has said, *"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken Me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water"* (Jeremiah 2:13 NIV).

Too many people rely on "hirelings" to teach them about Christianity. Jesus said, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep"* (John 10:11-13 NIV). As the Apostle Paul told the leaders of the church he started in 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. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears"* (Acts 20:29-31 NIV).

I see many books by religious leaders in book stores. And I know that many of them fall into the "wolf" or **(Continued On Page 4)**

“hireling” category. But they are rich and popular because they flatter their congregation and tell them what they want to hear. As Paul prophesied to Timothy, “...the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (2 Timothy 4:3-4 NIV). The very people who may look so godly to you may be in the group Jesus was talking about when He said, “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:22-23 NIV).

That’s why it’s not enough to make a one-time repentance to God, accept His salvation, and return to the same sinful past from which we were purified. We must be continually cleansed from the filth of this world system (1 John 2:15-18). For unless we continue to receive our nourishment from Christ, just as branches receive their nourishment through the vine, we will not produce good fruit for God. The late Tammy Faye Bakker, one of the televangelists of the PTL show, once wrote a book entitled, “I Gotta Be Me.” Christians, you cannot remain the same, if you want to get to Heaven. It’s not about you. It’s about the Holy Spirit living in you! “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**” (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV). You cannot remain the same as you were.

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:1-5 NIV). As Paul put it, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20 NIV).

Paul wasn’t physically crucified. He was **spiritually** crucified with Christ. That means that he wasn’t the same person anymore. His whole attitude and way of life had changed. We are to allow the Holy Spirit to live in us and control our thoughts and actions. As the sun projects its light onto the earth, we are to project the Son of God into the darkness of this sinful world! That’s why Jesus told His disciples, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16 NIV). Unless we produce good fruit we will surely perish (John 15:1-8)! We cannot rely on human endeavors to make us acceptable to God. For it’s not what a person **does** that makes him or her a sinner. Actions are the **fruit** that stems from the human heart. It is the **heart** that becomes the resting place of iniquity (see Matthew 15:19-2). That is why our hearts need to be changed. We cannot grow good fruit for God on our own. Only He can grow the fruit that results in righteousness.

Our Creator tells us plainly, “**the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the **fruit** of his doings**” (Jeremiah 17:9-10 KJV). That is why we can’t get into Heaven as a result of our own good works. Jesus said, “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matthew 7:18-19 NIV). If the tree is bad, the fruit that comes from the tree will also be bad! And obviously, good fruit isn’t going to result from a tree that is deceitful and desperately wicked! That is what God was trying to tell Cain when He refused his sacrifice (see Genesis 4:1-12). Many religious people today want to follow in the path of Cain. But Cain was not walking the “straight and narrow” (Matthew 7:13-14). He thought he could save himself, but he couldn’t, because he wouldn’t listen to God. He preferred to do things his own way, and would not acquiesce to the will of God in his life! “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12 NIV).

Many don’t understand Cain’s sin. They think, “Cain was a farmer who grew vegetables. He **worked** hard in the fields to grow them. And he brought the best he could to God. What more could he do? That was what he had to offer.” The key word here is “worked.” Cain was hoping to please God by his hard work, instead of his obedience (1 Samuel 15:22). He could have traded some of his vegetables for one of Abel’s lambs. Vegetables were not what the Lord wanted. Only the sacrifice of pure, undefiled, innocent blood would suffice! It would be symbolic of the blood of Christ. Even the blood of an innocent little lamb would not really pay the price for Abel’s sin. All it could do was push it back a little. Only the blood of Jesus was valuable enough to pay the enormous debt we owe to God! “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time” (1 Timothy 2:5-6 NIV).



Cain was, in effect, hoping to please God, thinking he was paying for his own sin. The problem is people don’t realize just how bad their sins

are to God. They compare their sin to other people. Their thinking is, “It’s not so bad that he sleeps in the gutter, because that other guy lives in the cesspool.” God is holy! In Old Testament days, the sins of mankind had not been paid for because Jesus had not died on the cross yet. The high priest would enter into the holy of holies to offer God the sacrifice. “But only... once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance” (Hebrews 9:7 NIV). If there was any sin in his life the Holy Spirit would kill him right away. For fire kills anything that cannot withstand the flame. Only the blood of Christ can make us pure enough before God to cover our sins and make us acceptable to God.

“For 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). Only through Christ can we withstand the flame! Fire not only destroys. It also purifies. God promised in these last days to shake everything that can be shaken. Therefore, through the blood of Christ, that which cannot be shaken is purified! But those who are purified by the blood of Jesus cannot be shaken. “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire’” (Hebrews 12:28-29 NIV).