



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

January 2019

FROM US TO YOU

The holidays are over and, for many, the after Christmas blahs are setting in. All the parties and excitement are over. The Christmas tree is coming down and the holiday bills are coming in. Then too, there's the extra weight you gained starting in Thanksgiving. That means adding a new diet to the list of nuisances. Since Summer, the days have been getting dark earlier. But the Light of Christ (John 8:12) is all you need to illuminate your path in the start of a new year. If you love and serve the Lord, His Spirit speaks to you and gives you direction on a daily basis. Yet there are lonely people who have all kinds of problems and fears. It's hard to be joyful when you have intense physical pain, the death of a loved one, or financial worries about the future. Do you have children who have gone astray? Is your family in disarray? The thing to avoid is self-pity. Remember Peter, who could walk on water when he kept his eyes on Jesus (see Matthew 14:25-32). As soon as he looked down, he began to sink.

Jesus said, *“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matthew 11:28-29 NIV). The secret of joy is simple. It is having the faith to put Christ first in your heart. The J is for Jesus. The O is for putting others second. And the Y is for putting yourself last. This may not sound too exciting on the surface. But it's like a smile, it has a way of being contagious. The bigger your smile, the more likely you are to get it returned to you. One scripture that helps those in worry and doubt is found in Psalms.

“Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong... Trust in the LORD and do good... Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him and He will do this... Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found” (Psalms 37:1-10 NIV).

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32 NIV). It's not God's will for His loved ones to worry and lose sleep. If you put Christ first you will automatically love others. You will even have compassion for your enemies. That's what Jesus meant when He said, *“...Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”* (Matthew 5:44 KJV). That runs contrary to normal human compulsion. However, if you could see those who died without Christ and are currently burning in the fires of Hell, you would understand (Matthew 13:49-50). With Christ in your heart you feel pity, not hate, for those who are heading in the wrong direction. When righteous servants of God pray for their enemies, life in this world doesn't get easier for them. It gets

much tougher! For God may remove the things that are getting in the way of their coming to Him. They may suffer financial losses, someone they love may die, or their reputation could be ruined.

Since we have a prison ministry, over the years we have heard from many inmates. Very often people have to reach rock bottom before coming to Christ. Sometimes they lose it all! But what a joy it is to hear them say, *“Thank God that I went to prison. It was there that I found Jesus.”* There was one former Hell's Angel named Tony Cruz. He came to Christ and what a difference it made in his life. In a letter we once got from him, he was concerned about a Christian prison guard who was picked on by other guards. They ridiculed him for reading his Bible while they would read pornographic magazines. When you've love Christ, you have His love for others. And you pray for those who hate you.

Don't worry, God knows what is happening. Just stay faithful to Him. *“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”* (Romans 12:17-21 NIV).



Remember the parable of the Sower. One of Satan's tactics to draw you away from Christ is to distract you with problems. *“The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful”* (Matthew 13:22 NIV). Take your problems to the Lord, with prayer and contrition, repenting of any sin in your life. And look to Christ for the answer. This reminds us of the woman who moved a shopping cart out of the way for Anne in the supermarket parking lot. Anne thanked her and the woman, a total stranger, asked for prayer for financial problems. Anne prayed with her, right there in the parking lot. Although we never met that woman again, God responds to those with faith.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about... what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear... Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?... “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’” (Matthew 6:25-31 NIV).

Have a wonderful year everyone, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*

Lessons for the New Believer

By Anne Kaestner

Are you a newly Born Again Christian (John 1:10-14, 3:3)? If so, you undoubtedly repented of your sins and asked God to forgive you of them (Matthew 4:17). Then you asked Christ to come into your heart and control your life (John 14:6, 1 Timothy 2:5-6). When you first came to Christ, you probably noticed an amazing peace you never knew before (Philippians 4:7). Suddenly, things you never thought about looked fresh and different to you, as if you were seeing them for the first time. I remember when I returned to the Lord in the nineteen seventies, after several years of backsliding. A day or two later, I was standing on the train platform near where I lived. And I looked toward the nursing home across the street. The snow around it looked so pretty. I had seen that scene many times before, but this time it was different. I felt a sense of awe and praised God for beauty I had never noticed before.

It feels so good to give your troubles to the Lord and trusting Him to take care of them (Matthew 6:25-34). But then you notice other people don't share your enthusiasm. They seem the way you used to be, grumpy, always worried, loving the carnal things that you used to love (Ephesians 2:1-5). *"They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you"* (1 Peter 4:4 NIV). You notice that the more you trust the Lord, the more He takes care of your problems for you. However, after awhile, the newness of your relationship with Christ seems to wear off. Things start happening, that didn't happen right after you first accepted the Lord. It was as if a rug you were standing on was pulled out from under you. *"Why is this happening?"* you ask God. The Lord's disciple, Simon Peter, gives you the answer. *"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed."*

If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you" (1 Peter 4:12-14 NIV).

In other words, it isn't you they are upset with. It's the presence of the Holy Spirit they feel influencing you. It makes them more aware of their own sin, by comparison. Nominal Christians like to compare themselves to the world (1 John 2:15-17). It makes them feel superior. They have a false sense of security about themselves (see Matthew 15:7-9) because their parents or grandparents were Christians (Matthew 3:8-9), they live a semi moral life (Galatians 3:10-13), and sometimes go to church (Act 7:48-51). But *"...If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"* (1 Peter 4:18 NIV). I think it was Rev. Billy Graham who said that many Christians of his time were the way the world was thirty years earlier.

So just being moral will not make you right with God. The Pharisees were extremely moral men. They complained that Jesus didn't keep all the ceremonial laws. For example, He healed people on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-14). Yet Jesus said to them, *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! ...You have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness... You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence"* (Matthew 23:23-25 NIV).

Most people think that going to a church will make them holy.

Yet it was the religious leaders in the days of Christ who hated Him the most (Matthew 26:3-4). And you will find that, as you get closer to Jesus, the people who dislike you the most will be churchgoing, nominal and backslidden Christians. However, *"...we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28 KJV). So God has a way of allowing annoying things to happen to His children so that good will come out of it. Something you want doesn't work out. But then it is replaced by something better. For example, a woman may pray that her boyfriend will propose marriage to her. Yet it doesn't happen, because God has someone better for her. And a year later she meets Mr. Right.

Another thing new Christians have to learn is that the Holy Spirit will mold you into the person He wants you to be, if you remain faithful to Him. *"The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart"* (Proverbs 17:3 NIV). A crucible is a refining pot that metals are placed in. The heat is turned up very high so that the metal will melt and become fluid enough to be placed in a mold. The meaning is that God wants to shape us into the person He wants us to become. He's not interested in the things you choose to give Him, or what you choose to do for Him. That was Cain's mistake. He wanted to do the choosing of what he would give God. Abel



obeyed the Lord, and followed that which He told him to do (Genesis 4:1-12). The point is that now that you have come to Him and are redeemed through Christ, God wants to control you and use you **His** way. The Bible says, *"Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker... Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'?"* (Isaiah 45:9 NIV).

In other words, God created you, and redeemed you. You belong to Him now. And He has specific plans for you. They may not be what you would have chosen

to do for Him. But if the Holy Spirit controls you, His way will be the better choice. *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"* (Ephesians 2:10 NIV). In fact, if God is not making it happen, it will never work out well. *"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).

In order to mold you into the person God wants you to be, the Lord will turn up the heat and it will hurt. You may lose friends, your family may turn against you, you may lose your job or suffer financial losses in some other way. But what good are riches if you die and go to Hell? (See Luke 12:20-31.) I'll give you a personal example of one way that the molding process works. When I was about eleven years old, my mother took my siblings and myself to England for four months. I used a vulgarity one day in gym class while talking to another girl. The girl I spoke to told other girls about it. And the next thing I knew a handful of them started taking turns running up and punching or kicking me. I was in tears, but it cured me of using foul language (Hebrews 12:5-11).

Anyone can live for Christ when everything is rosy in their life, and problems seem to melt away. Yet only a true Christian can live for Him when everything seems to go wrong! *"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all"* (Psalms 34:19 KJV). If this happens to you and you've been trying to live for Him, consider it a promotion. When I was a child my Dad gave

me a bicycle. But I didn't know how to ride it. I was afraid of falling. So, to start me out, he put training wheels on it. That made it much like a tricycle, but bigger. However, there came a time when I had to learn how to ride without the training wheels. And they came off. So if you're in the situation where the firm platform you are standing on gives way and you feel confused, God may have found you ready for some testing. So He is taking the spiritual training wheels off your life. What's happening to you may be new to you. But God allows testing in everyone He wants to use.

Jesus said that in order to please God, we have to produce good spiritual fruit for Him (John 15:1-8). And that's how you can tell the difference between a true Christian and a nominal one. God expects more from us than just lip service (Matthew 15:7-9). As Peter told the suffering Christians in his day, these troubles "...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).

Remember Job. God was so proud of him that He allowed poor Job to go through some horrible testing. "One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them" (Job 1:6 NIV). "Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.' 'Does Job fear God for nothing?' Satan replied. 'Have You not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land'" (Job 1:8-10 NIV). That's one important lesson to learn. God protects His children. The devil can't harm us in any way without God's permission. It was the same way with the Lord's disciple, Peter. Jesus told him, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32 NIV).

There are times when God allows the faith of His children to be tested. How else could we prove that we love the Lord because He is worthy and not just because of the blessings? And you will find that the more God wants to use you, the more you will go through some horrible testing. However, the testing has a dual purpose. It gives God glory, by showing that you love Him enough to suffer or die for Him (Acts 5:40-41). Secondly, it draws us closer to Christ, and teaches us more about the Lord. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4 NIV).

The Apostle Paul was used by God in a mighty way. He wrote a lot of the New Testament. Comparing himself to false teachers of his day, Paul said, "Are they servants of Christ? ...I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone

without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:23-28 NIV).

Since Satan managed to get control of this earthly system away from Adam, in the Garden of Eden, Satan became the ruler of this world (Matthew 4:8-10, John 12:31-32). For everything that God gave to Adam, fell under the control of the devil. Yet God fights on behalf of His children. Did you know that God set up his angels in a type of military system? For example, "...When Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, 'Are you for us or for our enemies?' 'Neither,' he replied, 'but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come...'" (Joshua 5:13-14 NIV). Joshua was talking to an angel, who looked like a human man, because he had a solid body. And angels, good or bad, are far stronger than humans. And although the fallen angels don't have solid bodies, they can enter into the human body of someone they can control (Matthew 12:43-45). It is called demonic possession. And they control much that influences society these days. That includes some in the media, higher education, government officials. That's why society has become so evil. And why we have to fight so much harder to live for Christ!

I once heard the host of a Christian television show talking about the late actor Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. He said that Zimbalist told him that

he had become a Christian. The host assumed he had repented of his sins and pledged to live for Christ. Then he saw the actor in a scene where he was in bed, unclothed, with a female actress. The host asked him how he, being a Christian, could play a part like that. Zimbalist, he said, replied, "I am an actor. That is part of my job." I won't mention the name of the television show because it lost its original anointing years ago. But the point is, that true repentance and commitment to Christ means **rejection** of your past. It means admitting that you were living a sinful life and you are asking God's forgiveness for it.

When Bill Sunday (1862-1935), a once famous baseball player, came to Christ, he totally rejected his past. Unlike many other professionals, he did not focus his ministry on his past laurels, then tack on a Christian label. He **repented** of his past life in

this world and chose to **live by faith** (see 2 Corinthians 5:7). When he quit baseball in 1891, he was at the **peak** of his career. But he gave it all up for Christ! That year Sunday had set a record of 90 bases stolen in 116 games. The Philadelphia Phillies offered him \$400 a month. Cincinnati offered him \$500 a month. Yet he took a "Secretary of Religious Department" job for the YMCA for \$83 a month. In 1894 the Pittsburgh Pirates offered him \$2,000 a month to return to baseball. Sunday took a job as an advance man for Evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman, making \$40 a week! When God calls someone to preach the Gospel, He tests them severely. Sunday passed the preliminary tests of faith and God eventually gave him a huge ministry.

So your faith will be tested! Satan wants to make you backslide and give you a false sense of security. There is a lying doctrine going around that teaches that once you come to Christ and ask for His forgiveness, anything you do after that is forgiven. It teaches that just doing the best you can will still get you to Heaven, even if you return to your past life. Jesus said, "I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Gardener. **He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful**" (John 15:1-2 NIV). How do you bear fruit for God? To do so, you need to be led by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:8-12, Acts 18:24 thru 19:6). Jesus was talking to **His own disciples** when He told them that He was the Vine and they (Continued On Page 4)



were the branches. He was telling them that if they didn't keep their commitment to Him, renouncing their past, they would be cut off and thrown into the fire (John 15:6). We must **remain** close to Christ and give Him fruit produced through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

When Satan manages to convince someone who repents of their sin and asks Christ's forgiveness, that they are now free to live as they like, and still get to Heaven, he achieves two goals. First, he draws the naïve believer into a false sense of security. And secondly, he makes a hypocrite out of them, setting up a bad example for others. So he makes Christ look bad! The danger is that if they remain in that state, and live as they did in their past (Ephesians 2:1-3), they will **not** be saved. *"It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to public disgrace"* (Hebrews 6:4-6 NIV. Also, see 2 Peter 2:20-22).

Yes, it's true that God said, "... *Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you*" (Hebrews 13:5 NIV). But Jesus also said, "...*Anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me*" (Matthew 10:38 NIV). There's a price to be paid in following Christ. Salvation is free, but the cost of maintenance is not. A person can inherit a house free and clear. But they still have to pay for the taxes, repairs, landscaping, insurance, etc. The more valuable the thing you receive, the more costly it is to maintain it. That's why Jesus implied that if you choose to make a commitment to Him, first consider the cost. Are you willing to pay the price, even if it costs you your life, as it has for thousands of Christians!

That's why He said, *"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish'"* (Luke 14:28-30 NIV). Remember too, that Jesus 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 because they were not led by the Holy Spirit. So Satan was able to deceive them. The devil can fake the gifts of God just as he did in the days of Moses. The Apostle Paul told us, that in these last days, that will be very prevalent. *"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).

Most Bible scholars believe that Jannes and Jambres were the magicians in Pharaoh's court, who tried to counterfeit the miracles God worked through Moses. *"The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness"* (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 NIV).

Satan has a whole army of demons waiting to tempt you into sin

and backsliding away from Christ. He has control of one third of God's former angels. Therefore, he has set up a chain of command under himself. God's angels watch over certain geographic regions. Notice how Jesus directed His messages in the book of Revelation *"To the angel of the church in Ephesus..."* (Revelation 2:1 NIV) or *"To the angel of the church in Thyatira..."* (Revelation 2:18 NIV). In like manner, Satan's chief demons have jurisdiction over certain areas he controls. They come up with schemes and strategies to manipulate sinful humans into doing Satan's will. That's what Paul meant when he wrote, *"...Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (Ephesians 6:12 NIV).

There is no fence sitting with God! If you truly love and serve Christ, you're going to make people angry. There is no getting around it. Jesus, the Apostles, and all the great prophets of God have always had their share of enemies. The blood of martyrs has blazed a crimson trail down the corridors of time (see Matthew 23:29-35). Therefore, if you've been trying to live in both worlds, and you want everyone to like you, it is a recipe for disaster! We, as the disciples of Christ, are certainly no better than He was (Matthew 10:23-25). In fact, we don't even come close! For He alone is the Word of God (John 1:1-14). He is the Creator, and we are the creation for which He was willing

to give His life! But it will do us no good unless we come to Him on His terms, not ours. Don't make the mistake of comparing yourself with other Christians, and feeling righteous by comparison. Many are not living as they should! Christ alone is our example (Romans 8:29)! After decades of blessings, Christians in the western culture, are about to have the rug pulled out from them. For Christ is going to refine His Laodicean church (Revelation 3:14-22).

Few humans have suffered for Christ as much as the Apostle Paul. Despite that, he still told the church, *"...Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose*

sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death" (Philippians 3:7-10 NIV). Living for Christ in this sinful world is not easy. However, only those who take their faith seriously, and remain true will receive the blessing.

Moreover, since Satan was insinuating that Job only loved God for His blessings, the Lord allowed poor Job to be tested severely. But in the end, Job passed all the testing. And he prayed for his unfaithful friends who were used by Satan to unwittingly attack Job. *"The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters. The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers. After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so he died, old and full of years"* (Job 42:12-17 NIV).

