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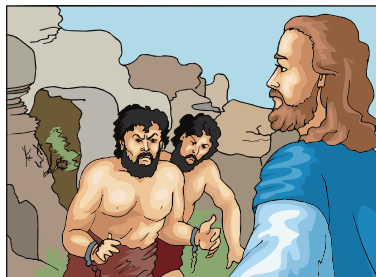
*"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* MARK 16:15

January 2024

## FROM US TO YOU

It's cold here in New York! All the holiday attractions are over, and we are starting a new year. Let's hope this one will be a lot better than the last one! We pray that America doesn't need to get involved in any more foreign wars or disasters. Let's also pray that our Lord will keep America safe. We, as a nation, have come a long way from the respect and devotion to God that the founders had for Christ in this "new world" so long ago. Gone is the righteousness and zeal our forbearers once had for the Lord. Their reverence and respect for God is what made America a great country. Satan is trying hard to destroy the United States! These days our national strength, the loyalty Christians have to Christ, is mocked and lampooned by those in power and influence. They will face the spiritual consequences of their lifestyle (Revelation 21:7-8) unless they come to their senses and repent. Nevertheless, our faith is as solid as the holy Rock we stand on (Matthew 7:24-25, 2 Samuel 22:2-3, 1 Corinthians 10:4). *"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. Will evildoers never learn—those who devour my people as men eat bread and who do not call on the LORD? There they are, overwhelmed with dread, for God is present in the company of the righteous. You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor, but the LORD is their refuge. Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores the fortunes of His people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!"* (Psalms 14:1-7 NIV).

Too many people think that they are basically "good" because they give money to charity and do some good works. Sounds like the man Jesus spoke about when He said, *"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"* (Luke 18:10-14 NIV). As God sees the pitiful shape of the human race He sees that, *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6 NIV). The "Him" that the scripture refers to is the Lord Jesus Christ. *"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). Those of us who know Christ, know that we didn't do anything to earn His love and salvation. We just repented of our sin and live by faith. *"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).

Sadly it is unfathomable to us that after the October 7 attack on Israel by the terrorist group, Hamas, many young Americans have fallen so far into the abyss of deception that they have been supporting demons! Fallen angels are called demons in the modern English Bibles. God destroyed their physical bodies (Ezekiel 28:18) after they mutinied against Him (Revelation 12:7-9). They were thrown out of Heaven to the Earth that we live on. And they are able to move into the bodies of any of those individuals who don't have the anointing of the Holy Spirit protection (John 14:26-27). It's called demonic possession (see Matthew 8:28, 12:23-25, and Mark 5:15). Deep hatred is one of the quickest ways of getting these demons in you. Not all demons are murderers. Jesus cast seven demons out of the body of Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9). Some of these demons tell fortunes (Acts 16:18-19) or do the devil's work in some other way (Mark 9:17-27). And there are political demons as well, such as those in Adolph Hitler and Saddam Hussein. But the level of hatred and the type of attack that was launched against Israel on October 7 is not the type common to mankind. A normal male, even one that is very angry, would not inflict the type of depraved evil where the bodies were so cruelly inflicted that there are no words to describe it. Only demons can be that vicious!

Experienced doctors have had trouble identifying the remains of the victims the torture was so severe! The victims were innocent individuals who just wanted to live their lives in peace and safety. Their ages were from infants to elderly men and women. However, the women and children seemed to get the worst of it. Satan has a special hatred for women since it was a woman who brought our Savior Jesus into this world. And our Redeemer, Jesus Christ was Jewish. So were most of the writers of our Bible, as were the apostles who brought the good news to mankind. Consequently, Satan has a vicious hatred for Jews. The Nazi's of World War 2 tried to exterminate them. Satan is again trying to destroy the only race that worshiped the one true God at a time when all other races worshiped idols. Therefore, they are especially loved by God. It is the Lord that gave the land of Israel to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Genesis 50:24). The Palestinians say they live in occupied land. That's not true. They were living in Palestine, their own land. They had their own government.

In an election held with the Palestinians in 2006, Hamas won 44% of the votes across the region, giving them a governing majority. The ultimate goal of Hamas has been the destruction of Israel. They don't want a piece of Israel. They don't want Israel to exist! Palestinians cheered when they heard about the October 7 holocaust. Before Christ comes back, two thirds of the world's Jews will be wiped out (see Zechariah 13:8). Those who remain will still be here when the Messiah, Jesus Christ returns!

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

# Overcoming Fear

By Anne Kaestner

Are you fearful? Do you lie awake at night worrying about the current condition of the nation and the world? If you're a true Christian, not just a nominal (Mark 7:6-8) or lukewarm (Revelation 3:15-19) one, but saved by grace (Ephesians 2:3-5) and washed in the blood of Christ (Romans 5:9), there's something you should know. Your fear is not coming from God. The Bible tells us "... *God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*" (2 Timothy 1:7 KJV). Fear comes from the devil, Satan. The Holy Spirit of God (also called the Holy Ghost in the King James Version) brings us peace, serenity, and inner joy. Jesus called the Holy Spirit "the comforter." Jesus said, "... *the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14:26-27 KJV). I know that many are thinking, "That's nice, but it is easier said than done." Granted, without the Holy Spirit in you, the words just sound like cheap platitudes. That's why I constantly urge Christians to seek after the Holy Spirit. You do that through prayer to God with a contrite heart (Psalm 51:17, 34:18) as you seek a closer walk with Christ.

The Apostle Paul put it this way, "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV). So how does the Holy Spirit give you that kind of serenity? It is through faith. Jesus frequently spoke about faith. He said, "... *I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you*" (Matthew 17:20 NIV). Naturally, that's if it's in God's will (John 15:7, James 4:3). Jesus often used metaphors to describe things. He was not talking about a physical mountain, just a problem the size of a mountain, one that seems unyielding, huge, and impossible. During these troubling times, most people do not depend on God in moments of crisis unless it is something life-threatening. They depend on drugs, alcohol, psychics, psychologists, anything but God. It's because they don't really know the Lord. Then, when their loved one gets deathly sick, they pray to God for help and nothing changes. That's because they have no personal relationship with God. Therefore, they have no faith in the Lord. He's not real to them. He's just the person that religious people talk to. They don't really know Him. Today's society is taught, through secular education, television, and movies, to rely just on themselves.

When someone gets desperately sick on your favorite hospital show, Dr. So and So suddenly tries some new procedure, and the patient gets well. Dr. So and So gets all the praises and the glory. He is the hero of the show. When a star ship falls into trouble on your favorite Sci-fi show, the captain comes up with a solution to the problem, and the whole ship is saved. The captain reigns victorious in the end. He has saved the ship. He is the hero. He gets all the praise and glory. Of course, it's all fiction, written specifically for a certain outcome. How different this is from the days of early settlers in the United States. They had no television or fast food restaurants to go to on the open prairie, and no supermarket. They had to rely

totally on what they called "providence." In other words, God. For food, if they were in a hurry, they had to kill and prepare an animal. If they were going to settle the land for enough time, they would plant vegetables to eat and trust God that they would come safely to harvest.

However, there was never any guarantee that they would find an animal for dinner. In wagon train days there was not even a guarantee that they would be able to cook it. The rain, if it came, could drown out any campfire they started. They had no electricity or batteries. They had to depend totally on God for their own survival. They were used to depending on the Lord for everyday problems. So they had the faith to trust Him in the big things, like when they were under attack. Old episodes of westerns that were popular in the 1960's had heroes who would aid the people's troubles in times of crisis. But, even the heroes, would pray for God's help before success would come. Even in the nineteen fifties and sixties society had more respect for God than people do today! That was the generation that had just come through World War 2, and their faith had been tested.

Did you ever wonder why, in biblical times, God mostly used people of working class to spread the Gospel? As Paul put it, "*He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and*

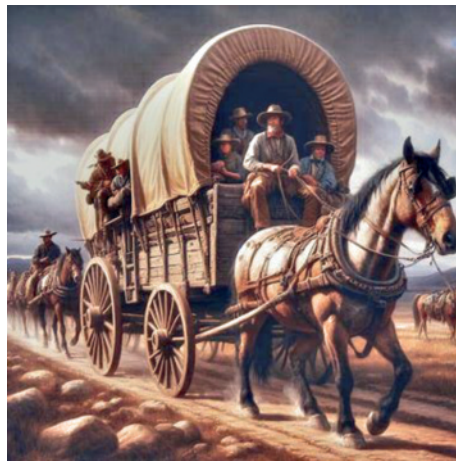
*the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him*"

(1 Corinthians 1:28-29 NIV). He chose ordinary people, not the highly educated hierarchy of that day. God chose the people that were not highly regarded by those in power. Peter and John were fishermen (Luke 5:2-3 & Mark 1:9). Matthew (also called Levi) was a tax collector (Matthew 9:9). King David started out as a shepherd boy (1 Samuel 17:28). Before He started His ministry, Jesus was only a carpenter. "*Coming to His hometown, He began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. 'Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?' they asked. 'Isn't this the carpenter's Son? Isn't His mother's name Mary, and aren't*

*His brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all His sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?' And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'Only in His hometown and in His own house is a prophet without honor.' And He did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith*" (Matthew 13:54-58 NIV).

It's true that Moses and the apostle Paul were both wealthy and highly educated and came from a position of power. But they both lost it all in order to serve the Lord. Paul had been trained as a pharisee, before he accepted Christ. Despite this, Paul never pined for what he had lost. Paul said, "... *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, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead*" (Philippians 3:7-11 NIV).

That's the point of this message, not to rely on human heroes or





mankind's technology! But to rely on God and put your faith in Him. Your government can fail you, education can fail you, new technology, machines, animals, and nature can fail you. However, there's a serenity and peaceful feeling knowing you can trust God no matter what happens. Mankind may puff itself up with education and prestige. Yet mankind can only go so far. Deep within the human heart we want to depend on something greater and more powerful than ourselves. God is our Maker. He designed us to depend on Him for our very existence, so that we can serve Him. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians, "*When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power*" (1 Corinthians 2:1-4 NIV).

The Power of the Holy Spirit is something that you have to experience to really understand. That's how you get freedom from fear. You rely on the Holy Spirit after you have learned that you can depend on Him. People have told me that they have prayed for help in a crisis, and it didn't work. However, God is not like a genie in a magic lamp. The Lord doesn't exist to serve you. You exist to serve Him! And He takes care of His children. So first, before you can expect anything from God, you have to **become** one of His children. It is a common, albeit erroneous, belief that we are all children of God. Adam and Eve, our original parents, were children of God (see Luke 3:38). But they disobeyed God and chose to put their faith in the serpent. However, the spirit of the devil, Satan, had entered into the body of the serpent (Revelation 12:9). Consequently, their sin separated them from God. They, therefore, became children of the devil. Likewise, their offspring also became subject to the devil as well. Christ paid back the debt we owe to God and, therefore, enables us to become God's children again.

However, the scripture says, "...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 1:12-13 NIV). That's what Jesus meant when "...He said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you **change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven**'" (Matthew 18:3-4 NIV). God does not want someone with a puffed up attitude, and a heart full of self-importance coming to Him. He expects humility, a contrite heart. Jesus told us the following to clarify His teaching. "*Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'*" *I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted*" (Luke 18:10-14 NIV).

Faith doesn't come easily. It is because it is human nature for people to want to control their own life and to make their own decisions based on their experiences, and the teaching they've received. True total faith means putting God in the driver's seat of our lives and letting Him do the driving and the navigation. And God doesn't

want us to be backseat drivers. When new believers have a problem and God tells them what to do, they will usually take the attitude of "Well, God said I better do this, and it sounds strange to me. But I'll give it a try and see if it works." After this has happened enough times, and turned out well, if they stay close to Christ, they will develop faith. If this happens to you when your life is threatened, the trust that you have developed in the Lord will relieve your anxiety, and you will feel a peace through the Holy Spirit.

Now trusting God for little things doesn't take as much faith. For example, if you fail your driver's test, you can take it again in the future. But when your life is threatened and there is great danger that you could die some horrible death, that takes much greater faith. The early church faced that awful prospect. It was against the law to be a Christian. Caesar was to be thought of as their supreme leader. It was the law of the land. No one was to be thought of as higher than him. Those who lived as Christians put Christ first and obeyed **His** laws. So, over the years, thousands were crucified, including some of the disciples, such as Matthew and Peter. And, speaking of Peter, he had told Jesus, when the Lord was about to be arrested, "... 'Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will. I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown Me three times.' But Peter declared, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.' And all the other disciples said the same" (Matthew 26:33-35 NIV). However, after Jesus was arrested,



Peter was a mixture of emotions. He loved Jesus with all his heart, and followed behind where they took Him, at a safe distance. However, he was afraid that the Romans or Jews, would identify him as a disciple of Christ. He didn't want to be arrested as well. So Peter had denied knowing Jesus twice. Then, "*after a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, 'Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away.'*" *Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, 'I don't know the man!'*" *Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: 'Before the rooster crows, you will disown Me three times.'*" *And he went outside and wept bitterly*" (Matthew

26:73-75 NIV).

Peter was a young man, and he had developed a measure of faith in Christ. However, Christ, his source of faith, was in a weak position because He was under arrest. Peter had been ready to fight for Jesus if Jesus had fought back physically. When the men came to arrest Jesus, "...Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me?'" (John 18:10-11 NIV). And Jesus healed the servant's ear (Luke 22:50-51). This must have been very confusing for Peter and all of the Lord's disciples. They knew that Jesus had told them that He would send them a comforter, the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit would not come upon them until Jesus had returned to Heaven (John 16:7). However, they were not sure what Jesus had meant by the comforter (or "counselor" in the NIV). They were not spiritual. Their world had been based on carnal things. And that which is carnal has to do with human senses, which are: sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. When Jesus was with them, they could see and hear Him. He did all His miracles through the Holy Spirit. Although Jesus was God the Son, He had a human body just like they did. He could eat with them and smell the wine they drank. They could touch Him. All the Lord's miracles were performed through Him. But now He was going away. "Where would their source of strength be now?" **(Continued on Page 4)**

## Overcoming Fear (Continued From Page 3)

they wondered. Who could they turn to now that Jesus was gone? Sure, He said He would come back to them, but how? And when? The Lord's disciples remained together in their love for Jesus.

All of them, except Judas, were reborn (John 3:3) children of God. They were brothers in Christ. Their relationship with Jesus was the adhesive that kept them together. And the women who loved Jesus remained as part of the group. Meanwhile, Jesus was arrested, beaten, mocked, flogged, and crucified. Then, on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. His tomb was empty, His burial clothes were folded up neatly (John 20:6-8). However, the body of Jesus was not there. He had risen. He had even defeated His own death! Hallelujah! Jesus appeared to His disciples several times (John 20:5-30) after His resurrection, teaching them spiritual truths. Jesus was with His flock (John 10:16) once again but only for a short time. Even so, His resurrection had greatly increased their faith. If their master could even defeat death, what was there left to fear (Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8-11)?

*"They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers"* (Acts 1:14 NIV). There were 120 of them. Then, *"when the day of Pentecost came, 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). The gift Jesus had told them about had finally arrived! They no longer felt alone. Jesus was gone. However, His Holy Spirit had arrived, their "comforter" as Jesus had called Him. And, because He lived in the hearts of each of them, no matter where they went, the Holy Spirit went with them. There was an excitement in them, a new Power within them! They still had vulnerable human bodies, susceptible to death. But now even death was not so frightening. Jesus had defeated death, and they felt that death would only bring them closer to Christ, their Lord (see John 14:2-4)!

The Apostles began preaching the Gospel with a new-found enthusiasm! The religious leaders did not like that. *"...They made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,' he said. 'Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.' Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than men!'"* (Acts 5:27-29 NIV). And Peter went on to continue to praise Jesus. Their entire attitude had changed. *"When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while"* (Acts 5:33-34 NIV). He told the crowd, *"... 'Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.' His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name"* (Acts 5:38-41 NIV).

What a difference of attitude! They continued to promote the Gospel. *"Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought*

*the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed. Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail"* (Acts 5:14-18 NIV). Their fear was gone, and the joy of spreading the Gospel kept them active. *"But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 'Go, stand in the temple courts,' he said, 'and tell the people the full message of this new life'"* (Acts 5:19-20 NIV).

*"It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him"* (Acts 12:1-5 NIV). God sent an angel to bring Peter out of prison. *"The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. 'Quick, get up!' he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists"* (Acts 12:6-7 NIV). The same Peter, who had been so terrified of being recognized when Jesus was arrested, was at such peace now that he was relaxed enough to fall asleep!

The hardest part of being a true Christian is to learn to trust God. It takes time and experience. I remember when a prison inmate, who had murdered a young Christian woman, wrote to me saying he was getting out of prison. He had previously threatened to kill me. He had even sent me a colorful drawing of the head of the woman he had decapitated. There were bloody holes there where her eyes had been poked out. That was more than three decades ago, when we first started this ministry. I

was in a state of panic! I found out that he wasn't getting out of prison, just getting a new trial. The district attorney's office in New York State found out that I had kept a file with the many letters he had sent me, and they wanted to see it. Then the prosecutor wanted me to appear on the witness stand to talk about the letters. I began thinking about all the times the Lord had worked miracles in my life and my husband's, to keep us alive when we were in extreme danger. So my faith was greater than my fear. All the way upstate in the plane I was praying that somehow all would go well. A policeman picked me up at the airport and drove me to the DA's office. Then, when we got there, they had told him that the trial was over, and the defendant admitted to the murder. I didn't have to become a witness at all! I took a leap of faith, trusted God, and felt so good about it! The experience made me stronger spiritually. Since that time, I don't have the fear I used to have of weird spiritual happenings.

Over the last year or so I have gotten into the habit of listening to Christian music while I am getting ready for bed. Lately the songs have been about the joys of Heaven and how much we have to look forward to when we love Christ. So even death doesn't seem such a scary thing. Of course, you should know never to commit suicide. That's a quick trip to Hell! However, when we stay true to Christ, and live by His Spirit (Galatians 5:25) and let Him guide us according to His will, the best is yet to come!

