



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

July 2021

FROM US TO YOU

Every good general has an advantage if he is able to know the strategy of his enemy. What method will he use to attack us? What weapons will he use? How loyal will his forces be to their leader? Where are they most vulnerable? In a conventional war the general will probably rely on spies, satellites, and cyberattacks to obtain this strategic information. However, we as Christians, do not fight a conventional war. Nevertheless, we are at war with a cunning and vicious enemy (Ephesians 6:12). Therefore, we must *"be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith..."* (1 Peter 5:8-9 NIV). So, as the apostle Paul told Timothy, each of you who love Jesus Christ should toughen yourselves for the fight and *"endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 2:3 NIV). But remember, *"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish [demonic] strongholds"* (2 Corinthians 10:4 NIV).

One of the devil's best strategies is try to turn God's own people against Him or weaken their faith. That's a problem with the church. Too many Christians believe that Christianity is like a big love boat. But in reality, it is more like a battleship. Now passenger ships are known for enjoyment, good food, relaxation, entertainment, and romance, like most people's idea of a love boat. That's why so many churchgoers have become lackadaisical, and *"...lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power..."* (2 Timothy 3:2-5 NIV). The Power of God is the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13). Such people therefore, *"...have shipwrecked their faith"* (1 Timothy 1:18-19 NIV).

Many of us have been through a lot in the last year; economic problems, Covid misery, financial troubles, and domestic crisis'. However, since all signs point to the closing out of Satan's rule of this world (Revelation 12:12) and the return of Christ (Revelation 19:11-21), we believe things will more likely get worse. You probably don't want to hear that. You want to hear good news. Most Christians want Jesus to come back right away and kick the devil out of this world and into Hell, where he belongs (Revelation 20:10). "Evil is so bad already" you may be thinking. "So why is God procrastinating?" Here is the reason. *"The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the*

elements will melt in the heat" (2 Peter 3:9-12 NIV).

In other words, some of you who consider yourselves Christians, are not living up to God's standards. So, the Lord is giving you time to repent and get your heart right with Him. Are there things in this world that you love more than you love Christ? What about your family? Are you worried that if you put Christ first, there won't be peace in your family? Jesus said, *"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household. Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me"* (Matthew 10:34-37 NIV). Yes, Jesus is the *"...Prince of Peace"* (Isaiah 9:6 NIV). But it's an inner peace that only comes from the Holy Spirit (John 14:27, Romans 8:6, Philippians 4:7) despite the circumstances of this world. And it's only available to those who have repented of their sin (Mark 2:17) and put Christ first in their heart. Remember that *"Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world... My kingdom is from another place'"* (John 18:36 NIV).



A teacher of the law came up to Jesus one day and said, *"... 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus replied, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.' Another disciple said to Him, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus told him, 'Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead'"* (Matt. 8:19-22 NIV). In other words, "Let your unsaved family bury him. Because they are spiritually dead like he is. Don't miss out on Heaven due to you family. Follow Me." Jesus also said, *"...anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives the one who sent Me"* (Matthew 10:38-40 NIV). Don't be like the Laodicean church (Revelation 3:14-22) and miss out on the Rapture (see 1 Corinthians 15:52-54 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), and possibly Heaven as well. Stay faithful to Christ. For, *"...in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him"* (2 Peter 3:13-14 NIV). Therefore, *"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever"* (1 John 2:15-17 NIV).

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

Remaining Faithful in Hard Times

By Anne Kaestner

One of my favorite Christian songs is “Because He Lives,” written by the Gaithers. It was one of the songs I chose for my wedding ceremony. And because Christ lives, those of us who love and serve Him, will live eternally also. Most people don’t understand what happens during the process of death. All they know is that the body that the person lived in has no life in it anymore. That’s the first death. However, your spirit that lived in your body, just moves to another place, Heaven or Hell. And Jesus said, most people don’t get to Heaven (Matthew 7:13-14). After the first death, if your name is not written in the book of life (Revelation 20:11-15), you face the second death. That’s the one you need to dread! It’s eternal separation from God, in Hell (Revelation 21:8). *“Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years”* (Revelation 20:6 NIV). People wonder why there is so much crime and evil in society. It is because people no longer fear God. Too many pastors and televangelists have been portraying the Lord, our Holy Creator, as if He were some big genie in the sky. People come away with the idea that God exists to serve us instead of the other way around (2 Kings 18:12, Psalm 36:1, Mark 9:33-35, Galatians 1:10). How foolish! For *“the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline”* (Proverbs 1:7 NIV. Also, see Psalms 111:10, Proverbs 1:27-30).

Like a loving human father, God is a friend to those who love Him. But we have to get our positions straight in our minds. God is our Lord. We serve Him. He does not serve us. It’s never His will to help us to achieve our goals. The only side God is on in a goal is His own. So, it’s important that we find out what His will is, by humbly asking Him, and getting on His side. That’s the winning strategy! And, like a loving human father, God disciplines His children when they need it (Hebrews 12:5-6). God wants us to draw closer to Him, so that He can teach us to see the world, and especially other people, through His eyes, instead of through the limited self-centered viewpoint that each of us are born with. That is why we need to be Born Again (John 3:3). When we come to know Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord, He gives us a perspective that we never had before, because He raises us up above our mundane earthbound existence and we are able to see things from His perspective! And since *“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good”* (Proverbs 15:3 KJV), you won’t just see each situation from your own human frame of reference, you will also see it through the Holy Spirit as well! That’s how it becomes possible for mere mortals like us, to have so much compassion for others, even when we can’t identify with their situation on a human level.

Years ago, a prison inmate once wrote me a letter complaining that other inmates would not listen to him. He said it was because they were all reading my article in the newsletter. He asked me what the other inmates could possibly have in common with me. He knew, he said, what it was like to, as he put it, “sleep with your head next to a toilet.” He said inmates are usually not very educated. So, what could they possibly have in common with an educated middle-class woman like me that had never been incarcerated. He didn’t know me very well. In those days, we started the ministry in an extra bedroom in our apartment. It was above an antique store. At least three bars were just steps away; one in a restaurant, one in a pizza parlor, and one in a bowling alley next to a pool hall.

I would work nights writing the articles and doing other ministry work, sometimes until 3:30 in the morning. I worked next to an alleyway where I had the feeling drug sales were taking place. Burglar alarms would frequently distract my attention. I didn’t sleep with my head next to a toilet but my cat’s litter box was right next to my workstation, and she would sometimes use it while I was working! There were dangerous gangs in the neighborhood. There was not much security in our building, and we were burglarized once with two other attempted burglaries. There were also other burglaries in the building.

What the inmate, who wrote to me, didn’t understand was that the other prisoners didn’t need to identify with another inmate like they were. They knew what it was like to be in prison. They lived it every day. What they were interested in was knowing why was all this happening to them. Was God real? And how could they connect with Him? Prisons are an incredible source of fertile ground waiting for the good seed of hope, love, and salvation to reach them and take root (Matthew 13:3-23). As Jesus said, *“...The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few...”* (Luke 10:2 NIV). Down through the ages, Holy Spirit filled missionaries have left the comfort of their homes and families and put their lives in danger in order to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost, hopeless humanity, worldwide! Many of them have taken long ocean voyages on stormy seas

in cramped, uncomfortable conditions, just for the privilege of being the means through which God was able to reach others with His love, peace, joy, and salvation. When we have the Holy Spirit in us, we are able to understand

the pain and suffering of others in a way that the natural man or woman never could! That’s because *“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Cor. 2:14 NIV).

One of the best ways that Satan is able to tap into our emotions is through clogged communications channels. Obviously, we can’t read the minds of other people, and so we form our own opinions on their reasons for doing or saying something. Without the Holy Spirit in your heart (Galatians 5:22-26), you will not know what strategy is God’s will. Anger and violence frequently erupt when people are not able to come to a satisfactory understanding of a problem. Each party has his or her own perspective on the issue, and is unable to view the matter in the same way. Let’s start by looking at it on an international basis. Jesus said that in the last days, *“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...”* (Matthew 24:6-7 NIV). How true this is today! We watch the evening news at night and it’s often very depressing. It’s exactly the way that Jesus said it would be. Probably the most common cause of friction between countries is in regard to land. Nations all over the globe have spilt a great deal of blood trying to obtain what they consider to be their territory.

History is filled with such accounts, whether it’s between native Americans and white settlers, or dictators bent on world conquest such as Napoleon, Hitler, Genghis Khan, Attila the Hun, Julius Caesar, and numerous others. Today there are disputes, skirmishes, and wars globally. Until recent years we felt relatively safe here in the United States, but since this nation has turned its back on the Lord Jesus Christ, our only source of strength, salvation (John 14:6), and unity, we are no longer under the same protection from God that we once



enjoyed (Deuteronomy 23:14 and 2 Chronicles 7:14). That's why America is falling apart and segments of our society refuse to even acknowledge the rights of others. And they are determined to get their own way no matter what the cost. Every adult human being, who has ever lived, has worshipped some form of god. Archaeologists find evidence that even the earliest of cultures have always based their laws and society around the worship of whatever god they chose to observe.

That's why God was so angry at the Hebrews in Old Testament times when, after all that He had done for them, they rejected their own Creator, and His method of atonement for their sins through Christ, His Son (Proverbs 30:4). Christ had been the Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4), the solid foundation of their faith. He had led them and guided them out Egypt, and had performed many miracles through His servants Moses and Aaron. But it didn't take the Hebrews very long to succumb to the temptations of all the other nations around them, and to begin to worship foreign gods. God calls the Hebrews "Jeshurun," which means Israel. Therefore, the Lord became angry with Israel's descendants when they rebelled against Him, and began to worship the demons of the other nations. He said, "*Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; filled with food, he became heavy and sleek. He abandoned the God who made him and rejected the Rock his Savior*" (Deuteronomy 32:15 NIV). In other words, the generations that descended from Israel had been greatly blessed by God. He had been watching over them and protecting them. It reminds me of the way that the Lord watched over America up until the nineteen sixties, when the country began to decline. The prophet spoke of the Jews as if He were speaking of Jacob/Israel, their ancestor.

He said of the Jews, "*In a desert land He found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; He guarded him as the apple of His eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. The LORD alone led him; no foreign god was with him. He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields. He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag*" (Deuteronomy 32:10-13 NIV). God had treated them with tender loving care, and they had plenty to eat. He had blessed them so much that they began to take Him for granted, and "*They made Him jealous with their foreign gods and angered Him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth. The LORD saw this and rejected them because He was angered by His sons and daughters. 'I will hide My face from them,' He said, 'and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful'*" (Deuteronomy 32:16-20 NIV).

The United States was very blessed by God in past times. It is He who raised up America to be a great nation! It is no coincidence that the people of every nation that has been founded on Judo-Christianity has been blessed far more than nations that looked toward demons and worshipped them as gods. In history there have been times when no nation was really living for the Lord totally. Yet even then He has had individuals within those nations who have looked toward Him, and He has blessed them even when everyone else was cursed by His wrath. Daniel, Noah, and Abraham are three examples. There were also times when the Lord allowed certain pagan nations to rise up and become important for one particular reason or another. For example, in the case of Joseph, God blessed the Hebrews through the Egyptian Pharaoh, and they were saved from starvation (Genesis 50:20). God also blessed the Babylonian empire in order to punish

Israel for her sins. But Daniel was there, as was Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 1:7). Through their example, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, accepted God as his Savior and Lord (Daniel 4:34-37). However, eventually Nebuchadnezzar died and his grandson, Belshazzar became king. However, he didn't regard the God of the Hebrews who had worked such miracles on his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar's father was Nabonidus.

"King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone" (Daniel 5:1-4 NIV). In effect, Belshazzar was thumbing his nose at God and showing Him great disrespect. He praised all his idols instead and credited them with all the blessing that God had given to Babylon. As often happens, terror struck when the people were having a sinfully good time. "*Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote*" (Daniel 5:5 NIV).

Up until then, King Belshazzar was confident of his position and his kingdom. He was ruling over the same kingdom that his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, had ruled over. And that had been

the mightiest empire on earth in his day. I'm sure he felt all powerful and unbeatable. He was probably a fairly young man who thought he could do anything he wanted to do. However, now he encountered a force that was mightier than he was. He had felt like such a big shot. But now that had changed. "*His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and*

his legs gave way. The king called out for the enchanters, astrologers and diviners to be brought and said to these wise men of Babylon, 'Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom'" (Daniel 5:6-7 NIV). The Bible says, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding. To Him belongs eternal praise*" (Psalms 111:10 NIV). Belshazzar, like a lot of pompous, egotistical fools, did not have the wisdom to fear God. Instead of praising Him, as his grandfather did, he gave his praise to idols instead. And, he "*...made Him [God] jealous with their foreign gods and angered Him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear*" (Deuteronomy 32:16-17 NIV).

"Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled. The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. 'O king, live forever!' she said. 'Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale! There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king, I say—appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners'" (Daniel 5:8-11 NIV). God always has a man or woman He can trust. In this case, the man of the hour was Daniel. So, Daniel was brought before them. And Belshazzar

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said to him, “Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.” Then Daniel answered the king, “You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means” (Daniel 5:16-17 NIV).

Now notice that Daniel had to be brought in. He wasn’t at the banquet. He didn’t fit in with this crowd. However, when everyone else at the banquet was terrified, Daniel was the only one who was controlled, calm, and confident. He didn’t want the king’s gifts. He wasn’t much interested in the carnal things that excited everyone else. He wasn’t like the others. Daniel feared God, not any man. And he wasn’t afraid to speak boldly to the king. He said that you, “...Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself... Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from His temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in His hand your life and all your ways. Therefore He sent the hand that wrote the inscription. This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN ‘This is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.’ Then at Belshazzar’s command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom” (Daniel 5:22-29 NIV).

“That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two” (Daniel 5:30-31 NIV). However, Daniel not only stayed alive, he continued to thrive. For King Darius liked and respected Daniel, and Daniel retained a high position even in his kingdom. However, Satan hates everyone whom God loves, especially those who are used so mightily by God. So, Satan inspired jealousy in the hearts of Daniel’s administrators. “Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, ‘We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.’ So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: ‘O King Darius, live forever!’” (Daniel 6:3-6 NIV). If Daniel had committed the tiniest infraction they would have charged him with it. But they couldn’t find anything he had done wrong. How many people can you say that about these days?

So, they devised a plan to use his faith against him. “So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: ‘O King Darius, live forever! The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions’ den. Now, O king, issue the decree and put

it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.’ So King Darius put the decree in writing. Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before” (Daniel 6:6-10 NIV). Daniel knew that his enemies had set a trap for him. Nevertheless, he chose to trust God, and continue in prayer. Naturally his enemies were watching him and thought “Ah ha, we have caught him!” However, with God, things have a way of boomeranging.

The officials went to the king and told him that Daniel had prayed to his God. “When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him. Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, ‘Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.’ So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den. The king said to Daniel, ‘May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!’ A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel’s situation might not be changed” (Daniel 6:14-17 NIV). The hatred of Daniel’s accusers reminds me of the hatred of the Pharisees toward Christ (John 5:18). All those who love and serve God, His way, will be hated by those who do the devil’s will. People are often confronted with a challenge to curse God or face human consequences. Even these days in countries like North

Korea, and China, people are often tortured and killed for their faith. However, Jesus said, “...anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 10:38-39 NIV).

As for Daniel, “Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. At the

first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, ‘Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?’ Daniel answered, ‘O king, live forever!’” (Daniel 6:18-21 NIV). Oh, the joy the king must have felt hearing Daniel’s voice! And it proved Daniel’s faith in the true God was more than justified. Daniel continued, “My God sent His angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in His sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king. The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. At the king’s command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions’ den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones” (Daniel 6:22-24 NIV).

No matter what the devil and his cohorts bring against you, if you love and serve the Lord, you may suffer occasional hardship to strengthen your faith (1 Peter 1:7-9). However, ultimately, “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4 NIV). So, “trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV).

