



NON-PROFIT

The Good News Letter

Bible Believers Fellowship, Inc.
P.O. Box 0065 - Baldwin, NY 11510
WWW.PRISONMINISTRY.ORG



TAX-EXEMPT

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

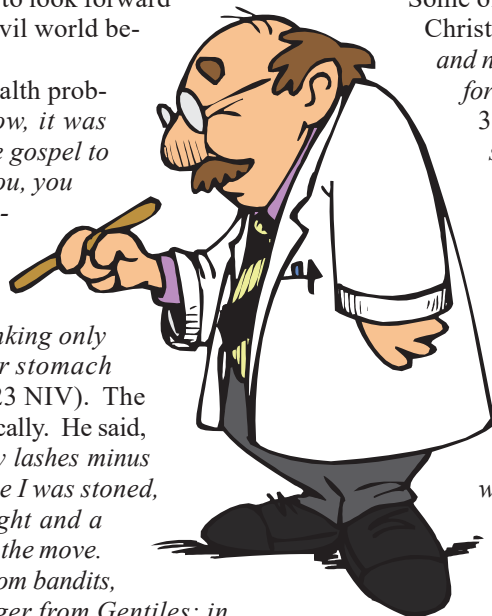
July 2022

FROM US TO YOU

Summer has finally arrived. The good things God has created, the sunshine, the beaches, pretty flowers, will still be here. Unfortunately the things mankind has created, inflation, pollution, and crime, will be here as well. These are challenging times. We love and trust God with all our hearts. However, every strong Christian we know has been suffering in some way. We too, have been experiencing serious physical problems, especially with arthritis as well as severe back and shoulder pain. Anne had surgery recently for skin cancer as well as yag cap laser eye surgery. She will also be having surgery this month for an endometrium polyp. Eric's sciatica has also been acting up and he, like Anne, is in a lot of pain. So that's why this newsletter is going out late. Please keep us in your prayers. Nevertheless, knowing Christ as our Lord and Savior makes it all easier to bear. We have so much to look forward to in Heaven some day when we leave this evil world behind. And that will be forever!

Many righteous Bible characters had health problems. Paul told the Galatians *"As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus Himself"* (Galatians 4:13-14 NIV). And Paul told Timothy, a young evangelist, *"Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses"* (1 Timothy 5:23 NIV). The apostle Paul was constantly under attack physically. He said, *"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 11:24-28 NIV).

Despite it all, Paul was not discouraged in his faith. He knew what glories awaited him in Heaven. And he boldly declared, *"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain"* (Philippians 1:20-21 NIV). In the case of the worldly folk the worst that can happen to them is to die. However, Paul welcomed death in God's time, because he knew about the things God has waiting for those who love Him. He said, *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him"* (1 Corinthians 2:9 NIV). It is revealed to God's people by His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10). It brings



to mind the words from a Christian song we like, by Joseph Larson, called, "Don't Give Up On The Child Of God." "Don't give up on the child of God, He'll be there when the battle's over. He will make it through the storm, find his way through the darkest night. Don't give up on the child of God, He's the one God is keeping. Don't give up, don't give up on the child of God. Weep your tears for others. We don't need your sorrow. We are held by a mighty hand, the hand that holds tomorrow. We have stood through every test and every situation. We stand upon His mighty Word, a mighty firm foundation. If you wonder why we smile when we are in affliction. We have more than human help, we know the great physician. We have been through every test and through the mountain soared. Over every circumstance Jesus Christ is Lord."

Some of you may have had financial losses. Cling to Christ and He will get you through it. *"I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread"* (Psalms 37:25 NIV). And, *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Matthew 6:19-21 NIV).

Lots of people call themselves Christians, but God knows the difference (see Matthew 7:21-23). And the Bible says, *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"* (Galatians 6:7 KJV). However, the righteous will collectively be a part of the Bride of Christ, God's Holy city of true believers, who put Him first, before all else, even loved ones (Matthew 10:34-38). However, for those who truly love Christ, here is the promise in prophecy: *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her Husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then He said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' He said to me: 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be My son'"* (Rev. 21:1-7 NIV).

In God's holy love, Eric and Anne Kaestner

Seeking God's Presence

By Anne Kaestner

When I was a little school girl in England, things were very different from the educational system in the United States. For one thing, they had religious instruction in school based on the officially recognized faith, the "Church of England." It is the equivalent of the Episcopal church in America. I remember hearing little snippets of Bible stories in the auditorium from time to time. And they were sometimes interesting. But the Old Testament studies in the classroom were ho-hum boring. There was absolutely nothing in them to hold my interest. And I hated having the lessons. My mother also sent me to Sunday school. She said it was to make my American Grandma happy, because she was "so religious." However, mother never went to church much herself, except for special occasions such as weddings and christenings, as well as woman's fellowship meetings in the church rectory. As a child, I wondered how anyone could get enthusiastic about something as boring as religion, as my mother said that Grandma was.

The attitude I got from the church was that I was a Christian already because I attended Sunday School, and I lived in a Christian country. Nothing was said to me about having to be "Born Again" (see John 3:3) in order to get to Heaven. It was just assumed that I would go there someday as long as I was good and did enough good works. No one told me that I could never do enough good works to make up for the disease of sin that I, and everyone else, was born with (Isaiah 53:6). And that only Jesus was able to pay for the debt of sin I owed to God (John 14:6). *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 3:23-24 KJV). No one told me that I needed to admit that I was a sinner and ask God to forgive me of my sins (Matthew 3:2) and send His Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26) into my heart and that He would help me to live above sin. And that we have no chance of getting to Heaven without accepting Christ Jesus as our Savior and Lord. That is because it was He who suffered and died in our place for our sin (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Meanwhile, my American Grandma, Anna Riccio, was praying for me. She knew that religion wasn't what I needed. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ was what I needed! I was the firstborn of her three grandchildren. All three of us were born in England, and my mother was determined to keep us there. My parents had met in England when my Dad was stationed there during World War 2. After the war, she had married my Dad at Ridgewood Pentecostal Church in New York. But Mother missed her birth family in England and returned there after a year or what was supposed to be a brief vacation. However, once there, she refused to return to her husband in America. A year later, my Dad left New York and moved to England to live with her. Grandma had given birth to three sons. However, only my Dad got married. So, after he left, only one son remained with her, Edward. The middle son, Vincent, had left home years ago and Grandma never heard from him again. Grandma had become a widow at 24 years old, and so, next to God, her children meant everything to her, and especially her grandchildren. As the years of separation went by and Grandma's prayers remained unanswered, I believe she told God, "Whatever it takes, please let me see my grandchildren before I die." She had seen me in England as a newborn baby when she travelled to England for my birth. So her prayers for me were especially desperate that I would come to know Jesus as my Savior.

God answered Anna's prayers, and what it took was a diagnosis

of terminal lung cancer. My Dad got the letter from his brother telling him the news when I was about five years old. He went back to America right away, but my mother would not leave her mother or her relatives in England. So she stayed behind. Grandma had been told she had six months to two years to live. Mother was hoping that Anna would die soon, and my Dad would return to her. The letters between my parents went back and forth until two years later when my Dad was threatening divorce. He said he had seen a lawyer, who felt he could get custody of his children. Mother said she prayed about it and finally agreed to go back to the United States, this time with her three children who were born in England. The year was 1961. Grandma continued to live, though dying slowly and painfully. Her church was closer to Grandma than her own sons. They sent a constant flow of people to her house to pray for her, wash her floors, and clean her bathroom. It was not done as an obligation, or good work. It was simply an act of love, done joyfully. The doctor would show up every once in a while to exam Grandma. He wanted another woman present, so my mother was also there at the time. Mother said that, after the examination, the doctor would shake his head sadly and Grandma would raise her arms up high toward Heaven and call out "I'm coming to you soon Jesus. I'm coming soon!" My mother would get embarrassed and tell me that Grandma was a religious fanatic. It was confusing to me. I wondered how anyone could get so enthusiastic about something as boring as religion.

Then, one day, two young women from Grandma's church brought about fifteen children to her house to sing to Grandma. They were Sister Sarah and Sister Gerta. My family was living in the downstairs apartment at Anna's house. Mother answered the door and let them in. Sister Sarah ran the "Release Time" at the church and Sister Gerta played the piano during meetings. Sister Sarah began explaining to Mother that the schools don't teach religious instruction in this country. But they allow children to leave school early one day a week so that they can get religious instruction at their local house of worship. Sister Sarah told my

mother that these children were about the same age as my sister and me. She said that if my mother let us go, they would give me a card to take to school to let them know that I was going to "Release Time." And the church would send a car around to our house to drive us there and back. Mother asked me if I wanted to go. I told her that I'd take any excuse to get out of school an hour early. So we got signed up and began attending services. However, by the end of the school year, my mother received another card in the mail, inviting my sister, and I to attend "Daily Vacation Bible School." I didn't want to go because I'd have to get up early and give up two weeks of my vacation. However, my mother said I would have to go. She never went to the church herself. So maybe it was just to get us out of the house, but Mother was adamant, and we went.

There was definitely something different about this church. Other churches I had been to were very formal, structured places. They would give out program sheets when you walked in the door, telling you what would happen at each period of the service. For example, at 11:00 am, singing from page 97 of the hymn book, 11:30 am, announcements, 12:00 pm offering, 12:20 pm sermon. However, this church was different. The formality was gone. They had singing and a sermon, but it was in a comfortable environment, like a big loving family getting together. As a child, I was also amazed at their honesty. They would tell the truth even when a lie would have been



more convenient. And their quiet patience wasn't restricted to the church. It was what I noticed when I was in their car too. When the church would send someone to pick me up, they were always patient and considerate of other drivers. My family couldn't afford a car. But my mother's friend, Kay, had one. And she would take us for drives sometimes. She would occasionally do something to annoy other drivers, and they would honk their horn at her. Kay would roll down her window and yell out, "So what else did you get for Christmas?" The church people were very different. They were also quick to apologize if they thought they had offended anyone.

One day, after the service ended, they gave an altar call. The piano began playing, "Rock of Ages" and everyone started singing, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee; Let the water and the blood, From Thy wounded side which flowed, be of sin the double cure; save from wrath and make me pure. Not the labors of my hands can fulfill Thy law's commands; Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone. Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling; naked, come to Thee for dress. Helpless, look to Thee for grace. Foul, I to the fountain fly. Wash me, Savior, or I die." All of a sudden something came over me, and I felt the Holy Presence of God. It had nothing to do with man-made religion. It was simply the power of God (Acts 1:8). And that's when I kneeled at the altar sobbing before the Lord. Suddenly I felt a comforting arm around my shoulder and Sister Sarah led me through the sinner's prayer. I accepted Christ as my Savior and Lord. My life changed forever, and I have never been the same again! I was 10 years old. Gradually I began to notice that Grandma wasn't the only one who was excited about God and the Christian faith. Just about everyone at her church felt the same way, as well as some people she knew who visited her from the Salvation Army. They all had so much love for each other (John 15:12), and an inner joy and peace (Philippians 4:9). It felt like one big family.

The cancer in Grandma's body continued to grow worse, and she was in horrible pain. A short time before her death, she went into surgery again. The doctors were amazed. Not only had the cancer spread, but she also had peritonitis and gangrene! However, the church told Grandma that I had accepted Christ as my Savior and, despite her pain, she was ecstatic! I would sometimes go upstairs to visit with her. Then, one day, I went to see her, shortly before her death. She had the most joyful, satisfying, look on her face. "Anne, God told me that He's going to give you a ministry. And it will be very big, worldwide!" she told me. Grandma died when I was 12 years old. Despite the doctor's original predictions, she lived for 6 years after the diagnosis and made medical history at the hospital! God answered Anna's prayers the only way He could. And she's with Jesus in Heaven today. After her death I wanted to go to "Pilgrim Camp," a summer camp owned and ran by the church. My family couldn't afford it, but Grandma had left me some money in care of my Dad. The camp was for two weeks.

The camp is where I was introduced to a new type of church service. Every evening we would go to worship God. Both children and adults were there. There was no minister in charge. No sermon. We all sat in a circle. Everyone knew what to do. It was to give God glory in any way the Holy Spirit led us. Everyone would praise God. Some people would speak in their prayer language, tongues (Mark 16:17). Some would just praise God in English with phrases like, "Love You Jesus. Precious Savior. Glory, glory, glory." Some other person might stand up and give a testimony of something God had done for them. Someone else might stand up and sing a song to glorify God. It was totally Holy Spirit led, and we felt God's strong

Presence. It was there that I obtained an even stronger love for God, sensing His Spirit so strongly at camp. For He gave me the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10). After my two weeks at the camp were over, my parents met me as I got off the bus in New York. They had surprising news for me. They were moving out to the suburbs of Long Island where they were planning to buy a house.

I was no longer able to go to the church that had taught me so much about God. My parents bought a house on Long Island and my family started attending a rather lukewarm church that believed in salvation, but wanted nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. I noticed a difference in the people right away. I didn't feel the warmth of fellowship I had experienced before. The new church grew as a result of the original birth, into this world, as those who attended had babies. No longer did I see new "babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1) coming in among the flock (John 1:12-13). But I was young, and lonely. My family felt at home among the lukewarm (Revelation 3:16). Yet I did not. However, I did get a crush on a young man who took up the collection during Sunday school. He was about my age. And, because he attended our church, I assumed that he wanted to please Jesus, as I did. I was shy, and I took a friend of mine to a youth meeting at the church in order to break the ice, so to speak. She met the boy. I'll call him Bob, but that was not his real name. A few days later, Bob called me up on the phone. He wanted my friend's telephone number.

My friend ended up going on a date with him. She asked him what he thought of me, and he replied, "Oh Anne. She's too religious." I think his implication was that I was too boring also. My friend told me what he said, and obviously, I was hurt. It must have been part of Satan's plan to start getting me to backslide, because that's what I did. I was tired of being misunderstood by my family and other teenagers my age. I didn't want to continue to be so lonely. So, I began to change my thinking and slack off on some of my high standards in order to make lukewarm or worldly friends. The years went by, and I didn't have the foundation and influence of a church that really loved Christ more than they loved each other. My family continued to go to the same church, but they were just "Sunday Christians." And my mother and sister would laugh at me when I told them I thought about becoming a missionary. Consequently, my backsliding continued.

My family liked the church we attended, but I felt no Presence of God there. My family liked the fact that the church had a structured agenda, and everything came just as the church flier said it would. However, I was bored, especially during the long sermons. My parents would bring people from the church over to our house. They were like everyone else. They would gossip, get jealous of others (1 Corinthians 3:3), and love ways of making money (see 1 Timothy 6:10). They were as Paul prophesied of many latter-day Christians. *"People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive... unholy, without love... without self-control... conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them"* (2 Timothy 3:2-5 NIV). I began working in Manhattan at that time. The commute was expensive and exhausting. So I moved to an apartment on Staten Island. Manhattan was just a ferry ride away. However, I spent most weekends at my parents' house. There was lots of new excitement in churches that decade about the charismatic movement, where Catholics were seeking the Holy Spirit along with Protestants, and well known people were claiming to be Born Again (John 3:3). However, I wasn't seeing any changes in their lifestyles. It was very discouraging! And (Continued On Page 4)



nothing makes Christ look as bad as hypocrisy. That's why Jesus was always accusing the religious leaders in His day about it.

My sister's friends from the church were frequently at my parent's house. One day they got all excited about a so-called "Christian" musical they wanted to see in New York City. They told me that it was performed by Christians in a Christian theatre called "The Lamb's Club." The musical was called "Godspell." I was the only one with a car, so they talked me into going with them. The performance was totally sold out, but we were told over the phone that if anyone canceled, or didn't show up, I could have their seat. In my confused state, I was very vulnerable in my Christian walk. All new (or newly recommitted) believers go through a period of feeling such incredible love, peace, and joy that they tend to forget for a while, that Satan hasn't disappeared just because they came to Christ. And we will still have many tests of faith to endure. Nevertheless, on this occasion, God was teaching me another valuable lesson. "Are you sure that this is a Christian musical?" I asked my companions before we left the house. "Oh yes," they assured me. "It's playing at the Lamb's Club, which is a Christian club, and the actors are all Christians." We left and drove into the city. Sure enough, someone who had purchased a ticket had not shown up, so I was given their seat at no charge. Those with me took this as an omen that God must want me to see the musical. God did want me to see it, but not for the reason they had assumed. He hadn't wanted me to be there because He approved of it. However, He wanted me to be there because He did not! It was part of my spiritual education, where the Lord would show me how His beloved Bride (2 Corinthians 11:2), the Church, had fallen so far away from Him that she had become filthy and blasphemous!

We sat down in the audience, and the show got started. To my horror, my Savior, Jesus Christ, was portrayed as a clown! Even back then, as naive as I was, I knew something was wrong. When I voiced my opinion, one of the young women with me said, "Oh, Anne, I think God has a sense of humor." During the show, one of the actresses came out on stage wearing a very sexy outfit and, walking down a ramp from the stage which led through the audience. She sang out a song from the show. As the band played to accompany her, she moved her body in a sultry way, and her voice took on a salacious tone and right in the middle of it, she stopped to flirt with one of the men in the audience. People, this is not Christian! This is from the pit of Hell itself, and is carefully designed to destroy the faith of God's people! Don't think that the devil comes out in a traditional red dragon suit with horns and long tail. "... *Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve*" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15 NIV). As for God's supposed sense of humor, every time the Bible tells us that God laughs, it is always at the stupidity of people, and often right before He is about to bring great judgment on them! (See Psalm 2:4, 37:13 & Leviticus Chapter 18.)

Why is it that so few Christian preachers speak out against sin anymore? From His throne in Heaven the Lord has declared, "... *priests have violated My law, and have profaned Mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them*" (Ezekiel 22:26 KJV). My confusion remained. I wanted a

closer walk with God, like I had experienced as a child. But where would I go to get it? I didn't want to be lonely. I wanted friends. So I learned to compromise on my faith. I preferred to be around nice people who accepted me even if they weren't "Born Again" than the level of hypocrisy I had seen in so many church people. By then, I had started wearing makeup and fashionable clothes and occasionally drank a little alcohol. I knew the church in Queens would not approve of that. So I would not fit in there anymore either.

Then, one day, I was on the ferry, sandwiched between the many other commuters sitting on the long wooden bench. I found myself thinking about the Biblical parable of Jesus in regard to the little lost lamb. I must have gone into a trance of some type, because when I awoke from it, I realized that the ferry had docked and all the passengers, except me, had left. I quickly got up and headed for the door, still pondering over the intensity with which the lost sheep parable had suddenly come to me. Just as I was about to disembark, I looked back over the rows of empty benches, and noticed what looked like white folded paper. Consumed with curiosity, and as the ferry crew viewed me with bewilderment, I felt compelled to walk over to it. As I looked down upon the paper, my eyes filled with tears. It was an ordinary church program, like many others that are given to parishioners on Sunday mornings.

However, this one had a large drawing on the cover of the Good Shepherd cuddling in His arms, a little lamb, who, according to the parable, had wandered from the fold! That lamb had been lost, but now she had been found, and was safely nestling into the protective arms of her Savior!

I knew Christ Himself had been out looking for me, and it was only a matter of days later that I was driving home from Long Island when I felt God's nudging again. I was driving by a church near my apartment that I had driven by many times before when suddenly I felt a powerful compulsion to stop and go in the church. They had just completed a business meeting, and the pastor was very friendly. It was a Pentecostal church. A few nights later I went to the church and heard the sermon. The pastor asked the congregation, "What happens when you try to make your own choices without God?" A lady in the crowd said something, and the pastor replied, "Say that again Sister. It never works out!" About a week

later, I lost my job and was devastated. I decided to go for broke and return to my Shepherd. I threw out everything in my apartment that I felt would offend God, including a novel I had been writing. I set a stack of *Cosmopolitan* magazines on fire in my kitchen sink, and it's a miracle that they never set my cabinets on fire, as the flames shot up within a half an inch of the wood. It wasn't even scorched. I knelt down, repented of my straying, and invited Christ back into my life.

The next day I stood on the train platform looking at the snow-covered nursing home across the street, as if I had never seen it before. It looked so beautiful! The joy bubbled up inside of me. That was more than 40 years ago, and I never want to be without the Lord again! I realized that God's Spirit had been there all the time. I had been looking for Him in people instead of personally seeking His Presence. "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10 KJV. Also, see Matthew 18:11). For 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. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light*" (Matthew 11:28-30 NIV).

