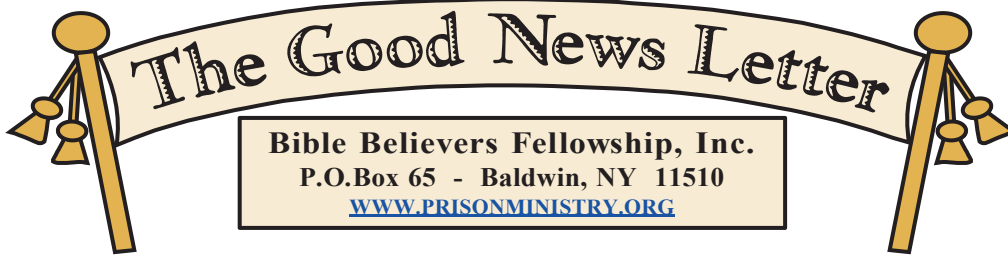




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TAX-EXEMPT

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

July 2025

FROM US TO YOU

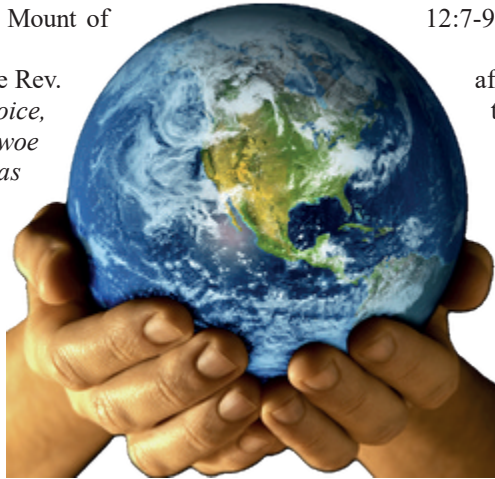
Now that summer is here, it ought to be a happy time of year for Americans. It should be a time of vacations, backyard barbecues, and beach activity. However, on a national scale there seems to be trouble everywhere on the political stage. People are getting more nervous about their future, even Christians. It's easy to get troubled in this current world. Satan is running it (Matthew 4:8-10, Ephesians 2:2). A big part of the friction centers around Israel. The Palestinians refuse to accept the fact that Israel is a sovereign country. It became a nation once again in 1948. It was acknowledged a legitimate country by the United Nations and the Truman administration in America. It was a part of the land that God promised to the descendants of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. The Jewish people lost the land after they rejected Christ as their Savior and Lord (Acts 13:45-46). However, God still loves the Jewish people and long ago He promised to restore them to their own land. He did that in 1948, and He will fight to keep them there. Palestinian protesters may fight against Israel and deny its legitimacy. But they will **never** reclaim the land! When Jesus comes back to Earth, His feet will be on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4) in Jerusalem.

Moreover, Jesus is coming back soon (see Rev. 19:11-18). However, in the meantime, *"...rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short"* (Revelation 12:12 NIV). So, *"humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. 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, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast"* (1 Peter 5:6-10 NIV).

In the beginning God created this world (Genesis 1:1) for us to be a place for His children to live and enjoy. He created the beautiful mountains, oceans, waterfalls, flowers, trees, plants of every kind, cute animals, a huge array of fish and birds, ground animals, rainbows, sunsets, the moon, and stars. He created it all before Man (Genesis 1:27-28) was created. God the Father and God the Son worked together to make it for us. Jesus told us how important it was to Them (Proverbs 8:24-31). There was great anticipation, like parents expecting their first child. God's *"...only begotten Son..."*, whom we know of as Jesus Christ, and God the Father worked on it together. Then God created Man. He then separated the Man into two distinct parts, male and female (Genesis 2:21-23). God gave Man control over the entire world (Genesis 1:28) for a specific period of time. It was an almost perfect world. But there was one problem. It had a snake in

the garden (Revelation 20:2), and the devil had entered into it's body, and was able to speak.

So why was Satan, the devil, in the Garden of Eden? He was originally a heavenly angel, named Lucifer. He was created as a heavenly angel to serve God. God said to Him, *"You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you"* (Ezekiel 28:14-15 NIV). God had greatly blessed Lucifer, but Lucifer became jealous of God. Therefore, he became corrupt. Sadly, he influenced one third of God's angels to mutiny against God. *"And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him"* (Revelation 12:7-9 NIV).



The name "Lucifer" means "light bearer," but after his fall, God felt he was no longer worthy of the name. His name was changed to Satan, and his angels became demons. He and his fallen angels were put on trial. As part of their punishment, God cremated their solid bodies (Ezekiel 28:18). That's how Satan was able to enter into the body of a snake. After the failed mutiny, God made Man. By then Satan was powerless, but he was already in the Garden of Eden, before Man was created (see Ezekiel 28:13 and Revelation 12:9). The woman, Eve, was influenced by Satan to disobey God, and Adam did the same (Genesis 3:1-24). That's how this world became corrupt. God had

given Man power over the earth (Genesis 1:28). But, as Jesus said, *"...Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin"* (John 8:34 KJV). So Adam, by obeying Satan, lost all the power God had given to him, and Satan got control of the earth. Satan and his angels will eventually end up in the Hell and the Lake of Fire forever (see Revelation 20:10 and Matthew 25:41) and all of us who are descendants of Adam and Eve will end up there as well **unless** our sin is paid for.

However, *"...God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16 NIV). And *"...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23 NIV). Only Christ could pay for our sins because only He was valuable enough. But first we have to repent of our sins to God, and accept Christ's salvation. We cannot pay for our own sins (Ephesians 2:8-9. Also, see 1 Timothy 2:5-6). You can only be a real Christian if you **repent** and accept Christ as your Savior, and become Born Again (John 3:3. Also, see Matthew 7:13-14). No matter how evil this world gets, it is because currently, Satan is running it.

In God's love, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*

The Prodigal Son

By Anne Kaestner

Perhaps “The Prodigal Son” is the most poignant story Jesus ever told in the Bible. *“...There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate”* (Luke 15:11- 24 NIV).

Jesus said that this story illustrates the way that God the Father feels about any of His beloved children who are foolish enough to listen to the devil’s voice and leave their Heavenly Father to set out for the “good” things of this world. He said, *“In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents”* (Luke 15:10 NIV). Let’s take a closer look at the story. The Father was a wealthy man with two sons. He treated his sons very well, but expected them to live a proper life and be faithful to him, for he loved them so much. The Father knew all the temptations and dangers that were out in the world, and he wanted to shield his sons from them. However, the younger son heard about all the worldly adventures other people had, and they sounded very exciting to him. He knew that when his father died, he would have his share of the inheritance. But he might be a lot older, and he wanted to enjoy all these temptations while he was still young.

His father was still healthy and would probably live a long life, and it would be too late for him, the younger son, to indulge in all the temptations by then. The young son had lived a pampered life, but it was routine. His older brother was contented with the status quo, but the younger son felt that he wasn’t going to be young forever, and he wanted to live an exciting life while he still could. So he went to his father and asked for his share of the inheritance. The father’s heart was broken. He didn’t understand why his son wanted to leave him. But he didn’t argue with him. He knew about the temptations and dangers of the world, and he had hoped his son would want to stay where he would be safe. However, he knew if he denied him, the lure of the world would make his son feel trapped and miserable. So he gave him what he wanted and kissed him goodbye. He didn’t know if he would ever see his son again.

The young son left his father, joyfully. He was excited about experiencing all the new adventures he had heard about. After all, he had a lot of money with him. But the money he had didn’t last him very long. He began to make new friends and spent some of his money

on them. Probably since they knew their new friend had a lot of money, all of them came to him with special problems and asked the young man to help with their expenses. He wanted to please his friends, so he helped them. He also found out that finding a place to stay for the night was more expensive than he had expected it to be. And his new friends wanted to show him all the exciting night-life he had been missing out on. The food, the wine, entertainment, new clothing, taxes, unexpected problems, all of it was adding up. Sure, the young man had money left, but didn’t have a job. And the money was getting less all the time. The young man began to worry that he had spent too much already.

Then a famine began in the land. The cost of everything went way up. Even his food was starting to cost too much. Jobs were hard to get. He hadn’t seen any of his friends lately. Where were they when he needed them? He was hungry and depressed. So much for the excitement he expected! However, he was almost out of money and very hungry. So he took a job from a citizen of the country feeding pigs. Pigs are a dirty, unclean animal to the Jews who keep a kosher diet. So the young man had to be fairly desperate in order to take a job feeding pigs. I’m sure he remembered all the delicious meals he had enjoyed at his father’s house. But that was in the past, and he had

left his father. He hated to admit it to himself, but he realized that he had been a fool, leaving the safety and security of his father’s house. He knew how hurt his father had been by his decision to leave. But at the time, all he cared about was having a good time, so he hadn’t thought about it.

How many men and women these days leave a secure and comfortable home for some idealist dream of a career that seemed hard to reach? Hollywood, California and Nashville, Tennessee are famous locations for foolish young people who want to pursue some fantasy occupation where their name would be up in lights, and they would become rich and famous. In reality, very few of them make a success of it. However, let’s take a look at the kind of life they aspire to. Let’s say you succeed in getting a job in the industry as an actor. Any idea you have

of ethics, morality, and Christian values, will go out the window. All the good teaching you have received about what’s right and what’s wrong will be changed. You may not realize it, but your dream of becoming a star isn’t without a price tag. You would be required to totally change your personality into whatever the character that you’re portraying is when you’re on-screen. And your own personality will change as well.

Is that character someone who uses vulgarity, blasphemy, and bad language? You become that person on screen. Do they become sexually involved with another character? Movies and television use to have a moral code and scruples decades ago. They don’t anymore. Back in the days when I use to watch the 700 Club, I remember Pat Robertson talking about actor, Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. He said that Zimbalist had become a Christian, and implied that he had repented of his sins and became “Born Again” (John 3:3). Then he found out that Zimbalist had been in a scene where he had to take off all his clothes and get into bed with an actress. Robertson asked him, “You’re a Christian now! How could you do it?” The actor replied, “But I’m still an actor.” Zimbalist is dead now. Sadly he valued his acting career more than his relationship with God. However, *“...Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again’”* (John 3:3 NIV). When you are Born Again, you are supposed to be starting fresh with a fresh **new life** for Christ, and a new direction.



Jesus "...said: 'I tell you the truth, unless **you change** and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven'" (Matthew 18:3 NIV).

Little children have faith in the parents to take care of them, to support them, and keep them safe. They don't stray away, like a lost sheep. They trust their parents the way Christians are supposed to trust God. It's so foolish to be delivered from an eternity in Hell, through salvation in Christ, and tell people that you're a new Christian, then to drift away from Him, your Savior. *"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). It's because you are making Christ look bad. When you say that you serve Him, and then engage in sin, people will think that Christianity is phony, and you haven't changed your lifestyle. In reality, Jesus didn't change, you did! God hates hypocrisy (Matthew 6:2-5). So if you are really serious about loving Christ, don't tell people that you're a Christian and then disgrace Him by committing some obvious sin. God can give you the ability to live a life above sin!

You simply **can't** serve two masters, God and the world. Satan controls the world (Matthew 4:9-10) until Jesus comes back and kicks him out (Revelation 19:11-21). *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money"* (Matthew 6:24 NIV). It's the same with every lifestyle. You can't put anything before Christ, not your family, not your career, not your friends, not even your residence. Perhaps your family is angry with you for becoming a Christian, and you are being tempted to compromise your faith because you want to bring about 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; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me"* (Matthew 10:34-38 NIV).

Many Christians have been put in a situation where they have had to choose between Christ or death. Many were tortured in horrible ways. Many have been humiliated. Jesus was humiliated too, and He, being innocent, suffered the most painful death known to mankind, flogging and crucifixion (see Matthew 27:26), with a crown of thorns on His head (Mark 15:17). So if you deny Christ in order to save your own life, you will lose your salvation. For Christ will deny you. *"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. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward"* (Matthew 10:39-41 NIV).

So, even if you get what you are seeking in the world, consider what you will have to give up. I disagree with the doctrine of once saved always save. Jesus will never leave you (Hebrews 13:5), but you can leave Him (2 Peter 2:20-22). Don't do it. Jesus said, *"If anyone does not **remain in Me**, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and*

*burned. If you **remain in Me** and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples"* (John 15:6-8 NIV). People 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..."* (Hebrews 6:4-5) are not likely to tell God that they don't want Him anymore. They will still want their salvation. Many people who don't value their salvation as they should, foolishly think that they can have both. Seriously, it doesn't work that way! You can't serve two masters. You can only serve God or the devil. *"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an **enemy of God**"* (James 4:4 NIV). And James wasn't limiting himself to marital unfaithfulness when he uses the term "adulterous people." He is talking about your relationship with Christ.

Paul told the Christians in Corinth, *"I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to Him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough"* (2 Corinthians 11:2-4 NIV). Now what about those who were once saved, repented of their sins, asked God to forgive them, and fell into deep sin? The prodigal son fell into that category. So don't get Hebrews 6:4-6 confused with the unpardonable sin (Matthew 12:32). If you loused up your walk with God by falling into sin, and want to return to Christ, you're not committing the unpardonable sin (Matthew 12:31-32). Those who commit it, don't want to return to Christ, and totally turn away from Him.

They think of themselves as righteous enough and don't think they need to repent. We have an example of that in a parable of Christ. *"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). The Pharisees took the attitude that thinks, "Of course I don't need to repent. I'm a religious leader. I keep all the ten commandments and do everything right. God must be very proud of me." That's why the Pharisees hated Jesus. He told them that they needed to repent, and they were hypocrites. He exposed their sin and warned the people not to be like them.

However, let's get back to the prodigal son. He was like many young people today, male and female. He wanted to experience all the things he had heard about. They looked so exciting to him. But then his money ran out, and there was a famine in the land. All his friends disappeared when his money ran out, and he realized what a fool he had been. He wanted to return to his father, but he felt it was too late. He had lived a life of sin, was hungry, broke, and lonely. Surely, he concluded, he had no right to return. He had loused up his life and broken all the rules his father had taught him. What a fool he had made of himself, he

(Continued on Page 4)



thought. I have heard that attitude from many prison inmates who have returned to Christ. Many didn't know how much God wanted them back. They learned about repentance from our newsletters and the Christian prison chaplains. And they came back to Christ. Jesus implied the father of the prodigal son was still wanting his son back and thought of him often. He said that God, the Heavenly Father, was like the father of the prodigal son.

When the prodigal son "...came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate" (Luke 15:17-24).

Jesus said, "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10 NIV). If you know that your heart isn't right with God, the Lord wants you to know, He still wants you back in His fold! No matter what you've done, God wants you back. That's the reason He sent His beloved Son into the world (see John 3:16). God know that you need help. You can't pull yourself out of the deep dark hole you dug for yourself. Satan will tell you that God is angry with you, and you're not good enough to return to him. But Satan is a liar. Don't listen to him! He wants to keep you as his slave. Jesus said "...It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:12-13 NIV).

Jesus lived on this earth with us. He knows what it is to be tempted of the devil. "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV). Of course, you still have to admit that you're a sinner, ask God's forgiveness and accept Christ as your Savior. There are many religions in this world. However, there is no religion in the world that will be able to forgive your sin, save your soul, and put you back on the right path to Heaven! Humble yourself before God. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time" (1 Timothy 2:5-6 NIV).

Now there is more to the story. The prodigal son had another brother. However, he didn't show any sign of joy over his brother returning to his home. The brother seemed to be jealous. He resented all the gifts that his father was giving to his brother. "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and

asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with Me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found'" (Luke 15:25-32 NIV).

The older brother is symbolic of church going Christians who consider themselves righteous in their own eyes. They obey all the moral code of the Lord and look down with contempt on those who fall into moral sins. They have repented of their own sins long ago, and they regularly go to church and study Christian literature. But they don't have the **fruit** of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-26) that a true Christian should have. Being saved, which is Born Again (John 3:3) and having the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4, 19:1-6) is not the same thing. I'm not talking about water baptism. It's the second work of grace, and is only available to those who have already been reborn. God gives His Spiritual gifts to His children (see John 20:22). Some people might go to church regularly, but don't have

the love and forgiveness in them that comes from the Holy Spirit (Luke 23:34). Jesus said, stop judging other people and pray for them instead (see Matthew 7:1-3. Also, see Ephesians 4:31-32).

"While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' They answered, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' So Paul asked, 'Then what baptism did you receive?' 'John's baptism,' they replied. Paul said, 'John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on

them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all" (Acts 19:1-7 NIV). Yes, your life should change when you repent of your sins and accept the Lord as your Savior. You are now on the path to Heaven. However, the Jews weren't saved from Egyptian slavery until God delivered them through Moses. But only two of them got to the Promised Land, which is symbolic of Heaven. They were Joshua and Caleb (see Numbers 32:11-12). The Baptism in the Holy Spirit helps you stay faithful.

If you really love the Lord and want to **remain** true to Him after being Born Again (John 3:3), you have to be filled with His Spirit. Yes, you received a measure of the Holy Spirit when you first repented of your sins. But this world is a sinful place, and is filled with many temptations. So you will need Christ's baptism to help you **remain** in Him. John the Baptist said, "The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 'I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor; gathering His wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire'" (Matthew 3:10-12 NIV). "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire'" (Hebrews 12:28-29 NIV).

