



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

June 2019

## FROM US TO YOU

After a long winter nature finally begins to come alive again. What a joy it is to know that even on gloomy days, the sun will shine again. And just as the sun shines in the sky, the light of Christ can shine in our hearts and control our lives, if we let Him! The reason why we humans have so many struggles is because it's hard for us to let go and allow God take a hold of the steering wheel of our lives. One reason is because God is invisible through His Holy Spirit. And we humans live in a world of senses. We like to see, hear, taste, touch, or smell what we are communicating with. It's hard to put our trust in something we cannot relate to that way. Yet just because we can't see something doesn't mean it's not there. The wind is an example (John 3:8). The wind is invisible, but we see the evidence of it and its power in a tornado. Jesus spoke of being born of the Spirit. He said, "...I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3 NIV).

He was saying that the first birth, when all of us are born as infants, will not get us to Heaven. Most people think that good works are the answer. However, the Bible says, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Isaiah 64:6 NIV). Adam, mankind's original ancestor, sinned against God. And our DNA was in his blood. So we are all born with his sin in us. It's what prevents us from getting to Heaven. "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29 NIV). God breathed fire into Adam that made him a living being. For fire has the unique ability to increase itself without diminishing the original flame. But fire also destroys everything flammable. God is so pure and holy that just His mere presence destroys sinful human flesh. That's why in Old Testament times, only the high priest could go into the "Holy of Holies" and only once a year. But if there was any sin in his life that had not been atoned for, God's Spirit would kill him (example, Numbers 3:4). It's not like God decided "this man has been sinful so I will kill him." It's a natural function, just as fire destroys straw. It's a part of His very being, the essence of His nature.

Therefore, as sinful beings we cannot come in contact with God, and therefore cannot get to Heaven in our natural condition (1 Corinthians 15:50). That's why Jesus came into this world. "For 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). Jesus temporarily gave up His power as God and made Himself vulnerable in order to come into this world and die in our place. Every miracle He performed was not through His Own power, but through the Holy Spirit within Him. You also can have the Holy Spirit in your life if you get close enough to Christ (John 14:16-17)!

We started out talking about nature. We also quoted Isaiah, who said that in our natural state, "...we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." Leaves dry up because they are no longer attached to the vine. So they have no sustenance to keep them

moist. Therefore, even if you have previously become Born Again (John 3:3), you can backslide away from Christ. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways..." (Proverbs 14:14 KJV). Therefore, you need to come back to Christ, in contrition and repentance, or like dry leaves, you too will blow away.

Jesus said to His followers, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. 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" (John 15:1-6 NIV).

People see the condition of the world and are frightened for good reason. We are living in dangerous times! God will do His part, but you have to do yours. If you come to the Lord you will feel spiritually cleansed for a while. But then, your faith will be tested. God doesn't want any lukewarm (Revelation 3:16) or fair weather Christians. He wants to see that you will trust Him in good times and bad. Therefore, don't let your seed of faith fall among thorns so that "...the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22 NIV). As a new Christian you are like gold. You have great potential for God. But, in its natural form, gold is still attached to the ore it came in. It cannot

be used in its natural state. So after He's washed you, the Lord has to separate you from the ore of this world. It will hurt for a while. But you will be of no use to Him unless He can separate you from the evil things of this world (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

Peter wrote to the persecuted Christians in his day, saying, "These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ...For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:7-9 NIV). Jesus said to all lukewarm believers, "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire..." (Revelation 3:18 NIV). The turmoil that is going on in the world right now is because God is planning to shake things up on this earth. He has promised His redeemed flock, "...Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens. The words 'once more' indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. 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 12:26-29 NIV).

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



# We Serve a Jealous God

By Anne Kaestner

Before we go any further, let's define our terms. Words and their meanings have changed over the years. However, in the Bible, jealousy is different from covetousness. Jealousy is when something or someone that should be yours is acquired by someone else. For example, a married man has an affair with another woman. His wife, if she loves him, finds out about it and is jealous. As far as God is concerned, her jealousy is not a sin. His affair is (Exodus 20:14)! Covertness is when your neighbor buys a new car, and you wish it was yours instead of his (Exodus 20:17). The second commandment tells us that our Creator is jealous of anyone else getting the appreciation, worship, or respect that He should have. It states, *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God..."* (Exodus 20:4-5 KJV).

This sin is very prevalent today in the form of statues, which the King James Version calls "graven images." Even most Christians don't think there is anything wrong with statues. But the Bible tells us that even statues of Jesus are included in the ban! Notice the wording of the scripture, *"...of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below"* (Exodus 20:4 NIV). Jesus is in Heaven. The earth below heaven is the surface of the planet we live on. Below the water means under the sea. Over the years, many civilizations that God destroyed have vanished below the ocean floor (Ezekiel 26:19-20). In other words, in hell, also called Scheol. God has said, of those who rebelled against Him, *"...a fire has been kindled by My wrath, one that burns to the realm of death below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains"* (Deuteronomy 32:22 NIV).

You might say, "But statues of Jesus are a sign of respect. People love Him, so they want symbols of Christ around their house, or in their car." This reminds me of a sermon an American missionary to Italy told a church we used to attend when he was back in the United States years ago. I'll call him George, but I don't think that was his real name. He recalled an episode in Italy where a woman called him into her house. Her husband was having a tantrum. The woman looked shaken. Apprehensively, George entered the house. Spaghetti was hanging from the ceiling and her husband was fuming. The woman wanted George to calm down her husband. George asked him what happened. He responded, "I came home from work and my dinner was cold. I work hard every day. Is it asking so much for me to have a hot dinner?" "No. That's not too much to ask," George answered him.

"Signor George," the woman replied. "I make a hot dinner for him every night. But he doesn't come straight home. He stops off at his friend's house. And I don't know what time to expect him." "Do you know what your problem is?" George told the man. "You need Jesus in your life. Then you will not fight like this." The man grabbed a hold of George's hand and took him from room to room in the house. He pointed out little statues of Jesus as he went. "Look, here's Jesus. And in this room, look here's Jesus again. And here in the bedroom, there's Jesus over there" the man told him. George told him, "You don't need Jesus in your house. You need Him in your heart," he replied. This story illustrates the problem with statues. People use man-made symbols to replace Christ instead of taking Him into their hearts. It's because in order to do so they have to give up the control of their

lives to Him. They have to admit that they are sinners and that they need God's help. They have to learn to live by faith (Galatians 3:11) and trust Him, no matter what the situation is or how bad it looks on the surface. The Bible says, *"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).

For example, after God delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, He took them to a resting place. However, the Egyptians were seen in the distance, pursuing them. Then they saw that they were trapped between the desert and the red sea (Exodus 14:1-4). Despite all that God had done for them, the Israelites didn't trust God. *"They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!'"* (Exodus 14:11-12 NIV). You probably know the rest.

*"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, 'Let's get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt.'"*

*"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.' Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left"* (Exodus 14:21-29 NIV). It wasn't a statue that saved the Israelites. It was the Holy Spirit! So no matter how hard things look, *"...With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God"* (Mark 10:27 NIV. Also, see Matthew 17:20 and Luke 1:37).

Why are other statues, and similar "graven images" forbidden as far as the Lord is concerned? It is because they are a symbol of the things or thing people cherish most, very often human idols. For example, the statue of Elvis Presley in Memphis. Few men, have ever been worshipped the way Elvis was. Eric and I visited Graceland, his home, years ago when we were in Memphis. We toured the house and grounds. We saw his trophy room, his gold Lamé outfit, his swimming pool, his fancy cars, his own plane, and much more. You might expect me to be awed by the experience. But I felt nothing but pity for him, especially after speaking to one of the guards on the grounds. I asked the man if Elvis was free to roam around the town, and browse through stores. "Oh no," the guard told me. And he began to relay an experience Elvis had when he was in Las Vegas.

Apparently, he was looking through the peephole in the door at many big celebrities who were calmly roaming around in the lobby.



And he noticed that no one was bothering them. It looked so easy to him that he decided to try it himself. However, as soon as he opened the door, someone screamed, "Elvis!" All of a sudden an excited crowd seemed to form, and they started running recklessly toward him. Elvis got back into the room just in time! Yes, his house and grounds were beautiful, and he had much material gain. But he was a prisoner of fame and fortune. He wasn't even able to look through the windows of his own house in case anyone saw him and invaded his privacy! He used a close circuit monitoring device instead. Frankly, I'm convinced that, especially in his later years, Elvis was a very unhappy man. Mankind was not created to be an object of worship. We were formed out of dust (Genesis 2:7) to "...Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only" (Matthew 4:10 NIV)! Now that doesn't mean that you don't have to obey parents (2 Timothy 3:1-2), and all those who have authority over you (1 Peter 2:13), including law enforcement (Romans 13:1-4).

It's not surprising that those who don't know Christ worship movie stars, singers, sports stars, and others all the time. But when Christians do it, you know the church is not living for Christ, as it should. The apostle Paul saw the same thing happening in the Corinthian church of his day. Paul wrote to the church saying, "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" (2 Corinthians 11:2-3 NIV). And the worst kind of idolatry a Christian can have is to the wrong shepherd. For "we all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way..." (Isaiah 53:6 NIV).

The problem is sheep follow. And those who are still babes in Christ (see 1 Peter 2:2) usually don't know the difference. That's why Jesus warned the church, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matthew 7:15 NIV). The apostle Paul was worried about this when he spoke with the elders among the Ephesians. He said, "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30 NIV). That's exactly what was happening in other churches as well. To the Corinthian church he said, "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 11:4 NIV).

Christ made it very clear that He would have impersonators. He prophesied of these current times we are living in, "...many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:10-12 NIV). "For many will come in My name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 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. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places" (Matthew 24:5-7 NIV).

Deception is all part of Satan's strategy. For he is the author of lies (John 8:44) and deceit! For "...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:9 KJV).

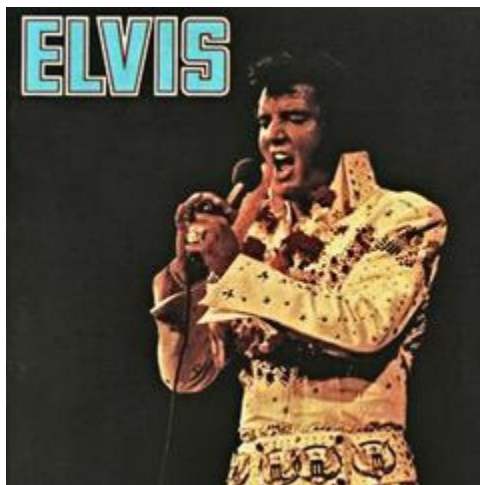
Satan knows that he is running out of time to control the earth (see Revelation 12:12). Therefore, especially in these last days before the return of Christ (Revelation 19:11-20), every Christian should be very careful whom they listen to. Therefore, "be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8 NIV). Satan has a whole army of fallen angels, called demons, to do his dirty work. And spiritual deception is one of his most dangerous ploys! And for those immature Christians who are so vulnerable, he uses his favorite weapons to promote his lies and false doctrine? Who did Jesus warn us about? "...False prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing..." (Matthew 7:15 NIV). Jesus was speaking of men and women who claim to be doing God's work!

Since the 1980's scandals in the church have come at an alarming rate! That's why we started this ministry in 1988. And it's why I give so much scripture to back up everything I write. The same thing was true in the church in Paul's day. And he made it his business to expose it. The problem with today's church is that Christians have been taught to protect the shepherd and not the sheep. That's why Jesus taught people to trust Him, not the hireling! He said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep" (John 10:11-13 NIV).

The apostle Paul was very worried about this type of thing. He even upset the church in Corinth because they felt that he was attacking their so called men of God. But Paul knew these men were phonies and were teaching bad doctrine. And the new believers in Corinth were like many in the church today. Their attitude was, "You're attacking my pastor and my religion. How dare you!" And they became angry at Paul. They apparently accused him of not showing the leaders and them enough love. Paul, very upset by this, wrote back to them. He said, "As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for 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 11:10-15 NIV).

It's not just the false doctrine of the "wolves" that is the problem. It's the lackadaisical attitude of the "hirelings" toward the faith. People used to go to church to learn what God expects of them. A few would read their Bibles for themselves. If you have a good church, you are in the minority. But check everything out in scripture, just to make sure the doctrine you are being taught is correct. Unfortunately however, most churches these days have drifted so far away from Christ that many of them don't even believe that the devil or demons exist! Secular Humanism is being taught in many pulpits instead of the Word of God. It is especially being promoted by the media and educational institutions. And many pastors have adopted it into the sermons! The Wikipedia definition of "Secular Humanism" is "A philosophy of life stance that embraces human reason, ethics, and philosophical naturalism while specifically rejecting religious dogma, supernaturalism, pseudoscience, and

(Continued On Page 4)



superstition as the basis of morality and decision making.” Or to put it another way, it teaches that there is no such thing as evil. People are basically good deep down inside. And, if you’re kind to them, they will learn how to be nice to you. And that mankind is to be exulted, above all else. What utter nonsense! The Bible says, “*The [human] heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure...*” (Jeremiah 17:9 NIV).

It also says, “*...we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away*” (Isaiah 64:6 KJV). However, that is not usually what is being taught in pulpits. Too often the church leadership sets a terrible example for the flock. That’s because if Satan can poison the leadership, all the sheep will follow their example! As a result, a favorite doctrine from pulpits these day, is “Jesus said you must not judge other people.” Hence, pastors and their congregation are free to live a life of sin, and you are taught that you must just love them, because God is love. It’s a lie! “*...Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you*” (2 Corinthians 6:17 NIV). Also, see 1 Corinthians 5:1-7). Yes, God is the very essence of love (see 1 John 4:7). But He must come first before anyone else (Luke 10:25-28)!

Did you know that the Bible says “there is no God”? Yes, it really says that, if you take scripture out of context. What it really

says is, “*The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good*” (Psalms 14:1 NIV). When Jesus said, “*Do not judge, or you too will be judged*” (Matthew 7:1 NIV) He was speaking about hypocritical judging! He continued to say, “*For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ‘Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ...You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye’*” (Matthew 7:2-5 NIV). And it is just ten

verses down that Jesus continued, “*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves*” (Matthew 7:15 NIV). Now if you’re not supposed to judge anyone, why would Jesus tell you to watch out for false prophets (See 1 Corinthians 5:12-13)?

The danger of looking toward mankind instead of toward God is that you can be easily deceived. “*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world*” (1 John 4:1 NIV). Because Jesus said, “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!’*” (Matthew 7:21-23 NIV). The true minister of God hears from God, and does not speak for Him. The true shepherd allows God’s Holy Spirit to speak through him.

The book of Jude makes an interesting comment I can relate to. Jude says, “*Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago*

*have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord*” (Jude 1:3-4 NIV). In other words, Jude wanted to send a kind of pep talk to fellow believers in his day. But the Holy Spirit took over as he began his letter and the message God gave him was very different from what he expected to write. Instead, it was a warning to the flock of Christ to be very skeptical of any teaching that was different from what the apostles had taught them (see Galatians 1:6-12).

Frankly, I had the same experience. From month to month I seldom have a clear idea of what my message will be. I will start with a subject that comes to my mind that I feel might help encourage other Christians. But invariably, as I start typing, the Spirit takes over and I find myself writing something totally different from what I expected to write. However, when I read what I wrote, it sounds much better than anything I could have come up with on my own! Because it’s the message that the Lord gives me for you. I just want to be an open channel that God can work through! That’s what a true servant of God should be! Jesus said, “*The man who enters by the gate is the Shepherd of His sheep. The watchman opens the gate for Him, and the sheep listen to His voice. He calls His Own sheep by name and leads them out*” (John 10:2-3 NIV). The Gate is your heart. And the message given must always come from God, not mankind! “*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 Corinthians 2:14 NIV). It doesn’t matter how fancy the seminary school was that the minister went to. Only God knows the mind of God. And we receive it only through the Holy Spirit!

That’s the reason why Jesus had so much trouble with the Pharisees and Sadducees in His day. They felt that they were the only ones qualified to preach about God. They had the education. They had the position. Yet Jesus told them they were not of God. They were hypocrites (see Matthew 23:24-26) from the devil (John 8:42-44). They received the glory and honor of the people. Because that’s what

the people were taught to believe. However, they were sanctimonious snobs, who didn’t know God! “*As He taught, Jesus said, ‘Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely’*” (Mark 12:38-40 NIV).

If your minister has both the Holy Spirit and a lot of degrees, that is good. However, the apostle Paul was the most educated of the apostles, and trained to be a Pharisee. Yet he said, he had no confidence in the flesh (see Philippians 3:3). That means, the human part of his nature. Although he certainly could brag about his own background, if he chose to do so. He said he was, “*circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But 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*” (Philippians 3:5-9 NIV).

