



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

June 2021

FROM US TO YOU

Many people all over the world call themselves Christians these days. They go to church regularly. They can quote a few scriptures from heart. And they try their best to do good works occasionally. Ask such people if they expect to go to Heaven one day and they'll probably answer, "I hope so." Yet there's no certainty in their voice. Here's the problem. God requires so much more than a "feel good" Christianity. Because God's standards are so much higher than ours! Some people think that if they donate a lot of money to a church that will buy them salvation. It's one of the conflicts that led up to the Protestant Reformation. The Catholic church was selling indulgences. Catholics were told that before they go to Heaven they will have to go to a place called Purgatory. They would have to work to pay for their sins there. When they were all paid for, they could go to Heaven. But if they donated a certain amount of money to the Catholic church they would not have to work as long in Purgatory.

Catholic theologians were the ones who were taught how to read and write in Latin in those days. For the Bible had not been translated into the language of the common people at that time. However, when many of the theologians studied the Bible for themselves they noticed that the Bible said that only Christ was able to pay the debt for us. "Jesus answered, *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (John 14:6 NIV). We cannot pay the price for our sin ourselves. It is much too high! As Paul wrote to the newly reborn believers (John 3:3) in Corinth, Greece, "...it is by **grace** you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV). In fact, the word "Purgatory is not even in the Bible. As Peter said to the newly reborn church in his day, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV).

There are many nominal Christians in this world today. However, true Christianity is not so easy. It requires a great deal of faith and trust, putting Christ in the driver's seat of your life and not being a backseat driver. You may go through difficult times. But, "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). And making your paths straight is important because Jesus said that we must "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14 KJV). You can't live like everyone else does, "treacherous, rash, 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 3:4-5 NIV).

However, the requirements of God do not end there. He must come first. If you love your children or spouse, or parents more than Him, you won't get to Heaven. 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).

An example of a church-going woman who put her sons first in her life, instead of Christ, is a woman named Kate Barker. She was better known as Ma Barker (October 8, 1873 to January 16, 1935).

Kate's husband, George Barker, was a passive man who worked at various jobs and let his wife raise their sons. They had four sons, Herman (1893-1927), Lloyd (1897-1949), Arthur (1899-1939), and Fred (1901-1935). Kate and George fought frequently, mostly about their poverty and problems with their sons. The boys were always getting into trouble with the law. However, no matter what crimes they committed, Ma Barker was always on their side. It was always the other person's fault as far as she was concerned. Eventually George had enough with the problems at home. He didn't like the lawless behavior of his sons, but Kate was a determined woman and refused to discipline them. So, George left the family and Kate raised their sons herself. After their sons grew older, their crimes got more violent, and the FBI became involved. It is said that the sons were guilty of a multitude of crimes,



including, robbery, kidnapping, and murder.

People differ in their views of Kate. Her neighbors claimed she was a good church woman. But J. Edgar Hoover described her as "the most vicious, dangerous, and resourceful criminal brain of the last decade." They didn't have guns in the Lord's day. But Jesus said, "...all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52 NIV). All the family's visits to the church didn't seem to persuade them from a life of crime. God allowed His own Son to die in our place (John 3:16). But Kate loved her own sons more than she loved God. As a result, all died young. Herman committed suicide in 1927. Lloyd was killed by his wife in 1949. Arthur "Doc" was killed by prison guards as he tried to escape in 1939. And Fred was killed with his mother when they chose to shoot it out with the FBI in 1935. How different things might have been if Kate had truly put Christ first. God has made so many great promises for those who love Him. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1 KJV).

Until next time, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*

THE FRUIT OF FAITH

By Anne Kaestner

The most important evidence of the Holy Spirit in someone's life is the fruit of faith (Galatians 5:22)! "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1 KJV). And true faith in God does not look at circumstances or listen to the "wisdom of men" (1 Corinthians 1:19-20, 2:1-14) when it conflicts with the will of God. "For who has known the mind of the Lord that He may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16 NIV). What does this mean? Paul was writing to the Christian church in Corinth, Greece. These were new, fledgling believers who had been Born Again, but they were not mature in their walk with God. Like most Christians today, they still had a lot of the world in them. Consequently, God wasn't able to pour the wine of His Spirit (Acts 2:1-13) into their hearts in full measure, any more than a man can pour a full glass of wine into a glass that is already two thirds full of something else. Paul was trying to teach the Corinthians God's ways, but first, he had to undo the damage that this world had already wrought on their minds. In those days, Christians were greatly persecuted by Rome. They were sometimes crucified, fed to lions, burned alive, or tortured to death.

For about seven centuries after the time of Christ, these persecutions would increase and become worse, right up until the time of Constantine, when Satan finally realized that he needed to change his strategy. For, despite the best efforts of the Roman Empire, Christianity had not decreased, but increased dramatically! Paul may not have known about all the horrors that the church would suffer in the centuries to come, but he did know that unless these new churches had a faith that was rock solid, it would not be able to withstand the coming tests and trials of faith. Remember that Jesus compared dedicated Christian faith to a house with a firm foundation. For unless the base of the house is solid and secure, nothing that was built on top of it will last! Any construction contractor will tell you that it is much easier to build a new house on land that has not previously been used than it is to knock down an existing structure and build from scratch.

In those days, Corinth, Greece, was a very sophisticated city. It was a seaport that had become prosperous through international trade. The Greeks thought of themselves as great philosophers and writers. They worshipped the material world, especially education and aesthetic pursuits. Even the word "aesthetic" comes from the Greek word *aisthetikos*. Beauty and grace weren't just a perception to them, it was a goddess named Aphrodite. The Greeks lived in a world filled with so called gods and goddesses of their own making (see Deuteronomy 32:17-18, Psalm 96:4-5, Daniel 5:3-31, Zephaniah 2:9-11, Romans 1:18-32, 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, Galatians 4:8-9). This was the culture of the people, and they had become very proud of their achievements. But their culture had been based on idolatry! In the world we live in today, the ancient architecture of Greece is still highly praised. My husband, Eric, and I visited some of it when we were in Greece in 1984. But the most beautiful of all were the temples, such as the Parthenon. They were built for the worship of Greek gods! In many respects, the Greeks were a lot like Americans today. They lived for pleasure and knowledge. Sports had become to them, an obsession.

The world-wide Olympic competitions that are held today, originated in ancient Greece. Their purpose was to glorify, entertain, and worship Greek gods. This was the lifestyle that the new Christians in Corinth had been born into it. They had come to Christ, but habits

from the past are hard to break. For their philosophy, their culture, had been indoctrinated into them since childhood, and until they came to Christ, they had not known any other way to live. Paul's job, was a difficult one. He, and other Christian evangelists, had to convince the Corinthians that God would never be able to grow good fruit in them until their old nature was changed. When we are Born Again (John 3:3) we don't instantly become perfect. We just change directions! But any new Christian has a long way to go in his walk with God before the Lord will be able to grow fruit in him. That's because fruit doesn't pop up instantly from seed. It takes time to grow and develop. It takes tender nurturing and loving attention before it is able to produce even the little buds that eventually blossom into fruit. It is the Holy Spirit who teaches the Christian what God expects from him or her. He can do this in many ways, but primarily He uses mature Christians for this purpose.

However, the Lord can't use them until He is able to grow good fruit in them. It is a part of the process that God brings us through as He slowly cultivates the hearts and lives of those who love Him. For it takes many years of hard work for our Heavenly Gardener (John 15:1-8) to grow good fruit in us. That's why I discourage new believers who are anxious to begin their own ministry right away. When a landscaper plants trees on a property, they are usually seedlings that

come from the nursery. They have already been carefully developed and grown from seed or clippings. That process alone takes a long time. But when he plants that seedling on the site, it's still not ready to grow fruit. For fruit comes from mature branches, not from little seedlings that are still struggling for their own survival!

The gardener watches the tree carefully, and tends to its needs. At times he has to prune the branches (John 15:2), when they are moving in the wrong direction, or even cut off a limb that becomes a problem. It's a slow, painstaking process, but it is the only way that he can grow good fruit! Many winters pass by, many hot summer days, and the gardener may wonder if

the tree is worth all the effort. But he has already invested so much time and work! Years go by before that little baby tree gets big enough to form buds. But then one day, the gardener sees the early signs of fruit on the tree, and when the fruit is finally ready to eat, he knows that it was worth it all!

Now what is Satan's part in this? You don't think that he is going to sit idly by and let that fruit develop for God without putting up a fight, do you? The fruit of the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22) is deadly to Satan's evil kingdom! That fruit, when it has blossomed to maturity, will become a mighty weapon in the arsenal of our Redeemer. So, Satan is going to do everything he can to see that the seed of faith God plants in the heart of His children (John 3:16, 1:12-13) never grows good fruit. The devil is very resourceful in his methods of achieving this goal. (See Matthew 13:3-9, 17-30.) But his favorite tool is pride! The new church in Corinth was very close to Athens, Greece, which was a center of deep intellectual study. The Athenians were very proud of their culture, for, in the eyes of the world, it had achieved great prestige. Athens was a city filled with universities, culture, and the beginnings of a democratic society. It was famous for its philosophers, such as Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates, who were the forerunners of psychology and psychiatry today. Therefore, the Greeks thought of themselves as being very wise and enlightened. Yet they were living so far away from the true Light, Jesus Christ (John 8:12), that their eyes had become accustomed to the darkness.



So, they had no illumination to see their own sin.

This same attitude infiltrated the church in Corinth. These were new believers who had a long way to go before God would be able to grow good fruit in them. But they didn't understand that. Like many people today, the Corinthians wanted salvation. They were willing to give up **some** of their past in order to please God. But they wanted to please God on their own terms! Yes, they wanted redemption in Christ, but they also wanted to bring along all the baggage from their past and add it onto their walk with God. Therefore, Paul had a difficult time getting it through to them that God wasn't interested in their great worldly success or all their human wisdom (1 Corinthians 3:8-20). It was all built on a bad foundation, and the whole thing had to come down if they really wanted to live for God!

Just like most people today, their culture was sacred to them! For it was interwoven with their pride. Therefore, they were very offended by Paul when he told them that God wasn't interested in all that they had acquired in the world. It hurt their feelings. So, they sent Paul a letter telling him how much he had wounded them by his remarks. This, of course, saddened Paul, who was in prison for preaching the Gospel. It wasn't his desire to hurt them any more than it is God's desire to cause us pain. He could have done what many pastors do today, and softened his message by compromising on the Word of God. But Paul loved them enough to tell them the truth! The Corinthians saw themselves as being cultured, educated, and refined. But Paul saw them as Jesus saw them, as weak, vulnerable lambs in need of protection (Isaiah 53:6)! In fact, when he was in Ephesus, Paul was so concerned about God's sheep, that he entered into battle with "wild beasts" (2 Peter 2:12, Jude 1:10, and 1 Corinthians 15:32) in order to protect the Lord's flock. In other words, demon spirits (2 Cor. 11:12-15). Therefore, he knew that if he didn't preach unto them the **whole** Gospel that God had given to him, savage wolves (false prophets - see Matthew 7:15) would arise among them, who would lead God's Corinthian sheep astray, just as they would with the Ephesian church (Acts 20:25-32).

Therefore, after receiving the angry letter from the Corinthians, Paul let the matter rest with the Lord. All he could do was pray for them. But then something happened. The words of Paul (probably 1 Corinthians 5:1-13) finally began to take root in the hearts of the Corinthian Christians. And they wrote back to Paul telling him that they finally understood what he had been trying to tell them. God had brought them under conviction, and they had repented of their sins! Now they were able to see how much Paul loved them. Paul wrote back to them saying, *"even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death"* (2 Corinthians 7:8-10 NIV).

God wasn't able to grow good fruit in the hearts of the Corinthian Christians when they insisted on doing things their own way, because they were trusting in their own ability, education, and culture, and were not totally trusting Christ. I have found that trusting God is probably one of the most difficult things for the Christian to do. And the more successful the person was in the world, the more they try to add their worldly knowledge and ability to their relationship with God. These days, false and backslidden prophets have been leading the Lord's people in the wrong direction. Instead of the world seeing a love, joy, and peace in Christians, a confrontational attitude has taken

place. This is primarily a result of "hirelings" (John 10:12-15) who have, all too often, led the Lord's sheep off of the "straight and narrow" (Matthew 7:13-14) by merchandising and politicizing the Christian faith. When believers are led away from the straight and narrow, they are no longer able to walk by faith. *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him"* (Hebrews 11:6 NIV).

When Eric and I were at a fundraising event in New York City many years ago, a Christian woman came over to our table and we had the opportunity to chat with her for awhile. She was a black lady, who was very supportive about the work that we are doing, and she had a lot of love in her. But, seeing that we are white, she asked us what we thought about the "Christian Right" who are also, for the most part, white Christians. We are conservative ourselves. However, I've felt the same kind of concern regarding the way many pastors, both white and black, tend to put Christ on the "back burner" and put their primary focus on politics and social issues (2 Timothy 2:3-4). When Christ is glorified at a church, and the people truly love Him, their faith crosses over all racial lines, both genders, all ages and backgrounds. It's when the people have been led astray from the fold that they tend to become grouped up into different churches where social issues and politics become the primary source of their unity instead of Christ being the center of the church.



Before I was married, there was a party one night for everyone in the building in which I was living. My neighbors were friendly and nice. But they knew that I was a Christian and that tended to make some of them nervous around me! I knew that there was drunkenness and a rowdy atmosphere there that was not conducive to my Christian walk. So, I did not go. Then, as the evening got late, I heard a commotion out in the hall, and some screaming. One of the young women had returned to her apartment alone while her husband had remained at the party. But for some reason unknown to me, one of the male partygoers had followed her back to her apartment and had accosted her,

punching her in the face. It didn't take long before word of it got back down to her husband, who sprang up the stairs with a group of neighbors around him, some of whom were off duty New York City police officers. I think they arrested the perpetrator, mostly to keep him safe from the wrath of the woman's angry husband! Her name was Linda. She was a pretty blond woman of only nineteen. Her husband was just a few years older than she was, and he was tall and muscular.

Linda was small and petite. And although I didn't want to get involved in anything to do with Sunday night's party, the Lord gave me such a tremendous burden for her that, although I tried to forget the whole thing, He wouldn't let me. Throughout the Monday the Holy Spirit kept bringing her back to mind. This was before I went to work for Merrill Lynch, and I was going on job interviews all that day. Needless to say, I didn't have much money. But I couldn't stand the burden anymore, so I knew I would have to go and see Linda. However, I didn't want to go empty handed. So, after work, I went to visit her. I took her a nice basket of fruit and nuts to cheer her up. She was alone when I arrived, but she welcomed me into her apartment and we began to talk. I didn't even have to bring up the subject of Christianity. My desire was to comfort her and to be neighborly. So, we began to talk. She told me that several years earlier, she had attended a Christian church. She had gone there alone because she was hoping to find out more about God. But she was quickly discouraged by the other churchgoers. Linda described a rich church where the women dressed in fancy clothes. *(Continued On Page 4)*

But Linda didn't have any fancy clothing. So, she felt that people were staring at her in a hostile manner. No one welcomed her. Everyone she saw at the church was cold and indifferent. The other girls her age saw her and began giggling and whispering among themselves. Linda left after the service with pain in her heart and she never went back. She had concluded that God was angry at her because of her lifestyle, and she had given up all hope of finding love in Christ. It was then that I knew why the Lord had laid such a heavy burden on me to visit with her! "Linda, Jesus loves so much that He wanted me to come and tell you how much He cares. Those people at the church you went to were wrong to treat you as they did. They weren't living for God at all. They didn't even know Him! For if they had truly known Christ, they would have reflected His love for you!" A few days later I received a thank you card from Linda for the fruit I had taken her.

When you really love the Lord, and His Spirit lives within you, your thinking process is different. On a trip Eric and I took many years ago, we were browsing around an antique mall. I saw some pretty glassware and I said to my husband, "Look at that beautiful communion set, honey." "It's nice Anne," he replied. "But look at the sign. They are calling it a cordial set." Your thinking is different because you are "...a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV). You don't feel comfortable in a carnal environment. You don't go to worldly movies anymore. You don't listen to worldly music. You don't feel comfortable around carnal friends, even if you've known them a long time. You want to talk about the Lord. They want to talk about buying a lottery ticket or how much they liked some R rated movie.

The first time I was called to jury duty, I was made the forewoman of the jury. I was nervous, because the other jurists were so different from me, and so carnal. The only thing we had in common was that we were on the same jury. They already knew everything about myself because the judge and two attorneys had grilled me before we were led into the jury room. So, I began by asking all the other jurists to introduce themselves, to tell all of us about themselves, and what they did for a living. Well, that didn't go over very well, and they preferred to stay anonymous. All they would divulge about themselves was their first name. That evening I went home rather disconcerted and somewhat discouraged. After dinner I spent about an hour in prayer during my nightly devotions. And much of my prayer was spent asking for God's help. The next day everything seemed to change. All of us remained in a very serious mood about the matter. However, when I suggested we vote, to my surprise, everyone except one woman, were in agreement. And one of the men talked her into voting with the rest of us. It was finally over, we had reached a consensus. I was so happy I said, "Hallelujah!" And one of the men looked at me and said, "Hallelujah?" What a difference prayer had made!

The moral of the story is that living for Jesus isn't easy, because it separates you from all the worldly people in your life, often including friends, neighbors, and family. However, the Lord is always just a prayer away. He's not a genie in a magic lamp. He does not grant your wishes. He steers you away from trouble or helps you through it. He's a friend who will stand with you, as long as you stand with Him. He 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). Do you love Jesus more than you love your family, or any member of it? God put you and me before His own precious Son (John 3:16). And Jesus was willing to die for us.

We're not talking about an easy death. You might take a bullet for your son or daughter. Your mother or father may take one for you. But would they choose to get severely flogged for you? The Bible prophesied that Jesus would be punched in the face and body so many times that "...His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and His form marred beyond human likeness" (Isaiah 52:14 NIV, Luke 22:63-64). Would the person you love more than Jesus be willing to have their hands and feet pierced and be hung on a cross for you (John 19:16)? Jesus spoke through the prophet when He prophesied what He knew He would experience on the cross. He said, "*I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to the roof of My mouth; you lay Me in the dust of death*" (Psalms 22:14-15 NIV). That describes extreme thirst. And if you've ever had a bone out of joint, even for a minute or two, you know how agonizing that can be. "*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:6-8 NIV).



I once read a letter that was published in a Christian magazine. It was written by a woman who said when she was eight months pregnant with a baby boy for whom she had longed, God spoke to her heart. He told her that this was going to be a very special child. He would be responsible for leading many, many souls into His Kingdom. As the woman sat there feeling these words she imagined her son as a missionary or an evangelist. She didn't know exactly what God's plans were, but she felt that he would have a full life dedicated to God. The child was eventually born, and he was treasured by his parents. Then, when he was about nine months old, after being very sick for awhile, he died. His mother didn't understand it. God had told her that her son would be used by Him to bring many souls into the Kingdom of Heaven. Now he was dead. The only thing of value left of her dead son was the insurance money that she and her husband received in the mail. After they had buried the child there was about \$200 left. The little boy's mother took the money and prayed about it.

She said, "Lord my baby is with you right now and as much as I loved my son, I love You more, and I want You to have this money. It's only \$200 and I don't understand why You said You would use him and now He's dead, but I am going to trust You anyway." She took the money and sent it to a large Christian charity. She enclosed a letter with the check explaining what had happened and saying, "This isn't very much money, but I feel that perhaps in some way you could put it to good use." The charity did use the money but they also published her letter in their magazine which went out all over the world. As I read it, I wondered what there would possibly be that a Christian organization could do with \$200 that would be worth the life of that child. For a long time, I didn't understand and it bothered me. Then one day God revealed to me that it wasn't the \$200 that had reached into the hearts and souls of people everywhere. It was her testimony of faith that was published in numerous languages and went out to all nations, creeds, and people, that touched the hearts of thousands and thousands of people as her testimony had touched my heart. This is what true faith in God is all about.