



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

March 2021

## FROM US TO YOU

Greetings to all of you from a cold, snowy Long Island, New York. The weather is rather gloomy, but our hearts are filled with the love, peace, and joy of knowing and serving Jesus Christ. This month we want to focus on perseverance, no matter what we encounter in this life, as we live daily in the love of Christ. Because, in the end, after you overcome whatever the devil throws at you, victory awaits you. Jesus told us that life in this world would be hard. He said, *“I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33 NIV). Likewise, we must be overcomers too. Life is hard right now. And, as time goes on, it will get harder to be a Christian. But don’t get discouraged, for you are not alone. And if Christ is in your heart, and you cling to Him, He will get you through whatever the crisis in your life there may be. *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you”* (1 Peter 4:12 NIV). Whatever takes place, you must trust God, no matter how things look on the surface *“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. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil”* (Proverbs 3:5-7 NIV). The devil is causing stress to mount up and this world to be in turmoil, for he knows that Jesus will be returning soon (see Revelation 19:11-19), and Satan will be thrown into hell (Revelation 20:1-3).

Therefore, *“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth”* (Luke 21:34-35 NIV). Don’t worry about what your friends, family, neighbors, and associates think as you try to live for Christ. *“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). *“For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead”* (1 Peter 4:3-5 NIV).

We had a little crisis recently as well. Anne was walking up the inside steps of our house carrying a glass of water when she tripped on the top step and went smashing, face first, into the wall. We have a suspicion that demons often cause such accidents. *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Ephesians 6:12 NIV). The glass broke into hundreds of little pieces, but not before cutting her face on her forehead, nose, and just below her left eye.

We thank God that the glass didn’t go into her eye! The floor was a mess of spilt water, blood, and tiny bits of glass. Thankfully, she received treatment right away at an emergency doctor’s office. The swelling looked awful the next day, but a week later the swelling was down and the sutures came out. Aside from a few colorful bruises, two little scabs, some small cuts on her nose, and a tiny scar under her left eye, Anne looks like herself again. The surgeon did an excellent job.

The point is, that unpleasant things happen in life, even for Christians. All the prophets and apostles of Christ suffered for their faith and had persecution. However, in the end they were victorious in their faith. They came through every miserable test Satan could throw at them and were overcomers in Christ. If being a Christian was easy, anyone could do it. That’s why it’s a test. If you do not go through the battle, you don’t get the victory. Therefore, remember

what Jesus said, *“Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. ‘Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets’”* (Luke 6:22-23 NIV). And the Lord said, *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed My teaching, they will obey yours also”* (John 15:18-20 NIV).



So, keep your eyes on Christ, and don’t worry when you hear people say that the world will be over in less than twelve years. For when it ends, Jesus will return! But the Rapture will come first (see 1 Corinthians 15:50-56 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). And Jesus said, *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away. ‘No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man’”* (Matthew 24:35-39 NIV). As Christians, we should be welcoming the end of the devil’s control over this world system and the return of Christ. Jesus taught us what we should pray about, including, the line, *“...Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth”* (Luke 11:2 KJV). That will only happen when Satan is thrown out of it and Jesus rules it. So, have a nice Spring everyone.

In the Lord’s service, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*

# REFINING YOUR FAITH

By Anne Kaestner

With so many people wanting to come to the United States to have a better life, it stands to reason that America has long stood out as President Reagan called it, “A Shining City On A Hill.” Many of us have heard about the terrible conditions and atrocities that take place in other countries, and it’s easy to understand why people feel that way. Citizens of the United States have traditionally enjoyed freedom. That includes all the benefits guaranteed to us in the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, some of which include freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press and the right not to be exposed to unlawful search and seizure. Americans have long gotten used to these rights. Therefore, a relaxed contentment has crept in among the population. We hear about things that happen to other people in faraway lands, but it hasn’t affected Americans very much. Many have lived a comfortable or affluent lifestyle. Hollywood movies and television shows have spread that impression all over the world. In fairness, this comfortable way of living is not restricted to America. Many western nations in the free world enjoy similar luxuries. Consequently, such people, who consider themselves Christians, have developed a blasé attitude, and feel detached from the suffering in other nations and the high cost of their salvation.

It brings to mind the words of Christ to the Laodicean church. *“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of My mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see”* (Rev. 3:15-18 NIV). Many people reading this will say, “I don’t live in any luxury. Ever since the Covet 19 virus started, I’ve been losing money. I am having trouble paying my bills. I may lose my business. And I haven’t been on vacation or out to dinner since before the virus struck.” You are right. Things have gotten tough right now. However, God hasn’t forsaken you, as you may think. He’s just refining your faith, because He loves you, and He wants to see you in Heaven someday, because the alternative (Revelation 20:15, Mark 9:48-49) is too horrible to think about. That’s why you’re having problems. The Lord is just trying to get your attention to focus you on what is ultimately most important. And that’s very often a painful lesson.

*“In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son.” Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons... God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it”* (Hebrews 12:4-11 NIV).

During the days of the early church, there was tremendous suffering. Christians were flogged, stoned, fed to lions, and crucified (see Hebrews 11:35-38). In my study of the days leading up to the Reformation, I cringe at the misery Protestants suffered at the hands of the Catholic church. Thousands were tortured to death or burned at the stake. However, in both instances, the early church and the forerunners

of the Reformation, a tremendous revival came out of it! For it was through suffering that the church was refined. *“For in much wisdom is much grief: and He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow”* (Ecclesiastes 1:18 KJV). It happened the same way to the Israelites too. God had blessed the Israelites more than any other nation. The other nations were afraid of them because they knew God was fighting for Israel (Exodus 14:25, Joshua 10:14). However, instead of showing greater love and devotion to God, Israel became complacent, proud, and fell into sin over and over again. God would punish them severely, and they would repent. After awhile the Lord would have compassion on them and bless them. Then their sin would start all over again.

God would get angry at their rebellion once more and the cycle would continue again. After the Lord brought the Jews out of Egyptian bondage, God saw how badly they had fallen into wickedness. The Hebrews got tired of having battles with their pagan neighbors. They wanted to rest and live in more luxury. They wanted to be friends with other nations, even though God had told them to be separate (Deuteronomy 7:1-9). The seventy-eighth chapter of Psalms summarizes what happened. *“Again and again they put God to the test; they vexed the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power—the day He redeemed them from the oppressor, the day He displayed His miraculous signs in Egypt, His wonders in the region of Zoan”* (Psalms 78:41-43 NIV). It got so bad that they actually started copying the pagans’ habit of worshipping idols as gods, and sacrificing humans

to them. The most innocent of life, newborn babies, would be placed down on hot coals, and drums would beat to drown out the sound of the baby’s screaming as it died in agony. This really infuriated the Lord! But the demons were happy. They had succeeded in getting the Jews to sin against God and worship them as gods. After all that the Lord had done for them, He was hurt and angry that they so easily forgot His laws. The Bible refers to them as Jeshurun, another name for the people of Israel.

*“Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; filled with food, he became heavy and sleek. He abandoned the God who made him and rejected the Rock his Savior. They made Him jealous with their foreign gods and angered*

*Him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth. The LORD saw this and rejected them because He was angered by His sons and daughters. ‘I will hide My face from them,’ He said, ‘and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful. They made Me jealous by what is no god and angered Me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding. For 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 32:15-22 NIV).

That last part of the scripture, sounds like God is referring to the fire of volcanoes and Hell, beneath them! The Lord had a right to be angry. He has emotions like ours. We were made in His image (Genesis 1:27). God has love (1 John 4:8) and compassion (John 3:16). However, He also gets jealous (2 Corinthians 11:2 and Joshua 24:19) and angry when He is rejected by His own people, whom He has blessed so abundantly. And when God gets angry, He very often allows other nations to defeat His people, so as to punish them for their sin. Also,



to try to bring them back to their senses. It got to the place in the days of Daniel, where the Lord allowed Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to overpower the Israelites, kill many of them, and plunder and capture the rest. God saved a remnant of the righteous Jews and the Israelites began to flourish again. However, eventually they even rejected their own Messiah, Christ (John 1:11). Again, they made the Lord angry, and He allowed them to fall into the hands of their enemy, Adolf Hitler. As a result, about six million of them died under horrible conditions in World War 2. Even today the majority of Jews still reject Christ as their Messiah. They view Christianity as a Gentile religion, even though Christ was a Jew from the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:1-17). And He was prophesied in Genesis 22:8, Isaiah chapter 53, Isaiah 7:14, Psalms chapter 22, Micah 5:2, and many other Old Testament Bible passages. It wasn't the Gentiles who brought Christianity to the Jews. It was Jews who brought Christianity to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46)! Paul of Tarsus, a Jew himself, wrote, *"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God"* (2 Corinthians 4:3-4 NIV). The god of this age is, of course, Satan, the Devil (Ephesians 2:1-2).

Another example of God blessing His people and then, afterwards, they rejected Him, is the Pilgrims. After terrible persecution by the Catholic church in England, the Pilgrims, who were Protestants, sailed for a new world. They left Southampton, England and crowded aboard the Mayflower. They spent the following 66 days in extremely crowded quarters on ship. Many of them were frequently sea sick. There was no privacy and no sanitary facilities. Fresh water was too scarce for washing. The stench in the crowded quarters and human waste must have been repugnant. Cold food was the main fare of the passengers, hard biscuits, cheese, and salted beef or fish. Many passengers contracted scurvy during the voyage. They also suffered exposure to bitter winds and icy waters. When storms tossed the ship, the caulking worked out of the upper seams, letting in the freezing spray. It was a bad New England winter when the Pilgrims arrived in America. They were not skilled at hunting or fishing. Nor were they equipped with fishing boats and gear. Aside from scurvy, many Pilgrims developed pneumonia. At times there were no more than six or seven well people left to care for the others.

Once the main beam buckled, and repairs had to be made in mid-ocean. On November 19, when they were nearly there, Captain Jones headed southward off the eastern coast of the cape. The vessel was caught in the scarcely submerged sandbars southeast of present-day Chatham. For several hours it appeared that the ship was in danger of running aground and being wrecked. Then a change in the wind enabled the captain to sail northward to the head of the cape, finally mooring in the Provincetown Harbor. They arrived in Province town, Massachusetts on November 21, 1620. A month later, on December 21, they arrived at the site of Plymouth. Of the band of more than 100 Pilgrims who landed, half were dead before winter's end. They buried the dead at night and leveled the ground to conceal the graves. Despite all of this, they did not waver in their commitment and love for the Lord, and He performed many wonderful works for them. They trusted Him and continued to serve Him even when their loved ones died, for they knew they would one day see them again in Heaven. They did not waiver in their commitment to Jesus Christ in the worst of their trials. So far, they passed all the tests that came their way, and God blessed them as a result.

A year later, when the harvest was bountiful, the Pilgrims held

their first Thanksgiving feast. It was a celebration, a day of giving thanks to God, recognizing that there is a God in Heaven, and that He is the one who brought them safely across the Atlantic Ocean to this new land, where they could begin a new life. Even the Indians were involved, and participated in the celebration with the European settlers. God had given them much for which to be grateful. Similar to Biblical accounts (Deuteronomy 9:1-5, 2 Kings 6:24 thru 7:16), the Lord had provided them with vacant fields that had already been cleared by the Patuxet Indian tribe, which had been wiped out by smallpox four years earlier. Moreover, neighboring Indians were friendly, and two of them, Samoset and Squanto, had learned to speak English from explorers, and could act as interpreters. Samoset had even arranged a meeting with Massasoit, chief of the Wampanoag Indians. This resulted in a peace treaty between Massasoit and the settlers. Furthermore, Squanto taught the colonist how to plant corn, and to catch herring for fertilizer by using a trap. This was especially handy since the European merchants who had contracted with the Pilgrims, and had financed their voyage, had been slow in sending them needed supplies. There was much to be grateful for at that first Thanksgiving in 1621. Initially it had been a real struggle and times were still hard, but the Pilgrims had put their trust in God, and He had come through for them every time.

Massasoit, their new friend, was invited to the feast. He attended with 90 of his braves, but fortunately, the Indian hunters brought five deer with them. Land was granted to each settler in 1627. The crops improved, and Plymouth's most prosperous years were from 1630 to 1640. The sad part is that, after all that they had suffered, and all the tests they had come through, the last and final test defeated their resolve. That last test was the same test that America has failed, even in most churches of this nation. That test was prosperity! For it was the prosperity brought on by the blessings of God which eventually led to the weakening of the Pilgrim's faith. The tight-knit community they had once valued eventually dwindled down in size so much that in 1691 Plymouth was absorbed by Massachusetts when that colony obtained a new charter. It's always the same way. Truly the



hardest tests of your love for God comes when He blesses you.

The devil himself was once a prestigious heavenly angel named Lucifer. God said of him, *"... 'You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. 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 28:12-15 NIV). It was the blessings of God that caused Lucifer to rebel against the Lord. I believe, based on scripture, that no other angel was so blessed. He was given beauty (see Ezekiel 28:17), wealth, as mentioned above, and authority. Notice how God said that Adam and Eve should *"...replenish the earth, and subdue it..."* (Genesis 1:28 KJV). "Replenish" means to put something back to replace something that was taken out. "Subdue" means to overcome, quieten, or bring under control.

So, what had been taken out of the earth that God wanted mankind to subdue? I believe it was Satan's control over the earth. The Bible tells us, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1 NIV). We know the earth must have been perfect, because everything God makes is perfect. However, the next verse says, *"Now the earth was formless and empty,"* (Continued On Page 4)

darkness was over the surface of the deep...” (Genesis 1:2 NIV). Christ was the maker of the earth (John 1:1-3 and Proverbs 8:22-31). God the Father was the architect. And Christ said, “...I am the **light of the world**. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12 NIV). So how did a perfect earth get into this dark, chaotic condition? I believe that it had been run by Satan and was populated by fallen angels, known as demons. The Bible says that after Satan mutinied against God, “...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 12:8-9 NIV). That would explain the horrible creatures, like dinosaurs, that once lived on this planet. So, Satan had it all, wealth, power, beauty, prestige. And he lost it all before the creation of mankind. There were nations of fallen angels, called demons, on the earth under his control too. God, speaking to Satan, the devil, said, “Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before **kings**. By your many sins and **dishonest trade** you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching” (Ezekiel 28:17-18 NIV).

The solid bodies of the fallen angels were originally designed to be sanctuaries or “houses” for God to control, and dedicated to God’s glory. But, instead, Satan and his fallen angels, turned demons, used them to glorify themselves. So, God destroyed them. He cremated them in front of all the host of Heaven. So much for Satan’s vanity. Therefore, God gave control over the earth to Adam and Eve instead. You know the rest. Satan, who no longer had a body of his own, had entered into the body of a snake to deceive Eve. Adam knew better. “...Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner” (1 Timothy 2:14 NIV). Nevertheless, Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, and Adam, with full knowledge of what would happen, obeyed his wife, and sinned with her. Despite everything that had happened prior to this, Satan gained all that Adam had been given by God. “Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (Romans 6:16 NIV). That’s why the devil is currently the ruler, or “god,” of this world.

And “...the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:4 KJV). However, he can only rule this earth for the period of time that God gave to Adam. And, thankfully, his time of rule is almost up (Revelation 12:12). God wants good things for us. However, even one third of the angels (called stars, Revelation 12:4) in Heaven, rebelled against the Lord when they were given so much. God loves us, however, He knows that human nature being what it is, God’s blessings cause us to become proud and contemptuous of the Giver, as Satan and Adam were. So, don’t make the mistake of the Israelites, and become too chummy with carnal friends and adopt their lifestyle. “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What

agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people. Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you’” (2 Corinthians 6:14-17 NIV).

We are living in the last days before the return of Christ. That’s why the devil is so active right now (1 Peter 5:8). Paul the apostle, said, “...There will be terrible times in the **last days**. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 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 3:1-5 NIV).

Do you sometimes wonder whether you are righteous enough to get to Heaven? Peter explains the kind of commitment to Christ that gets us there. Peter is my favorite apostle, and a man familiar with suffering. He told the early church, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 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. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, **for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls**” (1 Peter 1:3-9 NIV).

Now you know why you’re being refined and what Jesus meant when He said, “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire...” (Revelation 3:18 NIV). Therefore, do not value that which is temporal, but that which is eternal (see Matthew 6:19-21, Luke 8:14, and 1 John 2:17). “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:16-17 NIV). So, keep your eyes on the prize and remember what lies ahead for overcomers, as the Apostle John saw 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!’” (Revelation 21:1-5 NIV).

