



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

May 2020

## FROM US TO YOU

As we prepare this message there is a thunderstorm outside, and the grass and driveway are covered in hail. It seems to fit the gloomy mood many people are feeling as the COVID-19 pandemic is still getting much attention. Since we are based in New York State, we are still under orders to shelter in place for the present time. However, this experience is very enlightening. We are finding out that many things we have always taken for granted can be taken away from us very quickly. We thought that we would survive this without too much inconvenience. We have plenty of food in the house, medicines, and toiletries. However, we didn't even consider things like a toothache, which Anne got. A toothache is not life threatening, like the virus. And there is plenty of suffering going on right now, worldwide. But anyone who has had a toothache knows that it is very painful. Our dental office is currently closed due to the shutdown, and there is no way to contact them, even in an emergency. So, we contacted several good Christians we know and asked for prayer. Anne got through the night with hope, faith, and Ibu-profen.

The next morning was a partial answer to prayer. For the oral surgeon's office, which she had also contacted, called back. They didn't have the PPE equipment they had ordered, and were expecting a delivery in about a week. So, a visit was out of the question. However, they did prescribe an antibiotic, which helped a lot. At this writing, the toothache is not totally gone, but the antibiotic greatly lessened the pain. And she has a few days' worth of the medicine left. The point is that we, as a society, have gotten so used to the blessings of modern life, that we don't often stop to consider how much praise and gratitude, we owe to the Giver. Throughout history, people have gotten closer to God when they have gone through hard times. When the blessings are flowing, they seem to get used to them and don't give God the glory He deserves. When we stop to consider what the God-fearing early settlers of America suffered, it puts things into a different perspective. They didn't have modern medicine, but they had more respect for God than even Christians have these days.

They didn't have supermarkets. They either had grown their own food or kill an animal, then pluck, skin, or scale it. Then they could cook it. Even the cooking process took a lot of time. They had no refrigeration or microwave dinners back then. They didn't have modern transportation. So, they traveled across this country by stagecoach or wagon trains, fighting off Indian attacks, disease, and all kinds of wild animals. We were amazed to find out that the average life expectancy of the early settlers was just 25 years old. Between 1750 and 1800 it was up to 35. Life was hard. When a bullet had to come out or an Indian arrow, the patient would be given something to bite on. It didn't deaden the pain, but it made it hard for them to scream in pain. It was a frequent thing for women to die in childbirth back then. Oh, how blessed we are, and how little glory God is getting in modern society! In fact, fewer people are going to church

these days! Twenty years ago, 76% of Catholics belonged to a church. These days 63% do. Between 1998 and 2000 73% of Protestants go to a church compared to 67% today

We believe that people have lost interest in the church due to two reasons. (1) The influences of liberal propaganda through secular humanism, and (2) the lack of Holy Spirit anointing in the church. Without God's Spirit in a church, it becomes nothing more than a religious social club. As Paul told Timothy, a young evangelist, *“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths”*

(2 Timothy 4:2-4 NIV). That time has already come!

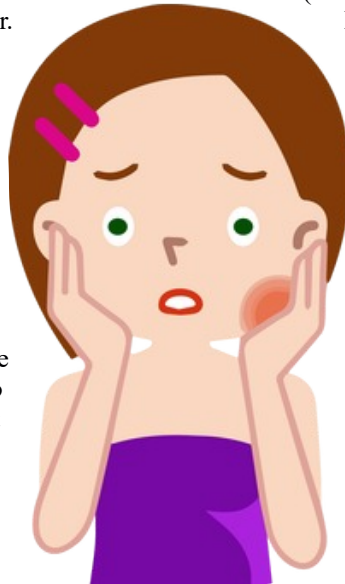
People in nations which once embraced Christ, are living off the blessings of their ancestors. Many megachurches, in particular, are filled with people with “itching ears.”

They want to be flattered. They want to hear about all the blessings God will bring them. They don't want to hear about Hell and the Lake of Fire. However, Christ has warned today's Laodicean church that they are living dangerously. He said, *“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.*

*Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent”* (Revelation 3:15-19 NIV). When the storms of life come against you, it is not because God hates you. It's because He loves you, the way a loving father would chastise a rebellious child to get his attention (Hebrews 12:7-10).

If God's warnings don't work, more storms will come. Therefore, *“see to it that you do not refuse Him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused Him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from Him who warns us from heaven? At that time His voice shook the earth, but now He has promised, ‘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 12:25-29 NIV).

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



# Cain and Career

By Anne Kaestner

Recently, for the purpose of this article, I was reminded of a film my husband and I once saw on television. It was called “The Bridge on the River Kwai.” It was made in 1957 and won seven Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Actor for Alec Guinness. Alec Guinness played the leader of a group of British POW’s forced to build a jungle railroad bridge in World War II Indochina. The British Colonel, played by Guinness, became so obsessed with the bridge he was building for the enemy that it became a “idol” to him (Leviticus 19:4). Therefore, when British Intelligence decided to blow it up in order to prevent the Japanese from gaining a wartime advantage, the Colonel was determined to save his bridge at all cost, even that of his country and the lives of British soldiers. Several people died because of this, including the Colonel. However, the bridge was blown up in the end. This story gave rare insight into that part of human nature that harbors achievement and accomplishment above all else. The bridge was a symbol of the Colonel’s pride, and he expected it to be a little shrine to him throughout the years to come. But when it didn’t work out that way, nothing else mattered to the Colonel but saving that bridge.

The bridge could just have easily been a doctorate degree from some university, a talent such as singing or dancing, an invention, a noble accomplishment for which mankind would pat him on the back and say well done, such as raising money for some charity, or winning the gold for his country in the Olympics. In effect, he was seeking the praise and admiration of his peers. The bridge was his ego, his sense of worth in society, and to most people that is everything. Education and accomplishment are stressed so much in the United States that it has become a god to millions. “If only I could get into that college” or “My son the doctor!” become such a sense of achievement that those reaching that place are at a definite disadvantage in their relationship with God (John 5:44).

In reality, those who feel that way may not even make it to Heaven at all, because, “...we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness 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). Also, see John 15:1-8). For those who are so proud of their accomplishments, that they look upon others as inferior, consider what Jesus said of the religious leaders in His day. “...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). Ask yourself these questions. Who gave you the good health, intelligence, and opportunity to do so well? Who put you in an environment where you could thrive? Who put you in contact with people who were able to enable you to achieve success? It was the Lord (Genesis 39:2-4, Deuteronomy 28:2, John 19:10-11).

Before I met my husband, Eric, he belonged to a van club. He would go to van-ins with his custom designed van. They would have contests for who had the best van in various categories. Eric had spent a lot of time and money working on his van, making it more comfortable and attractive. He won a lot of trophies at the events. Then, when we got married and moved into our apartment, he proudly displayed his many trophies in our living room, so anyone coming into the apartment would see them. Eric accepted Christ as his Savior a few months after our marriage. Then, one day, he heard the hymn, “[The Old Rugged Cross](#).” There is a part of the song that says, “I’ll

cherish the old rugged cross, till my trophies at last I lay down. I will cling to the old rugged cross, and exchange it someday for a crown.” After hearing that, he threw out all his trophies in the trash. And he got rid of all the carnal pictures, and replaced them with scenic photos and scripture. Outside the van, he put a sign that said, “Praise the Lord.” As we traveled around the country, Christian motorists would see the van, honk, and wave their approval (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Billy Sunday (1862-1935) was a famous sports star who turned from the ways of his past when he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He did not focus his ministry on his past laurels, then tack on a Christian label. He repented of his past life in this world and chose to live by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). When he quit baseball in 1891, he was at the peak of his career. But he gave it all up for Christ! That year Sunday had set a record of 90 bases stolen in 116 games. The Philadelphia Phillies offered him \$400 a month. Cincinnati offered him \$500 a month. Yet he took a “Secretary of Religious Department” job for the YMCA for \$83 a month. In 1894 the Pittsburgh Pirates offered him \$2,000 a month to return to baseball. Sunday took a job as an advance man for Evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman, making \$40 a week! When God calls someone to preach the Gospel, He tests them severely. Sunday passed the preliminary tests of faith and God eventually gave him a huge ministry.

Nobody gets into Heaven because of their own righteousness or good works. Jesus said, “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*” (John 14:6 NIV). That was the problem that the Pharisees and Sadducees had in the days of Jesus, they thought that they could get into Heaven on their own righteousness and, as a result, they became proud, wicked, and corrupt. They hated Jesus because He exposed them for what they were, and yet He was their only chance of getting to Heaven. Despite this, they plotted to kill Him (see John 7:1). Jesus said of them, “*Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men’*” (Mark 7:6-7 NIV). Education, medicine, sports, entertainment, and the media demonstrate this trait abundantly. We see doctors, psychologists, athletes, politicians, pastors, celebrities, all falling prey to their own egos and facing the consequences of them, whether they be scandal and corruption, drug abuse, murder, suicide, or the like. Over the last few decades, we have heard about many religious scandals and about medical doctors or psychologists who get into trouble for taking advantage of their position. It’s not our good works that please the Lord; it’s establishing and keeping a relationship with Him that’s above reproach!

This sin of pride in one’s accomplishments is nothing new. It dates all the way back to Cain and Abel, Adam and Eve’s first two sons. These men were told to bring blood sacrifices to God. That was symbolic of the blood that Christ, God’s Son, would eventually shed to purchase back our souls after Adam disobeyed God. Adam, in effect, gave his soul and that of his wife and offspring to the devil. However, God had already planned for such a situation. “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16 KJV). Consequently, a blood sacrifice was the only solution. However, the blood of cattle and sheep would only push back the debt mankind owed to God. The debt had to be paid or we humans would spend an eternity with the devil, burning in Hell. For the Bible



says, “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15 NIV). Jesus Christ was called the “Lamb of God” because He was the only one in all creation who was perfect enough to pay for the sins of mankind and to die in our place. John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him to be water baptized. When he saw Him, John shouted out, “...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29 KJV).

God’s own Son was the only sacrifice that would do to save mankind from eternal doom. And that would only work if we humans were willing to repent of our sins and accept Christ as our Lord and Savior. We must turn from our sins and live for Him. Only Christ’s precious blood could wash away our sin. However, in the meantime, the interest on the debt had to be paid in the blood of sacrificial animals. God did something that symbolized this after the sin of Adam and Eve. “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3:7-8 NIV). God knew that fig leaves would never cover the shame of sin. Therefore, “The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21 NIV). Innocent animals had to die in their place and at least cover their nakedness. It was symbolic of the blood of Christ.

Now we get back to Cain and Abel. Abel obeyed God with “...the firstlings of his flock...” (Genesis 4:4 KJV), but Cain refused to do so. He was a farmer, or “...tiller of the ground” (Genesis 4:2 KJV), and he was proud of the fruits and vegetables he’d worked so hard to grow. Moreover, Cain felt sure that God would accept them instead of animal blood. He probably thought Abel just sat around watching his flock all day, in comfort under a shade tree. But Cain felt he was doing a lot more for God. He was working by the sweat of his brow and had all these fruits and vegetables prepared to give to the Lord. “...And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering; But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect” (Genesis 4:4-5 KJV).

Cain became so angry that he killed his brother. Therefore, God punished Cain by taking away the one thing that meant the most to him, his career. God told him, “When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth. Cain said to the LORD, ‘My punishment is more than I can bear’” (Genesis 4:12-13 NIV). God could have killed Cain; he certainly would have deserved it. He had just murdered his brother! But God chose to take away the one thing that was coming between Himself and Cain, Cain’s career, which was the source of his pride!

How many Cains do we have today? “Lord, I get up in the middle of the night and deliver little babies into the world.” “I work with the handicapped and do a great service to society.” “I risk my life every day as a police officer to protect people.” “I am a big important attorney, but I take some cases without charge as a service to my community.” “I am a rock star and I have raised millions of dollars for the starving people in Africa.” “I am a good wife and mother. My family is so important to me that I sacrifice myself to please them.” God wasn’t interested in how hard Cain worked or in his fruitful endeavors! “Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it’” (Genesis 4:6-7 NIV). When God took away Cain’s farming ability, Cain was devastated. Nevertheless, God was showing Cain mercy by removing the

one obstacle that was coming between them, and which was preventing Cain from receiving God’s salvation.

No matter what we accomplish in this life, if it isn’t truly done for the glory of God, His way, not ours, it will mean absolutely nothing in the final analysis. With all the accomplishments you have made in this world, the Bible still states, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5 KJV). You cannot save yourself! In the end we will all stand before God on that day of judgment and the books will be opened, “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15 KJV). For with all your talent, good works, education, and ability, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10 NIV). As I write this article, a medical pandemic is going on. The COVID-19 virus is killing people worldwide. And many of those who don’t die from it, get ill effects as a result. People are terrified. That’s understandable. Death seems so final. But, actually, it isn’t! It is only the end of our lives here on earth.

The Bible says that when death occurs, “...Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets. **Remember Him** [God the Redeemer]—before the **silver cord** is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:5-7 NIV). When that happens all your good deeds, sacrifice, and kindness

to others will not make a bit of difference when you stand before God on judgment day. Your body is the temporary house that your spirit lives in. It is connected to your spirit through a **silver cord**. If you have a serious accident, a heart attack, or something similar, your heart may stop beating while the doctors or paramedics try to resuscitate you. During that time your spirit may leave your body and you appear dead. People in this situation have sometimes said that they were able to hover, in their spirit, over the room as the medical staff tried to get their heart started. In such a case, you still have a chance of becoming resuscitated as long as the silver cord is attached.

But once God cuts it, you are dead and can no longer come back to life.

Jesus was crucified between two thieves, one on each side. Along with all the pain and humiliation the Lord suffered, the forty lashes He had received, a crown of thorns dug upon His scalp, then nailed to a cross, prophecy says His beard was even pulled out (Isaiah 50:6). And He suffered the abuse of spectators who jeered at Him. At first both the thieves “...who were crucified with Him also heaped insults on Him” (Matthew 27:44 NIV). Then one of the them came to his senses. The other thief said, “... ‘Aren’t you the Christ? Save Yourself and us!’ But the other criminal rebuked him. ‘Don’t you fear God,’ he said, ‘since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong’” (Luke 23:39-41 NIV). Then he said, “... ‘Jesus, **remember me** when you come into Your kingdom.’ Jesus answered him, ‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in Paradise’” (Luke 23:42-43 NIV). The man had obviously been a sinner all his life. He admitted that he deserved severe punishment, but accepted the fact that Jesus was who He claimed to be, and had committed no sin. And he believed that He had a kingdom, and he, a thief, wanted to be a part of it.

The Lord’s response was a swift assurance that his repentance had been accepted and He would be with Jesus in His holy kingdom. The thief couldn’t pray at an altar. **(Continued On Page 4)**



He couldn't be water baptized. His faith in Christ and his humble contrition and dependence toward Him was all it took. He didn't work for his salvation. He didn't try to impress Jesus with all the good works he had done. He just admitted that he was a sinner who couldn't save himself. His remarks proved that he believed in life after death, and that Jesus was the only way to receive it. Now Jesus didn't say, "You'll be with Me in Heaven." He said, "You'll be with Me in Paradise." The story of the rich man and Lazarus illustrates the difference. *"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried.*

*In Hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead'" (Luke 16:19-31 NIV).*

Some teachers have claimed this passage was a parable. However, Jesus never mentioned real people in any of His parables. An understanding of Paradise can be explained in this passage. Speaking of what occurred after Jesus died on the cross, it says, *"...When He ascended on high, He led captives in His train and gave gifts to men. (What does "He ascended" mean except that He also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very One who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe)"* (Ephesians 4:8-10 NIV). The "lower earthly regions" refers to Hell, which is in the center of the earth (Deuteronomy 32:22). Twentieth century scientists found that the center of the earth contains liquid fire and brimstone (sulfur) (Revelation 20:10-15), just as the Bible says. Up until the time that Jesus died for our sins, even the righteous had no access to Heaven. For their sins had not yet been paid for. But the righteous didn't deserve to go to the same place as the wicked. Therefore, God prepared a place for them in the center of the earth, next to Hell. It was called Paradise. It was a holding area for those who died trusting in their promised Redeemer, like Abraham (Romans 4:2-3) or Job (Job 19:25).

So what Ephesians 4:8-10 is saying is that after Christ paid for our sins, He "descended" into Paradise in order to rescue those who had waited patiently for Him. Some had waited thousands of years! What a celebration that must have been! I can imagine how the excited shouted, "Jesus is here! He has paid for our sins. He is taking us up to Heaven finally!" So, they "ascended" into Heaven. But the rich man in the Lord's story stayed in Hell. If he was anything like

the religious leaders in Christ's day, he probably thought of himself as a godly person. He probably thought he was keeping the ten commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). So, did a rich young ruler who wanted salvation, but didn't want to give up all his worldly wealth to get it (see Matthew 19:16-23). Such people neglect the most important commandment of all, the very first one! Jesus summed up all ten commandments into two simple laws, *"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these'"* (Mark 12:30-31 NIV). Even in Hell, the rich man thought of Lazarus as his inferior. Yet if you put God first in your heart, loving your neighbor comes naturally (1 John 4:8)! The rich man was more like the Pharisee in Luke 18:10-14.

Now let's go back to the scripture mentioned in Ecclesiastes 12:5-7. When someone dies, his spirit leaves his body, *"...and mourners go about the streets."* Chances are that the rich man in the Lord's story, had a big funeral with many mourners. Lazarus probably had none. However, Lazarus remembered His Redeemer after he, *"...died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side."* I explained the "silver cord" already. But what about the "golden bowl that is broken," or the "pitcher that is shattered at the spring," or the "wheel that is broken at the well?" Remember the account of the Samaritan woman who went to draw water from the well. Jesus asked her to give Him some water, and *"the Samaritan woman said to Him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans). Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water'"* (John 4:9-10 NIV). When Jesus died on the cross, the soldiers wanted to make sure He was dead. Therefore, *"...one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water"* (John 19:34 NIV). His precious blood paid for our salvation, and the water cleanses us from all sin. We, who receive Him, are the city of God. *"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells"* (Psalms 46:4 NIV).

However, what if the woman at the well broke her pitcher? She wouldn't be able to access the water. What if she put the water into a beautiful golden bowl? No matter how beautiful the outside may be, if the bowl is broken, it won't hold water. The rich man could have been buried in a beautiful golden casket. But without the holy water of Christ, washing away his sin, it wouldn't make a difference to his eternal destination. What if the wheel at the well was broken? She could not access the water, and would go thirsty. It is a symbolism of salvation. You need to accept Christ when you still have the opportunity. After we are dead, it's too late to accept Him. Your sin will still be there. While you are still alive, drink up the spiritual water of Christ. Accept His blood sacrifice as payment for your sins. Then the Holy Spirit will guide you in what good works you must do. For no matter what profession you choose or how many good works you do, in the end there is only one way to be saved, through repentance and obedience to God through the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 6:46). *"Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body. Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil"* (Ecclesiastes 12:12-14 NIV).

