



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

September 2020

## FROM US TO YOU

As this generation draws closer to the triumphant return of Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:11-21), we are all experiencing what the Bible calls "birth pains" (Matthew 24:8). For just as a child who is ready to be born moves closer toward the birth canal, this world is feeling the pains that come with ushering in a new age. For the Kingdom of God is soon to take over the earth and Christ is getting ready to push out Satan, and his control over it (Matthew 4:8-9). Meanwhile, the earth is experiencing all the symptoms that come with it. Lately this world has had to deal with problems associated with COVID-19, crazy weather conditions, political unrest, riots, droughts, fires, famines, etc. As Jesus said, *"when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains"* (Mark 13:7-8 NIV). So why are so many people filled with anger and rage, even in the United States? It's *"...because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short"* (Revelation 12:12 NIV).

When Christ comes back, He will reclaim the earth and set up His own kingdom of peace, joy, and love. And Satan will be put in hell for a thousand years (Revelation 20:2). Jesus will rule this planet during that time. *"The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea"* (Isaiah 11:6-9 NIV). No matter what you hear politically, no earthly kingdom will ever be able to achieve that kind of utopia. Only God can do that under the leadership of Christ! What the world is experiencing right now is a shaking up. Because this world doesn't know God, so its people are living in sin. It's their natural condition since they are separated from God.

It was the condition of all of us before we repented of our sins and asked God's forgiveness for them. However, Jesus said *"...Go now and leave your life of sin"* (John 8:11 NIV). Yet too many lukewarm Christians have hidden sins in their life that they are still clinging to. God wants to refine you, so you will shine with the brilliance of Christ and reflect His beloved Son. Yet some of you are still hanging on to that worthless ore that clung to you when you first turned to the Lord. For gold, in its natural state, cannot be useful to the refiner until it is separated from the worthless ore it clings to. However, the process of separation is painful. For the gold has to be put into the furnace and heated up to such a high temperature so that the gold is melted off of the ore (Isaiah 48:10). Then the pure

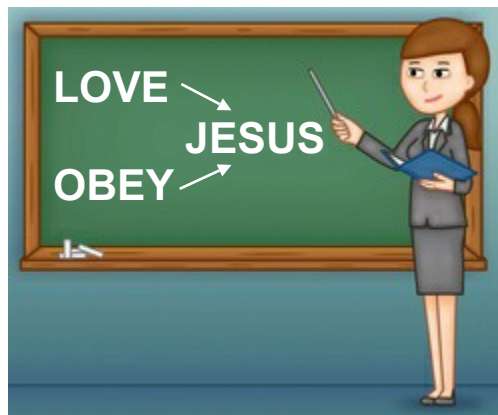
gold is put into molds and cooled down. Yet it must still stay flexible enough for the designer to shape into whatever he chooses. Are you flexible to the Lord? Is the sin in your life like ore that is keeping you from your true potential? If you're in this situation you are probably uncomfortable spiritually because you want to straddle the fence. You want to be a Christian. You want to serve God. But you still have one foot in the world. Are there things in your life that you don't want to give up?

Perhaps the problem is that you don't want to make people angry at you by living for Christ. You don't want to lose friends and disappointment family. Or it may be that you are worried about losing your worldly job. Jesus said, *"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other; or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money"* (Luke 16:13 NIV). So, as Joshua said to the children of Israel, *"if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD"* (Joshua 24:15 NIV). If you're Born Again (John 3:3), God paid a price for you that was so high that no one else would or could ever pay it. In return, He wants to be loved (Mark 12:30) and obeyed (see 1 Samuel 15:22 and Luke 6:46). *"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 1:4 NIV).

God shook the earth in ancient days.

And He is doing it again today. *"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 12:27-29 NIV). So, build your faith on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:24-27). Don't be a lukewarm Christian, like the Laodicean church. For Jesus 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. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock... He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"* (Revelation 3:15-22 NIV).

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



# The True Christian Spirit

By Anne Kaestner

About ten years ago a woman called us on the phone. She said she was a Christian and that she had a great testimony for us to print in our newsletter. I told her that she could certainly send it to us and if it met our criteria, we would put it on our website. “No, I want it in your newsletter,” she replied. I told her that there wasn’t room in our newsletter. And I repeated that, if we liked it, we might put it on our website. However, she wasn’t satisfied with that, and she continued to insist, quite adamantly, that we print it in “The Good News Letter.” It’s true that we used to occasionally print prison inmate testimonies in our newsletter. However, the many inmates that we heard from preferred to be taught about the Bible rather than read testimonies. And they often refer to the newsletter as a “Bible Study.” One inmate told me that he had a group of other inmates and that he used it to teach from. I have a feeling that he was not the only one. A pastor at a non-prison church once sent us an email. He said that his congregation wanted him to preach about Christian prosperity. He told us that he searched the web for ideas, and came across our March-April 1998 newsletter, with my article, “The Prosperity Gospel.” He thanked us and said that it had all the information he needed for his sermon. A few years ago, we published the article in my ebook, “Counterfeit Christianity.” Therefore, it is no longer available on the free web.

Yet there was no explaining any of this to the woman caller. She just wouldn’t take no for an answer! The thought also occurred to me that her attitude was not a good example of Christianity and so I had no confidence in her testimony. “But it’s a great testimony,” she insisted. I told her, again, if it was so good, we would put it on our website. However, we were going around in a circle, with her becoming more angry and abusive. Finally, after exhausting all my patience, I had no alternative but to hang up. She called back about five times, making threats to bad mouth us on her own website, and calling us names. Obviously, I was emotionally upset and frustrated. Then the phone rang again. Fortunately, it wasn’t the same woman. In fact, it was a man this time. He also had something to offer us for our prison population. In his case, it was an illustrated children’s book that he thought the kids of the inmates would like. I don’t know if he could sense the frustration in my voice, since his call came so soon after the woman’s. But I told him that we have a lot of people who send us books for the inmates. Sometime, like his, they are free.

I said that we are only a small organization with very limited funding and that it costs a lot of money in postage and handling to get packages out to the prisons. And I told him we simply don’t have the time to review every book that is sent to us. But, if he didn’t mind waiting until I get around to it, I would look it over when I got a chance. “Well that’s all I can hope for,” he responded. Right away I noticed the difference between the two callers. He didn’t try to impress me with words about what a strong Christian he was. I could sense it in his calm, sweet attitude (Galatians 5:22-23). I finally got a chance to look at the book eventually. Eric sent out a mailing to some of our chaplains, asking them if they could use some of the books for the children of the inmates. Some did. Some didn’t. Originally, the man donated 500. After we gave them out, he donated many more. After a few years, he sent a Spanish language version of the book, also free to us. Then he published a similar book, and we gave that out to prison chaplains as well. The man’s name was Don Hammatt. And he went home to be with Jesus when he died on Christmas day, 2015.

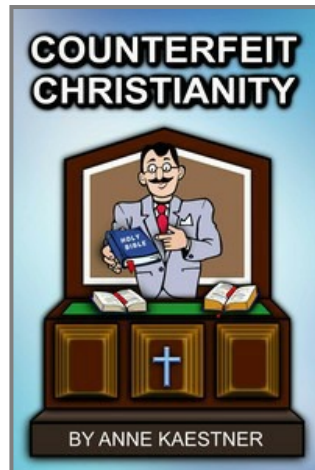
People take it for granted that when someone says they’re a

Christian, that they are what they say. There are churches all over our country, and it is easy to assume that if someone goes to church, they must be a Christian. However, that may not always be the case. True, many people have Christian ideals and a persona of Christian values. But do they really measure up by Bible standards? *“For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”* (1 Peter 4:17-18 NIV). When discussing this subject, Christians, who know there is sin in their life, are quick to jump to their own defense. One quote seems most common, although taken out of context. Jesus said, *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”* (Matthew 7:1-2 NIV). Most church people think that applies to this sinful world. However, the Apostle Paul said it did not.

In his letter to the Church he started in Corinth he wrote, *“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife. And you are proud! Shouldn’t you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present”* (1 Corinthians 5:1-3 NIV). The Corinthian church was like many churches today. After Paul left, it acquired a sugar-coated gospel. It focused so much on loving each other that it was putting the congregation above Christ! Jesus condensed 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). Note the sequence of these. God must always come first! His laws must never take second place to the church.

The Corinthians were boasting about how much love they had for the church. So, Paul told the them, *“Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast...”* (1 Corinthians 5:6-7 NIV). Paul didn’t want to hear any quote about not judging them. He told them it was the church that should be judged, not the unsaved. For they don’t know Christ. And when someone goes around telling people they love the Lord, and are a Christian, and then commits some terrible sin, it brings shame on Christ. That’s because, *“it is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to public disgrace”* (Hebrews 6:4-6 NIV).

Peter said, *“Of them the proverbs are true: ‘A dog returns to its vomit,’ and, ‘A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud’* (2 Peter 2:22 NIV). So, Paul clarified God’s position on judging. He said, *“I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a*



swindler. *With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. 'Expel the wicked man from among you.'*" (1 Corinthians 5:9-13 NIV)

Churchianity is not Christianity! Just because someone attends church doesn't mean their heart is right with God. In His same chapter about judging Jesus said, *"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves"* (Matthew 7:15 NIV). The reason why we started this ministry was because there was so much bad doctrine coming out of church pulpits. *"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 11:13-15 NIV). Remember, the one group that hated Jesus the most were the religious leaders of His day. They wanted to kill Him (John 7:1)!

As for the unsaved, I once heard someone remark, "What has God ever done for me?" That's the attitude of someone who doesn't have a clue about the Lord, or how much He has done for all of us (see John 3:16). And that's the way most non-religious people think. Religious people take a different approach to God. They want to please Him, but on their terms, or the terms they have been taught through their parents and their religion. That was the problem with the Pharisees and teachers of the law in the days of Christ. However, Jesus knew what a bunch of phonies they really were. And, *"He replied, '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." You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men'"* (Mark 7:6-8 NIV). The type of thinking that inspires that type of religion has its roots in pride and a desire for control. The religious leaders in the days of Jesus wanted to be the big shots. Just like any political despot, they wanted the power. And, while they deceived themselves into thinking they were doing God's will, they were actually twisting scripture around in order to manipulate the people.

However, Jesus knew what a bunch of sanctimonious hypocrites they really were. And He warned the people not to be like them. *"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). Unfortunately, that spirit still exists in many religious leaders today. It inspires greed. And it's not confined to any one denomination. My mother once told me about a Pentecostal pastor at a church she used to attend. He was a "prosperity gospel" preacher, a "doctrine of demons" that inspires greed and presumption (see 1 Timothy 4:1-2). And it's disguised in a wrapping of faith in God. It teaches that, as Christians, the more we give to God, the more He will give to us.

Now, on its surface there is truth to that. However, here's where the presumption comes in. It loosely assumes that if you give ten dollars to God, He will give you a hundred back. If you give a hundred, He will give you a thousand. And, of course, those who teach it promote the idea that they and their church represent God and the money will go toward doing His will. So, a woman in his congregation said to him, "Pastor, I have to pay the mortgage on my house. But should

I give the money to the church instead?" He said yes. I'm sure she believed that God would make her rich. Instead, she lost her house and her husband divorced her! God is holy! He is not to be thought of as a Las Vegas casino! To try to compare God with the carnal things of this world, is like comparing Him to the devil (James 4:4)! For it is Satan who runs this world system, with all its glitter and greed. Satan even tried to tempt Jesus with the things of this world and Jesus never disputed Satan's control over it (Matthew 4:8-10 and John 12:31).

The problem is that where there are vulnerable little sheep, there is usually one or more shepherds watching over them. And the sheep are going to follow the shepherds, even if *"...They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves"* (Matthew 7:15 NIV). So how do you know the difference? It's the same way I knew the difference between the two people I spoke with on the phone. *"By their fruit you will recognize them..."* (Matthew 7:16 NIV). But for those who don't know their Bible, and Jesus Christ, that can sometimes be a bit confusing. Because all of us started out life as sinners in this world. And sinners, and even many religious people, judge others by carnal standards. In other words, what you have learned in the world. And this world is filled with carnal teachers. There is the secular education system which reaches from kindergarten through college. It has no regard for God. So, it teaches "secular humanism." That doesn't necessarily mean the teacher is evil. He

or she is told what to teach by the Board of Education, which is guided by worldly standards.

Then there's the corruption of the mass media, which includes television, movies, politics, sports, etc. So, their listeners are taught that if a wealthy person gives a lot of money to some needy charity, they are a good person. Therefore, if organized crime leaders do so, it's easy to deceive the public into thinking they are good people. I remember comedian Jerry Lewis having his telethon every year for a recognized charity. Now please don't misunderstand me. There is nothing wrong with raising money legitimately. And nothing wrong with the charity he was helping.

But the people who entertained at the event were promoting earthly standards. They were the worldly elite, the idols of this world, celebrities. Yet the fact that they were helping the needy with donations, made them look like such good people in the eyes of the public. However, the rich religious leaders in the days of Christ were the same way. They liked to give people the impression that they were so holy. *"As He looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 'I tell you the truth,' He said, 'this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on'"* (Luke 21:1-4 NIV). Jesus saw the situation as God still sees it today. She was giving the little she had to God the only way she knew how. She gave it to her house of worship.

Yet, some of the Lord's disciples saw only what they had been taught to notice. They were more impressed with the worldly standards they saw. They *"...were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God..."* (Luke 21:5 NIV). But Jesus knew how carnal and temporary such things are. And He said, *"as for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down"* (Luke 21:6 NIV). That's the way the people think when they don't have the Holy Spirit influencing them. They become impressed with earthly things that will perish **(Continued On Page 4)**



instead of that which is built on the solid rock of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 7:24-27 and 1 Corinthians 10:4). Therefore, the Bible warns us, “do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:15-17 NIV).

If you like your church, go to it, but remember who is the true Shepherd. Christ is our only salvation, not the church, not your pastor, not your denomination! Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber” (John 10:1 NIV). There is only one gate that leads to Heaven. Jesus said, “I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture” (John 10:9 NIV). A real Holy Spirit filled pastor is a watchman, who steers the sheep toward the Gate. He cannot become the gate! “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 10:3 NIV). The job of a pastor is to point the sheep to Christ. Now there are a lot of ministers who are “hired hands.” They would rather point the sheep in an earthly direction, toward a social gospel of good works and politics. But that will only take them to the well-travelled, popular wide road. So, keep your eyes on Christ and, “enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it” (Matthew 7:13 NIV).

Jesus 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. I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me—just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father—and I lay down My life for the sheep” (John 10:11-15 NIV). In other words, the “hired hand” is a minister who is more concerned with raising money and becoming popular with his peers. So, he does not warn the sheep that a doctrine is leading the flock in the wrong direction. Then the “wolves,” (false prophets) end up destroying their walk with God. “For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them” (2 Peter 2:18-21 NIV).

You won't hear this message preached in church pulpits much these days. It's not very popular. However, remember the strong warning Paul gave to the church leaders in Ephesus. “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood. 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. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears” (Acts 20:28-31 NIV). Jude echoed the same theme when he said, “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 1:4 NIV).

Consider Paul's warning to the Ephesian church, “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:1-5 NIV). Above all, if you truly love Christ and want to please Him, you need the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. It's not a denomination thing. It's in the Bible (see Acts 19:1-7). I've written about it in previous issues. And the only way to receive the Holy Spirit is to cling very close to Christ! Worship

Him, confess any new sins to God alone, and read the Bible directly. You do not need a Bible study to do so. They tend to focus too much on denomination issues.

Are you having problems in your walk with Christ or the things you have been taught at church? Here's the trouble. The Lord has said, “You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!” (Acts 7:51 NIV). If you already have the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and you have been told that you need a church to interpret the Bible, the Apostle John disagrees. He said, “as for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing

is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in Him” (1 John 2:27 NIV). If you find a good church, it doesn't matter if it is only a shack in the woods, or located in a small strip mall. Do not worry about fancy surroundings. They don't impress God at all.

It's the hearts of the people who make up the congregation that God looks upon. The Holy Spirit doesn't haunt churches. Take the Holy Spirit to church with you. “This is what the LORD says: ‘Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house you will build for Me? Where will My resting place be? Has not My hand made all these things, and so they came into being?’ declares the LORD. ‘This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word’” (Isaiah 66:1-2 NIV). Don't worry about wearing expensive clothes. Jesus said, “...I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matthew 6:25-26 NIV).

In closing, it's not what you can do for God that counts. It's what His Holy Spirit can do through you!

