



NON-PROFIT



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TAX-EXEMPT

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

September 2023

## FROM US TO YOU

As we prepare this message to you there are fires in Maui. Many have died. There have been reports of people throwing themselves into the ocean to avoid being burned. We were in Maui in 1983 on a vacation in the Hawaiian islands. It was a beautiful island at the time, and we are sure it will be again. We wish them well and pray for a speedy recovery. Maui has been one of the most popular of the islands probably because of the scenery and laid-back, albeit expensive, lifestyle. Ironically, it was always considered a paradise by many people. Sadly, even a paradise in this world today can become a deathtrap at a moments notice. And no matter how perfect something may seem, there are no guarantees in this world. All that is good can end suddenly without any warning. Naturally, we humans don't like to think about such things. We recoil at the prospect of death, pain, suffering, and misery of any type. Satan, our enemy, knows that, and he uses it to his advantage. Yet those are the type of things that make for the best testimonies.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were destined to be thrown into a fiery furnace, a situation that would terrify the average person. Yet they trusted in God. And, instead of tragedy, it became a celebration! *“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire”* (Daniel 3:24-26 KJV).

If you don't go through your trial of faith, you don't get the victory. So often we have heard of tremendous testimonies from people who went through some natural disaster. Many years ago, one woman was interviewed by a television reporter. She said the tornado was all around her. Everything was destroyed except one little room she was in at the time. She called it her prayer room. Another woman gave a testimony about a tornado also. She said she was in her car with her young son at the time. She said the tornado picked up her car and as they were flying through the air, she kept praying that God would save her. Then the wind died down, and her car was safely back on the ground, some distance from where they had started. We get excited when we hear about the positive outcomes of these testimonies and shout hallelujah. However, these experiences don't occur without two ingredients, a situation of extreme danger and an attitude of faith. We read about Daniel being thrown into the lion's den and know that he was not hurt. But go back in time and put yourself in Daniel's situation, knowing that he was destined to be killed and eaten by lions unless a miracle occurred. What would

your mindset be? The natural inclination of the human mind is to be terrified! Daniel didn't know that God would save him (Daniel 6:1-24). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn't know that God would save them. Nevertheless, they felt in their hearts that no matter what the outcome would be, they would love and trust God, and keep their faith.

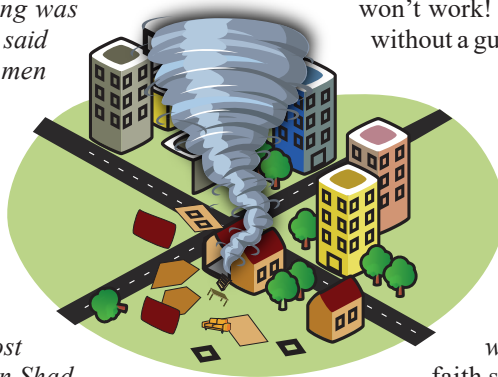
This kind of test is an indicator of one's faith. It doesn't have to be anything as tragic as a painful death sentence. It could be losing one's job, the death of a loved one, or not getting the raise in salary you think you deserve. There are those people who will get angry at God and try to get back at Him by hurting someone else. They could turn to God for help in coping with the crisis. But instead, they listen to the devil and demon voices speaking into their minds. The Bible says, *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil”* (Proverbs 3:5-7 NIV). Trust in God is not based on a specific outcome. It doesn't work to say, “Lord, if you get me out of this mess, I'll love and serve you.” People, that won't work! God wants your love, respect, and obedience without a guaranteed outcome, and no matter what happens.

There are those who will ask, “What good is it to trust in God if there's a good chance I will die a horrible death? Or how will trusting God bring back my loved one who died?” Your faith should not be in the things of this world. Satan controls them, *“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”* (Ephesians 2:2 NIV). Your faith should be in the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15),

and the assurance of Heaven, for you (John 14:1-6, Matthew 4:17) and the ones you love (2 Samuel 12:22-23).

*“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for”* (Hebrews 11:1-2 NIV). *“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. By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered Him faithful who had made the promise”* (Hebrews 11:6-11 NIV).

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



# The Fun Gospel

By Anne Kaestner

We received a phone call at our office from a merchant who had seen our web page on the Internet. He noticed that we distribute free Christian videotapes to prison chaplains, and he was anxious for me to take a look at a set of videos that he was selling. He assured me that he, too, was a Christian, and that selling the videos was his ministry for God. "You're going to love them," he told me. "After you've viewed them, you'll tell me that they are the best Christian tapes you have ever seen. By the time that you are finished you will really be proud that you are a Christian." "I am very choosy about which videos we distribute," I told him. "So am I Anne," he replied, and then he went on to tell me that he, like myself, was very disappointed with a lot of things that pass as Christianity these days. "Everyone who has seen these tapes has loved them" he stated. "And if you don't feel the same way, then you will be one in a thousand." It's not the first time that I've been told something like that. But then it's not the widely traveled, highly popular road that leads to eternal life. It's the narrow, seldom traveled pathway that most people avoid (Matthew 7:13-14). Nevertheless, there was no discouraging him. So, since he was offering to let me view the videos on a free trial basis, I reluctantly agreed to look at them. They came in a set of four tapes, accompanied by a long letter from the director of another ministry, of which I had never heard. It extolled the virtues of the husband and wife who were selling the tapes, and was intended to impress me with the strength of their faith. Instead, it made me even more skeptical, for those who are truly committed to Christ don't glorify themselves or seek glory from others (John 5:44 and 2 Corinthians 10:17-18). They lift up Jesus (Galatians 6:14), and they trust Him to open the right doors for them, according to His holy will (Philippians 4:19).

I watched about half of the first video before I decided that I had seen enough. I then returned the tapes with a three-page letter explaining why I couldn't use them. Not only was there no anointing on them, but they portrayed a Christ who was very different from the Christ of the Bible. The Jesus they showed was a happy-go-lucky fellow. This is the very antithesis of the true Jesus, who "...was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering..." (Isaiah 53:3 NIV. Also, see Hebrews 5:7-9). It was a distorted version of the Bible (2 Corinthians 11:3-4 and Galatians 1:6-10). The Christ in the film liked to play practical jokes on his disciples. In one scene, while he is giving the Sermon on the Mount, the actor playing Jesus picked up a bucket of water and poured the whole thing over the head of one of the disciples who was quietly sitting on the grass listening to him. That is not what the real Jesus would do! (See Luke 6:31.) There was also child pornography in the movie. Most Christians probably would not pay any attention to it, because, when compared to the world, it looked very tame. But the bare buttocks of a little boy of about seven or eight years old was exposed to the camera in one scene, and I knew that it wasn't fit for a prison ministry.

There were also other things that disqualified it. At the beginning of the tape there was a Hollywood style advertisement for another video that was made by the same company. It showed that there were actors and actresses in the film that are well-known show business icons. I have seen no evidence that they have made any attempt to turn their backs on their past (Luke 9:62), and give it all up (Matthew 6:19-21 and 19:27-30) in order to live by faith (see Romans 1:17 and Hebrews 10:38). That doesn't mean that a worldly performer can't do a good job playing the role of a Christian filled with God's Spirit. A few of them have, such as actress Julie Harris, who played the sister of Corrie ten Boom in the 1975 film "The Hiding Place." But more

often the carnal nature of the actor shows through, and they are more likely to influence Christians to be worldly rather than the other way around. This reminds me of something I heard years ago. A so-called "Christian broadcaster" was talking about a famous actor whom he had introduced on his television show as being a Christian. Did the actor leave his worldly past and live by faith? No! He had deluded himself into believing that, after coming to God in repentance and going through the sinner's prayer, he could go right back to his previous lifestyle as before. But, this time, he would tell everyone that he was Born Again. The broadcaster explained how he had seen a television movie in which the same actor played a very sexy bedroom scene with an actress. "How could you be in a movie like that?" he asked him. "You're a Christian now!" The man responded, "But I'm still an actor. I have to make a living and support myself." This conflicts totally with the warning of Jesus, who said, "*No one 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*" (Matthew 6:24 NIV).

I frequently see believers point to some celebrity, a professional ball player, or a psychotherapist, and then they announce proudly, "He's a Christian." Don't believe it! If he's still living for the god of this world, who is Satan (Matthew 4:8-10 and Ephesians 2:2), then he **isn't** a Christian. He's a sinner who has been deceived by the devil's lies into a false sense of security! But he has not turned his back on his past. He has not committed his life to Christ. And he's certainly not living by faith, which is total trust and dependency on God (Proverbs 3:5-7, Matthew 6:25-34, Mark 11:22, Hebrews ch. 11)! He's still living as he always did, with a few external changes. However, his heart hasn't changed at all. He is not a new creation in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17) unless he has been spiritually crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20, 5:24)!

This is something with which the church today has a real problem. The gullibility of believers astounds me. Just because a psychologist preaches against immorality doesn't make him a Christian no matter what he calls himself! The Jews and Moslems also believe in morality, but they do not live for Christ. Just because a famous actress takes up a crusade against abortion doesn't make her Born Again! It doesn't matter what label people put on themselves, it's who and what they are that counts! A duck can call itself a horse if it wants to. But if it quacks like a duck, and looks like a duck, and waddles when it walks, it's not a horse, it's a duck!

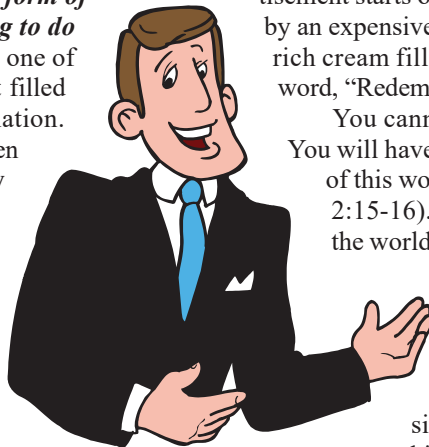
Very often I've heard the phrase, "But they believe in God." What the person means is that they believe in the existence of God, and perhaps also the deity of Jesus Christ. So what! As James said sarcastically, in his letter to the backslidden church, "*You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder*" (James 2:19 NIV). Just because they quote scripture does not make them Christian either. Satan and his prophets know the Bible very well. The devil even went so far as to use scripture during his temptation of Jesus. But it didn't work! (See Matthew 4:6-7 and Psalm 91:11-12.) Today the "fun gospel" is fashionable. Christians involved in it forget all about holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16) or obedience (1 Samuel 15:22, Hebrews 5:9, 13:17, 1 Peter 4:17), and they just want to have a good time. The labels "Christian" (Acts 11:26) or "Born Again" (John 3:3) have become great marketing tools. You can sell just about anything these days if you attach some Christian label or symbol to it. I have a file in my office where I keep some of the worst examples. One of them is an advertisement for a so-called



“Christian humorist and speaker.” The card bills him as “hilarious,” and it says that he “...has ministered at nearly every major Christian Festival in the US! And now he’s available to come to your church.” People, in reality there is no such thing as a Christian humorist! He’s just an out of work comedian who has modified his repertoire so as to accommodate naive Christians who want to be entertained but will not accept the current filth and immorality of secular performers. Undoubtedly he tells jokes that have a religious slant. We received this unsolicited advertisement in a pack of promotional cards that are distributed to churches. It was marketed to pastors as a method of encouraging people to attend their churches. However, when the Holy Spirit is truly working in a preacher’s life, he doesn’t need to resort to entertainment in order to draw a crowd. He will be given such an anointing by God that people will flock in like thirsty sheep who have found a brook of fresh water. The problem is that too many pastors are not willing to live by faith, and to trust God to provide for them during the good times and the bad. People don’t seem to understand what it means to live by faith. It means that you’re not in control anymore. Jesus is!

The Apostle Paul’s prophecy about these last days was right on target! He said, “*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 3:2-5 NIV). Herein lies one of the biggest differences between true Holy Spirit filled churches, and the majority of churches in this nation. The false Christians are elitists. They have no burden for lost, hurting souls because they are primarily just religious social clubs. They have no interest in feeding the Lord’s sheep (John 21:17) because they are only interested in feeding themselves (1 Corinthians 11:34). But when a church is truly on fire for God, the congregation doesn’t attend Sunday services expecting to visit with God. They take Him to church with them, for He lives in their hearts and lives all week long! (See Acts 17:24-25 and 1 Corinthians 6:19.) That goes doubly for the leadership. If you have been truly reborn in Christ (John 1:12-13), you were washed in His blood (Romans 3:25-26, Hebrews 9:22, and Revelation 7:14). That’s why real Christianity is pure and undefiled (John 15:3). You cannot mix that which is pure with that which is impure without the pure being tarnished. The Lord’s people are supposed to be married to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). Therefore, when their attention is divided between God and this world, it is like a married woman having affairs with other men (Ezekiel 16:4-43). “*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!*” (1 Corinthians 6:15 NIV. Also, see Ephesians 5:31-32). If you have been Born Again, but your heart still yearns for the things of this world, you are being unfaithful to your Husband, Jesus. “*You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God*” (James 4:4 NIV. Also, see Hosea 5:3-7).

There are many Christians who think that a little bit of worldliness is all right. It is not! Sin is addicting. It’s like a drug. The more you get of it, the more you will want. It never satisfies (see Proverbs 27:20, Ecclesiastes 5:10, Habakkuk 2:5 versus Isaiah 55:1-2, John 4:13-14, 6:31-35, and Revelation 21:6-7). Satan will always keep you coming back for more! He’s like a fisherman dangling new bait, and much of the time you won’t even get to enjoy the bait. As soon



as you reach for it, he will reel you in. Remember that to the devil and demons good is bad and bad is good. That’s the way Satan thinks, because he is the enemy of God, who is good. Moreover, Jesus told us that Satan “...is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44 KJV). So it’s easy to understand where all of the following is coming from. A woman’s magazine advertises a cookbook and promotes one of its recipes by saying, “...this seemingly **sinful indulgence** has only 4 grams of fat!” A recipe card boldly proclaims the name of a new dessert entitled “**decadent fudge cake.**” Then there’s a tourist advertisement for the Salem Witch Museum, which states, “Visit the “Spirits” of Massachusetts at the Salem Witch Museum 1692. **Wicked Good!**” Another favorite tool of the devil is to take something that is portrayed as being “cute” and use it in an evil way. A full color advertisement for a collector’s doll was based on the old nursery rhyme about the little girl with a curl in the middle of her forehead. The ad stated, “...and when she was bad, she was simply adorable ...and affordable!” People, what spiritual entity do you think is trying to subtly influence your thinking when you see this type of thing? Moreover, this pouty little doll will be dressed in a frilly white and pink dress, and your spiritual defenses will be down! It doesn’t look evil on the surface, but dig beneath the surface and think about what is going directly from your eyes to your mind, generally without any censorship en route. All of this is bad enough, but when it gets into blasphemy it’s even worse! For instance, a full page magazine advertisement starts out with the word “temptation.” It is then followed by an expensive, bite size piece of chocolate sliced open, with the rich cream filling spilling out of it. Under the chocolate is one word, “Redemption.”

You cannot be a carnal Christian and still get to Heaven! You will have to choose whether you want to live for the things of this world, or the things of God (Joshua 24:15 and 1 John 2:15-16). But you may be wondering what’s so bad about the world. Those who are further from the light (John 8:12) will not have the spiritual illumination to see how evil it really is. So here are more examples. I once saw a TV commercial for low fat ice cream. It used an actress named Bernadette Peters. She wore a man’s shirt, a sultry expression, and very little else. Sex has been used to sell everything from cars to after-shave, but this commercial seemed particularly salacious. It’s a sample of the way that large corporations will go to any length to sell their wares. In the ad Peters pouted seductively, and, while eating her ice cream, said “I love being naughty. Especially when I can get away with it. Like this Breyers Light. Less fat, so I can indulge in **sinful** fudge. Ummm! Pure true taste. I feel like I’m cheating! But I’m not. What a shame!” In another commercial, years ago, a woman sat beneath a tree eating some nuts. Then she looked up mischievously at the viewers and asked, “What’s the best way to get rid of a temptation?” After pausing for a few seconds, and placing another nut strategically in her mouth, she replied, “Give in to it.”

True Christianity is not the “Love Boat”. It is a battleship! But there are too many in the church today who are not willing to “...fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith” (1 Timothy 1:18-19 NIV). However, if you have been truly Born Again, and desire to get to Heaven, you are no longer a citizen of this world system. Your true citizenship is in Heaven (John 17:6-26). The Apostle Peter wrote to the church saying, “*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*” (1 Peter 2:11 KJV). Spiritually speaking, we are not on our own territory, and we will not be in our own kingdom until we reach Heaven. Therefore, we are living as aliens in a world that is not run by God. It is ruled by Satan, who **(Continued on Page 4)**

is “...the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2 KJV). Therefore, he and his demons are going to do everything they can to destroy your faith. One of their favorite techniques is to use deceptive doctrine and false prophets (see Matthew 7:15-21) in order to give you an erroneous concept of Christianity so that you will turn away from the true faith. The Holy Spirit warned us through scripture that in these, “...later times some will abandon the faith and follow **deceiving** spirits and things taught by **demons**. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:1-2 NIV). Why would men and women do that? Why would they lie to you about the Christian faith? Firstly, they want the power and influence that all false prophets enjoy. “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). Secondly, “...the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Timothy 6:10 NIV). Jesus also told us of these dangerous times. He said that “...many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matthew 24:10-13 NIV).

However, if you determine in your heart that you are going to live for Jesus whether the rest of the crowd does or not, you’re going to have a real battle to contend with. For Satan will view you as his enemy! People will seem to dislike you without cause. You will be especially misunderstood and hated by those lukewarm Christians who just want to have a good time. Remember that “a student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master” (Matthew 10:24 NIV). When Jesus was on earth, He didn’t have any problems with the ordinary folk. Most of them didn’t accept Him as their Lord and Savior (John 6:66), but they didn’t viciously attack Him, or seek to kill Him. It was the egotistical religious leaders that did that (see Luke 19:47)! Therefore, don’t be surprised if the worst hostility that is launched against you comes from those who are supposed to be your brothers and sisters in Christ. It was the same way with the Apostle Paul and the other apostles. Paul, speaking of those who had managed to slip in among the brethren as wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15 and Acts 20:29-30), wrote, “...I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:12-13 NIV). Paul suffered as a result of many in the church (2 Timothy 4:9-18). And if you really stand firm against all the false doctrine and worldliness that have entered into the Christian community, you too will be attacked by those who **claim** to also love and serve Christ!

For example, my husband, Eric, spends many hours working on his computer. He designed our website and did all of the technical work himself. When we first got started on the Internet we accepted links from other Christian groups and sometimes gave them reciprocal links. However, nowadays, we have abandoned that practice, except for special circumstances. It is very sad to see all the carnal activity that takes place on the World Wide Web under the guise of

Christianity. Nevertheless, “...we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved” (Hebrews 10:39 NIV). The Bible tells us that one of the ways that Satan deceives people is through flattery (Romans 16:18 and 1 Thessalonians 2:5). When someone compliments you it takes you off your guard, and you think of them in friendly terms. Therefore, when another website owner complimented us on our website, and wanted to give us an award and a link from his site, Eric was pleased. When the man, who claimed to be a fellow believer, asked for a reciprocal link, Eric took a quick look at his website and, at the time, it seemed satisfactory. Then, a few days later, Eric took another look at the site and was shocked. He noticed that the so-called Christian site included some very un-Christian material. One was a promotion for Santa Claus, that very worldly fat man who has managed, quite successfully, to take Christ out of Christmas in many homes, and replace Him with expensive gifts, tinsel, and marketing strategies. The other was an advertising banner for another website that boasted about its photos of bikini clad models. Eric wrote a nice email message to the man who had initially contacted us with an award, but he made it clear that we do not consider Santa Claus and advertisements for bikini websites to be Christian. He wrote it in a humble (Philippians 2:3, Colossians 3:12, and Titus 3:2), polite way, but he was very firm about our commitment to purity in the Christian walk (Matthew 5:8 and 1 Timothy 1:5). The response he received

back was anything but polite! Satan hates to be exposed, and so do his servants, especially when they pose as Christians. The man called Eric all kinds of nasty names. He accused him of being a bigot and narrow-minded. And those were some of the nicer things he said! (See Matthew 5:11-12.) We didn’t respond.

This is what I’m talking about when I tell you that if you are really serious about living for Jesus, it is going to be a battle. For once Satan discovers that he cannot get you to compromise on your faith, he will oppose you on every level. And he will use anything that is at his disposal, even your loved ones (Matthew 10:37, 12:46-50). If you want to have lots of friends and a fun time at church, you’ll fit in



just fine with the lukewarm church of today (Revelation 3:16). You can have your rock concerts, and your psychology training, and your worldly celebrities who claim to be Born Again, and politicians who will flatter you in order to get votes. But if you truly want to live a holy life that will be well pleasing to Jesus, you’re going to be awfully lonely at times. For the straight and narrow can be a very solitary path. It was for Paul, and it will be for you too (see 2 Timothy 4:16-18). The straight and narrow is a route that has been traveled by Christian martyrs for two thousand years. They would not compromise on their faith, and the world hated them for it (Hebrews 11:35-38). Therefore, remember the words of Jesus, “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” (John 15:18-19 NIV). However, this world is going to be destroyed by the Lord (2 Peter 3:10-13 and Luke 21:33), “...but the man who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:17 NIV). Therefore, “endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:3 NIV). And remember that “...eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9 KJV). Moreover, Jesus said, “...I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20 ASV).