



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

SPRING 2017

## FROM US TO YOU

As we begin this new issue, our nation seems to be in great danger spiritually. Not since the Viet Nam War and Watergate has the United States been so divided. And the political atmosphere these days is so toxic that the disputes are becoming even more polarizing than they were then. As the Lord stated, “...*Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall*” (Luke 11:17 NIV). Lessons should be learned from the fall of the Roman Empire. For, at its zenith of power, all other nations were afraid of it. It could not be destroyed from without! The Romans controlled most of Europe and the Middle East of their day from 753 BC to approximately 27 BC. And then from 64 AD to 1453 AD. How did it end? The moral depravity of the Empire caused it to decay internally, thus making it easier for the Turks to finish it off. That began the Ottoman Empire, which ruled from 1299 to 1922. George Santayana (1863-1952), the famous Spanish philosopher once said, “Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” How true!

For Satan’s techniques are not new. He uses the same ones over and over again. His plan is to make the United States fall apart through sedition, moral depravity, and internal rivalry. With all the enemies we have in this world today (Mark 13:7-8), that could weaken us beyond repair! The further people drift from true Christianity (see Matthew 7:21-23), the more quarrelsome they become (Galatians 5:19-21). They do not seek the will of God, who gives us wisdom, love, and peace (Luke 21:15 and Galatians 5:22). They are constantly nervous, argumentative, and pugnacious. There is not much point in trying to reason with them peacefully. They want their own way and will not listen to any other! In fact, they will talk over you as you speak. (See 1 Timothy 6:3-5.) And for some of them, their hatred of Christ and traditional moral values causes them to incite violence and attack anyone who disagrees with them!

Sadly, the most persecuted group in the entire world are Christians! That’s because the devil still runs this world at the present time (Ephesians 2:1-2). Therefore, the closer you draw to Christ, the more the world hates you (John 17:14). A recent article by Perry Chiaramonte in Fox News World states that “...Open Doors USA recently released the latest edition of its annual World Watch List, which ranks countries based on the treatment of their Christian populations. The group said the increase in incidents considered persecution was alarming and only getting worse. And that ‘it is appalling that Open Doors has to report that persecution has increased again in 2016 and we are still at the worst levels of persecution in modern times,’ David Curry, president and CEO of Open Doors USA, said to Fox News. ‘The spread of persecution has gotten worse, now hitting nearly every continent in the world. There were 23 Christians killed in Mexico specifically because of their faith.’” The article goes on to say that “...nearly 90,000 Christians were killed for their faith in 2016 and that as many as 600 million were prevented from practicing their faith through intimidation, forced conversions, bodily harm or even death.” See [Fox News World](#) for this article.\*



According to “[World Watch List](#),”\*\* the countries where Christian persecution is at its worst are North Korea, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Yemen. For informed Christians, the situation should be frightening. For Satan is on the warpath against everything that is holy! And in democratic western nations, he is attacking even that which is moral and decent. “*Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, 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). In other words, it will get to the place where Christians who have died in Christ and gone to heaven will rejoice knowing that they are safe, while those who remain on the earth will be in constant danger.

It is bad enough that this situation exists in the world at all. But the fact that such evil is trying to work its way into western nations, such as Europe and the United States, should be alarming. In these countries liberal propaganda leads the way! Much of it is spread by movies and television (both news shows and entertainment), atheistic college professors, liberal politicians, much of the medical community, and even some in the sports, publishing, and fashion business! Those at the top of their field who promote Christian and moral values are most likely to be attacked. For example, Vice President Pence and his wife, Karen, were ridiculed recently because they have a good Christian marriage and follow certain moral values. Even Chip and Joanna Gaines, stars of the television show “Fixer Upper,” were attacked during the Christmas season due to the fact that the church they attend considers homosexuality a sin.

For those so brainwashed by liberal propaganda that they do not know the difference between right and wrong, the Bible states clearly, “*Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders*” (1 Corinthians 6:9 NIV. Also, see Romans 1:22-27). The attitude of those who oppose this message is, “We don’t accept the Bible as truth. It is full of threats and hatred toward anyone with an opposing view.” (Which of course, is not true!) Nevertheless, there’s no point in arguing with people like that. All you can do is pray for them. For, among them, “*truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey...*” (Isaiah 59:15 NIV). The main article for this issue, “Glorious Things Are Spoken Of Thee,” will tell the church how to live above the evil of this current world and let your light shine in Christ in the midst of an increasingly wicked and perverted generation. Remain in the Lord and He will remain in you (see John 15:4).

Till next time everyone, we remain, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*

### Footnotes –

\* [FoxNews.com](#) – Article by Perry Chiaramonte - Published February 02, 2017

\*\* Open Doors USA - Christian Persecution - World Watch List

# Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken

By Anne Kaestner

One of my favorite hymns is "[Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken](#)" by John Newton.\* The music is so beautiful and the words are music to my ears. It's because, for those of us who love and serve Jesus Christ, it moves our thoughts away from the carnal things of this world (John 17:6-16, 1 John 2:15-17). And it encourages our confidence and trust in God and His promises to us. For we who have not yet gone home to be with the Lord, it's a reminder of the good things God has waiting for us when we finally arrive (John 14:1-3). It speaks somewhat futuristically about the righteous, holy church of Christ that has overcome the trials and temptations of sinful human flesh (1 Corinthians 15:50 and Jude 1:23). For it has risen high above the mundane things of this world to become a city of glorious believers who become united with the Deity who saved us from the eternal fires of hell (Revelation 20:15). And the words remind us of Christ's love for us!

Yet there are those who will say, "What are you talking about? The hymn is speaking about Zion, another name for Jerusalem. It's a place, not a people." But that's not the Zion that it is spoken about in the song. It is a city. But not an earthly city. And, although there is a physical city waiting for us in Heaven that is probably made of brick and mortar, there will also be a spiritual city as well. It's a city of holy believers who have overcome the fleshly desires of this sinful world and become a part of the "kingdom of God." We are also known by other names such as, the "Redeemed of Christ," the "Bride of Christ," the "Church of Christ," the "Body of Christ," the "Kingdom of God," and "Heavenly Jerusalem." I know that it's going to be confusing to some of the Lord's flock (John 10:11-16). It is very spiritual. But the closer you are to the illumination of Christ (John 8:12) the better you will understand the spirit world (John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 2:16).

The apostle John was "in the spirit" (Revelation 21:10) when he was carried away by an angel "...to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (Revelation 21:10 NIV). Now there are two Jerusalem's spoken about here. There is the "brick and mortar" Jerusalem. I'm using that term in order to explain it better. I don't know what kind of material God uses on His buildings in Heaven. But there's another kind of Jerusalem here as well. To put it in human terms, we have a geographical country called "America." That refers to the land and the buildings. But there's another "America" too. It's a nation full of people who live here. They all have thoughts and opinions and choices to make in life. When you hear someone say "America doesn't do it that way" what do they mean? Are they talking about the land, the trees, the building? No. Of course not. They're talking about the people who make up America!

It's the same thing with New Jerusalem, which is also known as "Zion." It is a collective group of people who have passed through all the trials and tests of faith and gone on to become the "Bride of Christ." Actually, the word "group" does not sufficiently convey the magnitude of the people. That's why the Bible refers to us as a "city." John's description of what he saw continues, "...the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal" (Revelation 21:10-11 NIV). Now I am sure that when we get to Heaven we will see that city made of precious jewels, and the twelve gates. But the "precious jewels" that are important to God are the redeemed in Christ.

I want you to understand that the term is a **metaphor** for what

we will have become spiritually when God's work is completed in us. Simon Peter explains it very well when he refers to the eventual perfected state of Christians as becoming "living stones" (1 Peter 2:4-9). Also, see the words of John the Baptist to the hypocritical religious leaders in his day, "And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that **out of these stones** God can raise up children for Abraham" (Matthew 3:9 NIV). The stones were symbolic of the "living stones" Peter was talking about in 1 Peter 2:5. That is those who trust in the true Rock of our salvation, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4, Mathew 7:24-27). We are little rocks, stones, or "pebbles" formed from the Rock of Christ.

Do you think life has gotten tougher since you repented of your sins and asked God to come into your heart and take control of your life? If so, it's not by accident! It's a part of God's plan of perfection for you. For He allows us to be put through tremendous pressure in this world, as tiny rocks are put through great pressure in the center of the earth in order to make diamonds and other precious stones. Remember the terms Peter used in 1 Peter 2:4-7, "precious" and "living stones" (2:5 NIV).

Getting back to the hymn, the words begin with "Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God!" That means you, beloved in Christ! "He, whose Word cannot be broken, formed thee for His own abode." In other words, you were created to live with God in Heaven, and enjoy all the glories of the Lord's own home. If you think that this world was made beautiful before mankind messed it up so much, imagine how magnificent Heaven will be! "On the Rock of Ages founded, what can shake thy sure repose?" My American Heritage dictionary defines "repose" as "The act of resting or the state of being at rest. Freedom from worry; peace of mind. Calmness; tranquility." Can you imagine the joy of living in a perfect world with no worries, no fear, no sickness, no disease, no stress? In fact, nothing to shake the total serenity of our souls? Just with eternal comfort, overflowing joy, and gorgeous surroundings around us forever! "...As it is written, 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).

That's what God wanted for us originally! It's why Christ loved us enough to leave all the glories of Heaven to come into this world and purchase us back from the clutches of the devil (John 3:16). It was so that we can live with Him and taste all the joys He wants to share with us in a place beyond glorious! "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him" (John 3:17 NIV). The hymn asks the question, "On the Rock of Ages founded, what can shake thy sure repose?" The answer is nothing this world, or any world, has. For our faith is anchored surely and safely on the solid Rock of Jesus Christ. How do we get to that place? "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6 NIV). There is nothing on earth that you can do for God that will get you to Heaven. No good work will do it (Ephesians 2:8-9). It's not what you do for Him. It's what He has already done for you!

One of the most beautiful passages in the Bible was written by Solomon under the influence of the Holy Spirit. For although Solomon put the words into writing, the person who authored it was not made of sinful flesh! (See 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16). This passage is special to me because it expresses the love that God the Father



and God the Son had for each other during the creation of planet earth for us. And it speaks of the love they put into it, sort of like the joy expectant parents might put into preparing a home for an eagerly awaited child. *“The LORD brought Me forth as the first of His works, before His deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before He made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world. I was there when He set the heavens in place, when He marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when He established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when He gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep His command, and when He marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was the craftsman at His side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in His presence, rejoicing in His whole world and delighting in mankind”* (Proverbs 8:22-31 NIV).

Obviously, the words were inspired by the Holy Spirit, who seems to be the holy liaison for communication between God the Father as well as God the Son, and us humans. Many Christians are confused about the Holy Trinity. For yes, we have only one God. But when the term “God” is used in regard to holy deity, it is referring to a **family** unit of three separate and distinct individuals. *“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”* (1 John 5:7 KJV). The Word, of course, refers to God the Son, Jesus Christ (John 1:14). We serve a triune God made up of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That’s why God spoke in the plural when He said, *“...Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness...”* (Genesis 1:26 NIV), and *“The LORD said... Come, let Us go down and confuse their language...”* (Genesis 11:6-7 NIV).

During the late nineteen eighties I waited, along with my husband, outside a coliseum on Long Island. A famous evangelist was going to be having a crusade there. I won’t mention his name because he allowed his pride to get in the way of his walk with the Lord. He began to believe that God needed him. Consequently, he thought he could get away with having sex with prostitutes. It resulted in a huge scandal that shook the faith of a lot of believers. One woman at a church we attended told us that she was embarrassed to tell people she was a Christian. God took away the anointing the man once had (compare with 1 Samuel 16:14) and left him with a much smaller ministry. However, at that time, the Holy Spirit could still be felt at his crusades. Eric and I were among a small crowd that was first to arrive as we waited for the doors to open. What a time of fellowship we had with fellow believers as we talked to each other about our love for Christ! There was so much love between us. Race differences, church denominations didn’t seem to matter at all. We were one in Christ and we couldn’t do enough for each other (John 15:12, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, 1 John 4:11-12).

However, the one conversation that stands out in my mind the most was with a woman I sat next to on a short wall. She began to tell me her testimony. She had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Most people would have been terrified at the prognosis. Her doctor said that he might be able to give her a little longer to live if she allowed him to operate. I’ll call the woman Ruth although I don’t remember her real name. Ruth eagerly agreed to the surgery, although she had convinced herself that she was going to die on the operating table. She got all her financial and legal affairs in order and waited. The day of her surgery she was thrilled. *“I’m going to see Jesus today!”* she thought to herself. *“I’m going to Heaven. I’m going to see all my friends who have died in Christ! I’ll have no more pain, no more suffering. I’m going home at last. Hallelujah!”*

However, much to Ruth’s disappoint, she survived the operation. She was taken back to her room and God began to speak to her heart. He told her that He was going to take away the cancer. And that it wasn’t time for her to go home just yet. He told her to drink lots of water to flush the poison out of her body. She did as she was instructed. But her doctor wasn’t happy about it. She told him that she had been cured by God. He refused to believe it. However, in order to prove it to her he arranged for her to have more x-rays. Then he became annoyed again. He complained to Ruth that someone must have made a mistake, that they must have given him the wrong x-rays. There was no cancer on them at all! He had the x-rays redone and the result was the same. Many years had passed since that time. Ruth just glowed. Her face took on a radiance as she ended her story. The doors were soon to open and we would be filing into the coliseum. But Ruth’s testimony was one I will never forget!

Oh, how I wish my mother had felt that way about her breast cancer. Like the evangelist I mentioned, my mother allowed her pride to get in the way of her relationship with God. She didn’t understand that God doesn’t need you, me, or any of us. We need Him (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 5:6-8). That’s why humility is so important in our walk with Christ (James 4:10). Humility leads to trust (see Proverbs 3:5-6), as a child learns to depend upon his parents (Matthew 18:4). My mother could never grasp this aspect of God. She used to attend church occasionally, especially for specific occasions. She also enjoyed a

women’s club at the church. Of her three children I was her favorite up until I accepted Christ as my Savior and Lord. Then something strange happened. I noticed the closer I got in my walk with Christ, the more my family began to resent me. After my marriage, my mother in law, Gerry, told Eric that my mother would call her up and complain about me. Gerry thought that we were having marriage problems until one day when Eric explained to her that I wasn’t the problem. My mother was. After that Gerry would defend me!

However, the Lord revealed to me that it wasn’t me that my mother hated. It was the Holy Spirit in me! I began to understand what was going on by reading about others in the Bible who were rejected

in a similar way, like Samuel in 1 Samuel 8:6-7, and Joseph in Genesis 37:4, and young David in 1 Samuel 17:28-29. In her church, mother was very popular. It was her social outlet. She’d be so kind to the young people at the church that they couldn’t understand why I was having problems with her. Satan would tell me, *“It must be you Anne. Everyone else gets along with your mother. You must be the problem.”* I felt even worse when the young people would tell me what a wonderful mother I had. It was like a knife going through me. Eric would stand by me, hug me, and tell me I was not the problem. It was them. My mother resented Eric for this. One day she wrote him a letter complaining about me, and asking him why did he want to stay married to me? Eric showed it to me. He was too angry to respond to her.

Occasionally, on the days we did get along, mother would tell me about the good works she had done. For example, she cooked a turkey for her church one time even though she didn’t feel well. On another occasion, she cleaned up the mess her Catholic friend had made in her apartment after a bad bowel movement. My mother was fully convinced that her good deeds would get her to Heaven. I prayed for her. I tried to set a good Christian example. I tried to warn her that good works on their own don’t get us to Heaven. But she would get annoyed at me (Matthew 13:57). *“You talk to me like I’m a heathen. But I’m a good Christian woman,”* she would say. Mother died in April 1993, the same year that Bible Believers Fellowship, Inc. moved into our first office suite in town. The February before her death Eric and I visited her in Delaware. I could *(Continued On Page 4)*



Winnie Riccio - Anne's mother

sense a spirit of death around her.

We were not able to see my mother when she died. I believe that God prevented it (compare with Luke 9:59-60). There was a horrible snow storm in New York that year. And Eric had to quit his job to go to her funeral with me. His supervisor would not give him the time off to see her before she died. However, my sister-in-law was with her. She told me as we were en route to the funeral that just moments before mother died her face turned totally white. The way she described it I believe mother saw something that terrified her. As Jesus said, *“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law - a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me”* (Matthew 10:34-38 NIV).

The irony of this is that my very worldly mother-in-law, who never went to church, repented of her sins five days before she died. And I led her through the sinner’s prayer as she received Christ as her Savior and Lord. I will see her again in Heaven someday! I will also see my paternal grandmother who prayed me into Heaven. Mother despised her as well. I heard her and her mother complain about grandma before I became Born Again myself (see John 3:3). I used to wonder why they hated her so much. All they would say was that she was a terrible woman. She was very religious! Translation, she loved and served the Lord and set an example of faith and holiness for me as well.

If you truly love and serve Christ with all your heart, you are not going to be popular with those who resent your faith (John 15:18-21). Their excuse will be, *“We’re Christians too. But you act like you’re better than us.”* Has this happened to you? If so, it’s not you but the Holy Spirit in you who brings conviction upon them. They know they are not living for God but they want to believe that they are. They want God to be pleased with them, just as Cain expected the fruits and vegetables he gave the Lord to please Him (Genesis 4:1-10). But God wants our obedience, not our hard work (1 Samuel 15:22-23)! The pompous (Mark 12:38-40), hypocritical Pharisees (Matthew 23:13-15), hated Jesus because He had so much influence over the people. And because of His eloquence of speech (Matthew 22:16-22) and His miracles.

The next part of the hymn says, *“With salvation’s walls surrounded, Thou mayst smile at all thy foes.”* Although God allows us to go through many trials of faith, it is ultimately for a good purpose (1 Peter 1:6-9). When painful experiences happen to us, they tend to minimize the carnal things around us. Television sit-coms seem silly. Fashion magazines become a waste of time. Even our appetite for food is often diminished as we worry about our situation. Serious trials of faith have the effect of weeding out fair weather Christians. For Christ doesn’t want any lukewarm bride (Revelation 3:16). He suffered horrendous agony and spilled His own blood for us. So He wants an enthusiastic, wholly committed church that is on spiritual fire (Acts 2:3-4, Hebrews 1:7, 12:28-29) with love for Him! The hymn says, *“with salvation’s walls surrounded...”* No demon in hell will be able to hurt us unless the Lord allows it in order to refine us or test our faith.

You must not tempt the Lord by deliberately putting yourself in jeopardy. But if the enemy tries to kill you, God will not allow you to die until His purpose is completed in you (Mark 16:17-18). Do you remember the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace? The fire not only killed the soldiers who put them into the flames, it also burned off the ropes that bound them (Daniel 3:28-30)! Daniel also was saved from death in the lion’s den (see Daniel 6:7-24). The apostle Paul had a similar experience (Acts 14:19-20). It’s the same with all those who love and serve Jesus Christ. And it’s not just limited to Bible accounts (Mark 16:17-18). God puts limits on what the devil can do to us. Satan had to ask God’s permission in order to attack Job (Job 1:1 thru 2:6).

In like fashion, the same thing was true with Peter. Jesus told him, *“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers”* (Luke 22:31-32 NIV). Church history tells us that Peter had actually escaped from the Roman soldiers with his wife. Then he knelt down to pray and ask the Lord what to do. Now came his ultimate test of faith. God’s answer was, *“Go back Peter. Go back!”* Going back meant a horrible, torturous death and Peter knew it. Beyond that, he knew that his wife would die a miserable, painful death as well. It’s hard enough when we have to suffer extreme physical pain or face death ourselves. But when our loved ones are asked to suffer with us, it’s even harder. What did Peter do? What would you do in a situation like that? How much do you love Jesus Christ? He has to come first in your life, even before the humans you love.

When he was young, Peter told Jesus, *“... ‘Lord, I am ready to go with You to prison and to death.’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know Me’”* (Luke 22:33-34 NIV). Peter failed the test at that time. But now he was in his eighties and mighty in his faith and trust in God. He went back. His elderly wife was stripped of her clothes by Roman soldiers as Peter watched. It’s said that, as she screamed in agony, he called out to her, *“Beloved, remember Christ! Remember Christ!”* Many people get angry

at God when Satan attacks them. But Peter responded differently. He told the Romans that He was not worthy to die the same way as his Savior. He told them to crucify him upside down. It was a more painful form of death, as if anything could be more painful than crucifixion! They granted his request! But the words in the hymn continue, *“...Thou mayst smile at all thy foes.”* Peter is in heaven today. Those Romans who crucified him have been dead, and probably in hell, for thousands of years. Peter and his wife have been living among the glories of heaven during that time and will continue to do so forever! Remember, the hymn is talking about a glorified, futuristic church that includes all who die securely clinging to the Vine of Christ (John 15:1-6).

We must not take our walk with Christ for granted! The Apostle Paul was even worried about losing his own salvation (1 Corinthians 9:25-27). Jesus said that we need to **remain** in Him. He said, *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned”* (John 15:5-6 NIV). Therefore, cling as close to Christ as you possibly can. For *“how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?...”* (Hebrews 2:3 NIV).

\* See the YouTube video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EwLNar8J9c>

