The WATCHTOWER

Announcing JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

SEPTEMBER 15, 1970
Semimonthly

THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE LEARNED THROUGH SUFFERING

ENJOYING REAL HAPPINESS IN FAMILY LIFE

BEWARE OF THE HARDENING EFFECTS OF SIN

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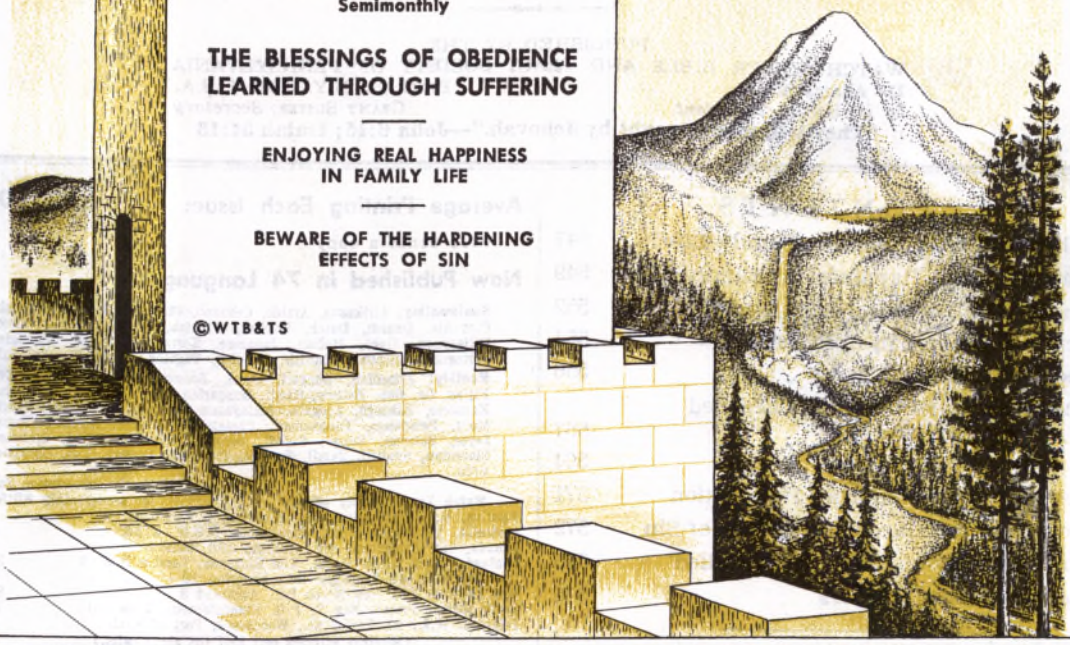

"YOU ARE MY WITNESSES," SAYS JEHOVAH.—Isa. 43:12

THE PURPOSE OF "THE WATCHTOWER"

Every watchtower has its purpose. It serves as an elevated place for a wide-awake person with sharp vision. It enables him to see far ahead into the distance and tell those below for whom he is a watchman what is drawing near, whether it is a danger against which to prepare or it is something good over which to be glad with strong faith and hope.

Because of having the name "The Watchtower" this magazine justly has to render a similar useful service to the people of all nations. This is an international magazine and makes no racial distinctions, for we are all facing a common world danger; we are all hoping for a common good.

Ever since "The Watchtower" began to be published in July of 1879 it has looked ahead into the future, always striving to aid its readers to advance in knowledge and to gain a clearer picture of the glorious new order of things that is in store for righteous mankind. No, "The Watchtower" is no inspired prophet, but it follows and explains a Book of prophecy the predictions in which have proved to be unerring and unfailing till now. "The Watchtower" is therefore under safe guidance. It may be read with confidence, for its statements may be checked against that prophetic Book.

Among the many nations of today there are hundreds of differing religions. Which one does this magazine present? Not the confused religions of Christendom, but the religion of the oldest sacred Book on earth. Which Book? The Sacred Bible of the Holy Scriptures, written by inspiration in the name of the Creator of heaven and earth, the only living and true God.

The sacred, nonpolitical purpose of "The Watchtower" is accordingly to encourage and promote study of the Holy Bible and to give our many readers the needed unsectarian help to understand that Book of true religion and infallible prophecy. Thus this magazine will be helping them to prove worthy of perfect life and happiness in God's promised new order under His everlasting kingdom of righteousness.

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"They will all be taught by Jehovah."—John 6:45; Isaiah 54:13

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The WATCHTOWER
Announcing JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM
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Why the UNHAPPINESS in Family Life?

THAT question is often asked today. Yes, more so than in former times. But why is family life so often unhappy today?

Well, what is needed for one to be happy? For a person to be happy, his physical, emotional and spiritual needs must be cared for. But how is this accomplished? Is it accomplished through striving always for material things? If that were true, you would expect countries with a high standard of living to be enjoying happy family lives. But what do the facts show?

In prosperous lands, such as Denmark, there is evidence of increasing unhappiness in family life. Said Danish teacher Estrid Nielsen: "Many homes have become simply small boardinghouses where each member of the family looks after himself as best he can."

And in many lands where people enjoy the "good things" of life, including a cozy home, there is often a high rate of suicide among family members. A Copenhagen daily newspaper recently said: "It is such in present-day Denmark that suicide has again crept up to third place in causes of death for persons between 15 and 45 years." As to the significance of this, a writer in the Copenhagen newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* states: "There is this one important thing we must not forget in this apparently so unworried welfare country, and that is that we have the next highest suicide rate in the world. To me this is a sorrowful evidence that material welfare is not the same as happiness."

Despite material comforts, there is also unhappiness among family members due to alcoholism. In Denmark the number of persons treated for alcoholism is 25,000 a year. "It does not surprise me," states Social Counselor Birgitte Winkel, "that husbands give out under stress—a natural result of the continual increased demands from his work for increased production and from his wife for increased earning capacity. Neither am I surprised that the housemaking housewife gets bad nerves because of monotonous and dull housework, which does not give her enough contact with other people and that she often seeks refuge in the darkness of alcoholism and pills."

Further, what about the unhappiness of youthful family members, evidenced, for example, by frequent misuse of drugs? The Danish Minister of Justice stated that the

number of persons in Copenhagen involved in drug-abuse cases increased more than 1400 percent from 1963 to 1968! The greatest increase has been among youths.

Blame for drug abuse among youths has been placed on the housing problem, among other things. But the head of Copenhagen's Police Narcotics Division stated: "It is not usual that these misusers come from small and bad apartments. The majority come from larger and better dwellings where they have their own rooms, tape recorders, phonographs and whatever else they wish. Drug users do not always come from what we understand as a bad home. . . . their relationship with their parents is insecure. . . . The truth is that parents are not concerned with where their children are."

So what is evident? That unhappiness among youthful family members is often related to lack of parental supervision and especially to a lack of a worthy purpose in life. The overemphasis on material things in many lands has led to an unbalanced family life.

Many families have turned away from the Bible. As a result, moral values have been shattered, and many families have virtually no moral direction.

Some authorities thus believe the real cause for so much unhappiness in family life is that the people have abandoned the church. In Denmark about 97 percent of the population are registered as church members, but less than 3 percent are believed to attend church, and then not very regularly.

But is this apathy in attending church the reason? Is the church a bulwark against immorality? Does it really advocate and hold to high Bible principles, such as the counsel, "Flee from fornication"? (1 Cor. 6:18) Or does the church contribute to the moral decay?

Well, what kind of moral help does the family, especially youths, get from the church? The majority of clergymen in Denmark say as did the dean of Holmens Church in Copenhagen: "Everyone must work out his own moral standards . . . If you look in the New Testament for moral laws you will look in vain." When the Bible is so misrepresented by the church, how can the family be helped?

Who would benefit, for example, by seeking counsel on family life from a church where the minister stated in the parish magazine: "Nothing is gained by limiting all sex to marriage. . . . It can be correct from an ethical and Christian viewpoint for young people to have sex relations before marriage, and it can be just as correct for married persons . . . to have sexual relations outside of marriage. I do not say it is always correct but it can be correct, yes, necessary"?—*Vedbæk-Gl. Holte Kirkehilsen,* July-August 1964.

No wonder another clergyman said: "Young people in Denmark hardly expect any help from the Church." And a different clergyman wrote an article in a newspaper under the title "The Church Has No Morals," saying: "In this time of moral confusion the Church has only one thing to say: Your sins are forgiven." —*Rødovre Avis,* March 12, 1964.

In view of this, one can ask: Have Christendom's churches really helped create a happy family life? Have they helped families to avoid overemphasizing material things to the neglect of instruction in God's Word? Have they filled the spiritual needs of the people? No!

Though families may feel abandoned by the churches, they have not been abandoned by God or by true Christianity. God's Word has helped hundreds of thousands of families to find true happiness, as you will learn from the following article.

Enjoying

Is it possible for you?

REAL HAPPINESS IN FAMILY LIFE

DO YOU want to attain true happiness in family life? Then would it not be wise to look to the One who created man and woman and who formed the first human family?

God's Word the Bible sets forth guiding principles for handling both the major problems and the minor ones that arise in every feature of family living.

Consider, then, some of the Bible counsel that provides a basis for family happiness. And it offers improvement and happiness *now*.

The Bible indicates that when God created the first man and woman he established the basis for happiness in family life by saying: "That is why a man will leave his father and his mother and he must stick to his wife and they must become one flesh."—Gen. 2:24.

So, husband and wife are not to be competitors. Nor are they to be simply acquaintances having the same home. No, they are to be "one flesh." This means they should cultivate deep love for each other, and, as Jesus Christ stated, they are to stick together.—Matt. 19:4-6.

THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS

One of the main reasons why many husbands and wives are not sticking together and are not finding happiness is failure to appreciate their respective positions.

The Creator of marriage and of the family should know best how a family should function to attain genuine happiness. So, what does the Bible say about the respective positions of husbands and wives?

God's Word assigns headship to the husband. But the Bible also shows that the wife shares a privileged standing with him before God. Setting out the basic formula for marital happiness, the Bible says:

"Let wives be in subjection to their husbands as to the Lord. . . . husbands ought to be loving their wives as their own bodies . . . for no man ever hated his own flesh; but he feeds and cherishes it, . . . on the other hand, the wife should have deep respect for her husband."—Eph. 5:22-33.

The husband, then, is to take the lead in the home, shouldering the responsibility for making final decisions. But he is not to be a harsh head of his household. He is to love his wife, not being overly demanding of her. The wife, on the other hand, is to have "deep respect for her husband." How many problems can be overcome by the husband's manifesting affection and the wife's showing respect!

Because many have turned away from these divine principles, their marriages are falling apart. But when these and other Bible principles are followed, married people are able to stick together in happiness. This is no mere theory. It is happening in thousands of families all over

the world. Families that are studying the Bible with Jehovah's witnesses are learning to apply its principles in their lives. Here is an example:

A Witness started a Bible study with a woman who explained that her marriage was through. The couple had decided to separate and go their own way. Encouragement was given by the Witness to try to save the marriage by applying Bible principles. The husband did not believe in God, but he was very impressed to see how the Bible answered many questions. A Bible study was started with the entire family, including three children. Within the first month the husband became fully convinced that Jehovah God lives. In a short time the marriage began to improve, and the couple decided to stick together, as Jesus said, and to preserve their family life. Now they are very happy.

KEEPING THE MARRIAGE BED UNDEFILED

Many today are rejecting the Bible's moral standards. But this has not brought happiness. Which makes more sense—a few minutes of illicit sexual excitement, or having a clean conscience with self-respect year in and year out? The Bible counsel is:

> "For as a honeycomb the lips of a strange woman keep dripping . . . But the aftereffect from her is as bitter as wormwood . . . do not get near to the entrance of her house, that you may not give to others your dignity, . . . [nor] have to groan in your future when your flesh and your organism come to an end. . . . rejoice with the wife of your youth." —Prov. 5:3-11, 18.

Sex interests outside the marriage bond undermine the security and happiness of the home. But those who live by the Bible have their happiness protected. Says God's Word: "Let marriage be honorable among all, and the marriage bed be without defilement, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers." (Heb. 13:4) So, for real family happiness marriage partners must limit their sex interests to their own legal marriage mates.—Prov. 5:15-21.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Economic problems are on the increase today, with so many families living beyond their means. But the Bible's counsel helps to protect the family from overspending and overemphasizing material things, with resultant stresses. For example, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, said: "Having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things. . . . For the love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things, and by reaching out for this love some have been led astray from the faith and have stabbed themselves all over with many pains."—1 Tim. 6:8-10.

Jesus Christ himself counseled to 'seek first' God's kingdom. He said that then "all these other things," your material needs, "will be added to you."—Matt. 6:31-33.

Applying these as well as the other Bible principles mentioned has saved many a marriage. For example, a family with three children were spending beyond their means. Their financial situation was a cause of stress. Further, the enticements of this world's "free morals" brought their marriage to the point of ruin. The husband stated:

> "About one year ago we were visited by Jehovah's witnesses. My wife responded because they were able to answer several of her questions, and she was offered a Bible study. I agreed to take part in the study to strengthen my wife's faith and to see if we could in this way save our marriage."

What was the result? He continues:

> "We are now very happy that we accepted the offer of a Bible study. It opened our eyes to see the true values in life. We now have a harmonious marriage and we are happy to have the association of our Christian brothers. We are grateful to Jehovah."

PARENTAL SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

Much of the unhappiness in family life is due to the difficulties that youthful members of the family get themselves into. But why? Along with the rise of delinquency, we see parental permissiveness. But the Bible warns that a child "let on the loose" causes shame, that "foolishness is tied up with the heart of a boy; the rod of discipline is what will remove it far from him." —Prov. 29:15; 22:15.

But will just strictness and chastisement correct matters? No, and so parents are counseled: "You fathers, do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted." (Col. 3:21) By developing a blend of firmness and affection, parents can enjoy the respect and love of their children.

When both parents apply these Bible principles, there is great benefit to the family. But suppose one of the marriage mates is not a believer in God's Word? Well, even if just one mate, the believer, applies Bible principles, the results can be most beneficial. A man who is not a Witness writes:

"My wife has been one of Jehovah's witnesses since 1952, and we have four children. I would like to say it has been a great advantage for the whole family that my wife has been a Witness. The right inclinations of the children to honest, moral uprightness and their mental balance are in no small way due to the good influence of my wife's religion."

ASSOCIATE WITH HAPPY PEOPLE

For all the family to have true happiness, its members need to follow the Bible counsel to associate with those who love God and his Word: "Pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, along with those who call upon the Lord out of a clean heart." (2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 10:24, 25) Since those who do this serve "the happy God," Jehovah, they are happy people. (1 Tim. 1:11) The result of thus associating with God's happy people is evident in the following experience of a young man who moved to Copenhagen to enjoy the pleasures of life. He writes:

"I began to come together with the 'intellectuals' and the 'God is dead' groups. I went into a conscientious-objector camp and lived with drug addicts and students. My hair and beard grew long, as I tried to live according to the examples of Marx and Engels. Then I got bad nerves and went to a mental hospital. The nights were unendurable. One of the patients was bothered by demons, and he said the voices were filled with lies and forced him to do unspeakable things. I began to realize that if there really were wicked spirits, there must also be a true, loving God.

"The next day I told my psychiatrist that when I got out I would study the Bible with Jehovah's witnesses. In August 1969 I attended the convention of Jehovah's witnesses in Copenhagen. The happiness of these people gave me a real push in the right direction. I accepted a home Bible study. The past five months have been the happiest time of my life."

How true it is as the Bible psalmist stated: "Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah!" (Ps. 144:15) This involves learning about God through his Word, the Bible, and coming together with his happy people.

Jehovah's witnesses are anxious to help you to gain greater happiness through a study of the Bible. Why not accept their offer of a free home Bible study the next time they call at your home? Or you may write to the publishers of this magazine, and a Witness will be sent to study with you free of charge. Also you can attend meetings at one of the Kingdom Halls, and you will see happy people, happy families. That happiness can be yours.

THOSE WHO BECAME JESUS' DISCIPLES

I AM thinking of a person who is the finest servant of God that ever lived on earth. Do you know who he is? That's right. Jesus Christ.

Do you think that you and I can be like him? Well, the Bible says that he set the example for us to follow. And he invites us to be his disciples.

What does it mean to be Jesus' disciples? It means several things. To be Jesus' disciples, we must learn from him. But that is not all. We must really believe what he says. Do you really believe everything that Jesus says? If we really believe, we will do what he tells us, won't we?

Many people say that they believe in Jesus. But are all of them really his disciples? Do you think they are? No; most of them are not. They may go to church once in a while. But many of them have never taken time to learn what Jesus taught. If you try to talk to them about Jesus, they may say they are too busy. Or they say they are not interested. And they do not share in the preaching work that Jesus told his disciples to do. So they are not really his disciples.

An article specially designed for parents to read with their children

What kind of people become disciples of Jesus? Do you know? It would be interesting to meet some of those who were Jesus' disciples when he was a man on earth. Let me tell you about them.

Some of them were fishermen. One day while Jesus was walking beside the sea of Galilee he saw Peter and his brother Andrew. They were letting down a fishing net into the sea. Jesus called to them: "Come after me."

Going a little farther, Jesus saw two other men who were brothers. Their names were James and John. They were in a boat with their father, repairing their fishing nets. Jesus called James and John to be his disciples too.

What would you have done? Would you have gone with Jesus right away? These men knew who Jesus was. They knew that Jesus had been sent by God. So at once they left their fishing business and followed Jesus.—Matt. 4:18-22.

It is plain that these men were willing, and that is important. But they were not perfect. Consider Peter. There were times when he said the wrong thing and got himself into trouble. But he had a good heart. He did not try to make it appear that he had done no wrong when he knew that he had done wrong. He accepted correction and was willing to change. If we are willing like Peter, we can be disciples of Jesus too.

Jesus also spoke to a rich young ruler. Could a man like this become a disciple of Jesus? He showed interest. He asked Jesus how to gain eternal life. Jesus explained it to him. But when *the man* learned that being a disciple of Jesus had to be more important in his life than his material riches, he became unhappy. Jesus invited him: "Come be my follower." But the man did not join him. He loved his money more than he loved God.—Luke 18:18-25.

Jesus invited all sorts of people to be his disciples. Even those who had lived

bad lives could change. But they must be willing to learn. They must really want to please God. Is that what you want to do?

The apostle Paul did. Before he became a disciple of Jesus he had done many bad things. He had Christians thrown into prison. But when he became a disciple of Jesus, he changed his whole way of life. Now he did things to help people, instead of hurting them. And he spent much time teaching people about God and his kingdom, just as Jesus had done.

One day Jesus chose twelve of his disciples to be apostles. The apostles were men whom he sent out to do special work. Some of them were used by God to write parts of the Bible. Do you know the names of the twelve apostles?

Let's play a game. I will name each one of the apostles. And you repeat the names after me:

(1) Peter and (2) his brother Andrew, (3) James and (4) his brother John, (5) Philip, (6) Barthólomew, (7) Matthew, (8) Thomas, (9) James the son of Alpháeus, (10) Simon who is called "the zealous one," (11) Judas the son of James, and (12) Judas Iscariot. But later Judas Iscariot became bad and turned against Jesus. So Paul was chosen by Jesus to be an apostle.

How many of those names can you remember? Tell me the names that you know.

The only disciples that we have talked about so far were men. Does that mean that only men could be disciples of Jesus? No. Women became disciples too. Some of them traveled with Jesus when he went preaching. There were Mary Mágdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and others. Later the Bible tells about a family in which four daughters were busy telling other people about God. What a happy family that must have been!

When Jesus was teaching, he took a special interest in young children. Why did he do that? What would you say? He knew that children could become his disciples. It is true that grown-ups can do some things that children cannot do. But grown-ups are not the only ones who can learn from Jesus. And they are not the only ones who can talk about God. You can do those things too.

Do you want to be a disciple of Jesus? I do. That is really the best thing that any of us can do.

It is a special thing to be a disciple of Jesus. Remember, before Jesus came to earth he had been with God in heaven. So he knows things that no other man knows. When we learn from him we learn things that only disciples of Jesus know.

So we can be like Jesus. We can be his disciples. And if we are truly Jesus' disciples, then we will have the approval of God.

TRUTH WELCOMED IN COLOMBIA

COLOMBIA is no insignificant land. Its population of some 20 million occupy an area of about 455,000 square miles—larger than France, Spain and Portugal combined. Up to 1945, 99.9 percent of the people were nominally Roman Catholic. In that year the first Watch Tower missionaries arrived to aid two local Witnesses who lived and preached in the mountains.

At first viewed as outsiders and with some hostility, these Christian ministers quietly went about their work of visiting people in their homes and offering free home Bible study courses. They encountered stock objections, obviously all arising from one source—objections such as, "It's a sin to read the Bible," "Our priest forbids us to read the Bible," "The Bible makes you go crazy," and so on. Often religious opposition resulted in the denial to them of the use of public auditoriums for meetings, so they met in backyards and patios. Patiently they endured in their fine, unselfish service, confident that God would bless His work.

The strict neutrality of the Witnesses toward all political movements set them apart from Catholics and Protestants alike. (John 17:14) Even during a decade of violence in which an estimated 200,000 persons were killed, the Witnesses carried on with their ministry peacefully. Sincere Colombians began to respond to the truths of the Bible. They, in turn, could not but speak forth the things they were learning. The word spread. People were thirsty for Bible knowledge.

Times have surely changed. The Catholic Church now finds herself on the defensive, striving to stem the tide of antireligious forces. Inside the church a new generation of priests is demanding immediate reform, including the abolition of celibacy. Colombian newspaper headlines have exposed the problems of the church in such recent titles as "People of Cali Scorn Holy Friday Myths," "Archbishop Criticizes Colombian Priests," "Are They Priests or Politicians? Asks a Hierarch."

No longer do the Witnesses have to use backyards for their assemblies. Businessmen and municipal authorities are making public auditoriums and stadiums available to the Witnesses, without regard for what the bishop might say. In greatly increasing numbers people are coming to listen. They are recognizing the genuine ring of Bible truth.

Jehovah's witnesses have their hands full trying to satisfy the burning desire of thousands of persons for Bible knowledge. Distribution of Bibles and Bible literature has more than doubled in the past two years. Over 9,100 free home Bible studies are regularly being conducted in the homes of interested persons. Reflecting the current trend, a traveling overseer reports: "Kingdom Halls are often filled to overflowing and latecomers have to stand outside to listen and observe through the open windows." For the annual celebration of the Lord's Evening Meal one congregation of fifty Witnesses had 368 persons in attendance. In the entire country the attendance of 28,377 represented an increase of 37 percent over last year and over four times the total number of Jehovah's witnesses in the land. Obviously, there are

thousands of Colombians who want to learn what the Bible teaches.

Not long ago, in the city of Villavicencio the radio encouraged the people to welcome the Witnesses into their homes. From Ciénago de Oro (Córdoba) a woman traveled to a neighboring city to find the overseer of a Christian congregation and invite him to send Witnesses to organize a Bible study group in her home. Indeed, it is common for people to offer their homes for this purpose.

Now, instead of always meeting objections, the Witnesses engaged in the house-to-house ministry are met with such questions as, "How can I get a Bible?" and "What does the Bible say?" One elderly woman in Medellín declared: "I believe the Bible. The church can change all it wants to, but it can never change the Bible." She readily assented to having a Bible study in her home.

Among those benefiting from such Bible instruction was a sincere Catholic woman who was zealous in the work of her church. In her own words she tells how it happened: "I was given the assignment of spiritually preparing families for the Pope's visit in 1968. Knowing nothing about the Bible to accomplish this task, I appealed to the priest for help. He confessed he did not know how to teach the Bible. However, he invited me to a week's special course at a Catholic university to equip me along with others to do this work. It so happened that there was no qualified priest to do the job, and so a Protestant evangelist was called in to a Catholic university to teach the Bible. By this time I was confused and perplexed, and, happily for me, a Witness called at my door. Now I am a baptized Witness along with my husband, daughter and mother."

CHANGED LIVES OF ALL KINDS OF MEN

Persons of all walks of life are welcoming Bible truth, and it is having a powerful effect on their lives. One couple in Medellín had lived together without benefit of marriage for twelve years, and had two children. When they learned the Bible requirements they took steps to legalize their marriage. Ironically, the husband's brother, a priest, had never mentioned to them the Bible principles governing marriage.

Bible truth was welcomed by a beggar in Ibagué. He soon realized that he had been violating Bible principles. In order to be one of Jehovah's witnesses he would have to engage in honest work. Now he is a shoe salesman and plans to be baptized soon.

And here is another instance of the power of God's Word to change one's life: "From the very first contact with the truth [a man in Bogotá] has never missed a meeting. His family is Jewish and, prior to studying the Bible, he associated with hippies besides being a drug addict. His father would give him money to visit prostitutes. All his life he wanted to do something humane. Now he is baptized and fulfilling a lifelong ambition—helping people in the finest way possible, aiding them to grasp the truth that leads to life."

Then we have the following heartfelt expression by an engineer, professor and editor: "It disgusted me to see the close association of the Catholic Church with capitalism. All my life I have felt a spiritual need and have been searching for answers to my questions. Three months ago I came in contact with Jehovah's witnesses and now I am happily studying the Bible with them and my questions are being answered." He is now cutting down on his secular work so he can share more fully in the spreading of Bible truth in Colombia.

Jehovah's witnesses find that people of all kinds respond to God's Word. Housewives and laborers are joining with them in spreading the "good news." Teachers and businessmen are responding favorably. Dentists, doctors, lawyers, engineers and other professional men are manifesting keen interest in the Kingdom message. Their outlook on life undergoes a great change.

EXCELLENT RESULTS

Perhaps the greatest change wrought in people's lives by the truth of the Bible is reflected in the transformation from a selfish, self-serving way of life to a way of life that manifests eagerness to share with others the wonderful information with which they have been blessed. Increasing numbers of persons of all ages and of all classes of the population are sharing in spreading the message of life. Why, just a year ago in all Colombia there were 5,448 persons engaged in preaching the Kingdom message. This April there were 6,776, an increase of 24 percent.

Showing their earnestness in the service of God, large numbers are getting baptized. At the national assembly of Jehovah's witnesses held in the spacious football stadium in Bogotá last December, a total of 717 persons of varying ages, after preparing themselves by careful study, were immersed. During just the ten months following September 1, 1969, a total of 1,174 were baptized. That accounts for about one out of every six Witnesses in the whole country.

There is much work still to be done. Rural territory has hardly been touched in many places. Next in line for special attention are scores of villages and cities of 15,000 to 100,000 population.

Entire families from other lands have moved to Colombia to help seek out truth-hungry ones and extend to them the message of life. One such family reports: "We are a family of three and we are all pioneer ministers (or full-time preachers) in the city of Pereira, where we can give a Bible sermon in over 90 percent of the homes. We have spent two and a half of the most happy years of our lives here preaching and teaching the good news of the Kingdom to the people of Colombia. They are very receptive. But only a small percentage of the people own a Bible. A smaller percentage have any knowledge of it, and the majority do not even understand that the Bible has chapters and verses."

Can you imagine how happy a Witness in Medellín was when two young men took time out from their busy carpenter trade to study the Bible! When he apologized for the poor Spanish he spoke, they replied: "Do not let it bother you, because we are learning the truth. Besides, this is the first time in our life that anyone has taken the time to teach us anything about the Bible and God's purposes for mankind. We are grateful for this."

Yes, the bearers of Bible truth are being welcomed in Colombia. They have gained a reputation for being champions of Bible truth. Many thousands of Colombians would say *"Sí, sí"* ("Yes, yes") to the following expression of a Colombian military general: "With pleasure I grant you permission for your assemblies. You never give us any problems. Teaching of the type you give is just what this country needs."

Second Coming of Christ

● Only 24 percent of Episcopalians, by survey, believe in the second coming of Christ. (*Look*, April 29, 1969, p. 55) Do you? The Bible clearly teaches it.—John 14:3; Matt. 24:37-42.

The Blessings of

OBEDIENCE LEARNED THROUGH SUFFERING

"Although he was a son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered; and after he had been made perfect he became responsible for everlasting salvation to all those obeying him."—Heb. 5:8, 9.

A SUPERHUMAN test of endurance! Such a headline in a newspaper would immediately attract attention, not only because it promises something sensational, but because many people are interested in the quality of endurance. They would read what was under that headline with the feeling of being involved, wondering how they would fare under such a test. Many, in fact, willingly undergo severe tests of endurance, such as in mountaineering, or long-distance running, swimming, and so forth. These feats not only demand a nonstop continuance in a certain activity, but also call for constant firmness under pressure, hardship or suffering, without being overcome or giving way. That is what endurance means. It is rightly looked on as a sterling quality, requiring patience, perseverance, strength of devotion, fortitude and courage. Though in the above instances the prompting motive may include competition and pride in the sense of achievement, this is not always so. Nursing someone through a long, painful illness, with no hope of recovery, or living for years with someone who has turned sour or become dissolute, these and other similar circumstances all call for endurance, but with no thought of acclaim and often taken for granted and passed by unnoticed.

[2] Right now we are inviting your interest in a unique case of successfully passing a superhuman test of endurance. This is no exaggeration. We can also say, on the authority of God's Word, that you are invited to become involved. In truth, we are all involved, every one of us. This case is unique, not due to its principles differing from those of other tests, but because of certain outstanding features and circumstances that are well worthy of consideration. As you may have expected, this case concerns God's only-begotten Son, Christ Jesus. Of him it is recorded: "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered; and after he had been made perfect he became responsible for everlasting salvation to all those obeying him." (Heb. 5:8, 9) However, before going into detail as to how and why he was tested, let us, for our encouragement, briefly note some of the blessings he gained as a direct result of all that he endured.

[3] To begin with, Paul immediately goes on to mention three of these blessings: (1) Jesus was thereby "made perfect" in a special sense, (2) he was authorized to become "responsible for everlasting sal-

1. Why does endurance often have a great appeal, and what does it involve?
2. To what special example of endurance does the Bible invite our attention?
3. Briefly, what blessings thereby gained by Jesus can be mentioned?

vation to all those obeying him," and (3) he qualified to be a "high priest according to the manner of Melchizedek." (Heb. 5:9, 10) This last one of course means that (4) Jesus also qualified to be a "king," like Melchizedek. To these we can add that (5) Jesus is appointed "mediator of a new covenant," and also (6) enjoys supreme exaltation to the "right hand of the throne of God." Lastly, (7) he was made head "as a Son over" God's house of sons. We should keep these things in mind as we look at what might seem to be the dark side of the picture. That is what Jesus did, as we read: "For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake." —Heb. 7:1, 2; 9:15; 3:6; 12:2.

4 Turning our attention again to the apostle's inspired statement at Hebrews 5:8, 9, we note he uses expressions that at first sight seem strange and difficult to understand. Since Jesus was God's perfect Son sent down from heaven, "loyal, guileless, undefiled, separated from the sinners," how can it be said that he "learned obedience from the things he suffered," and how was he thereby "made perfect"? (Heb. 7:26) Why was it necessary in his case? Was he not always obedient and always perfect? To aid in getting the right viewpoint and appreciation on these leading questions, we want to look at the whole matter through Paul's eyes, as it were, remembering that he was particularly blessed with Jehovah's spirit.

5 It is most interesting to see how Paul develops his argument in writing to the Hebrew Christians, also to note his frequent mention of angels in the earlier part. His main theme, to begin with, is the unique exaltation of God's Son to the highest position, made to be the "reflection of his [God's] glory and the exact representation of his very being . . . and after he had made a purification for our sins he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in lofty places. So he has become better than the angels." (Heb. 1:3, 4) In the long list of quotations that follows from the Hebrew Scriptures, showing Christ's superior position over the angels, the basic reason for this is clearly stated when Paul quotes from Psalm 45:7: "You [the Son] loved righteousness, and you hated lawlessness. That is why God, your God, anointed you with the oil of exultation more than your partners [the kings of Israel]." (Heb. 1:9) We should take to heart that fundamental principle. If we follow it under whatever test we become involved in, we too can be sure of a successful outcome because of having Jehovah's approval and blessing.

6 With Jesus' lofty exaltation in mind, we can better appreciate the force of Paul's words when he says: *"That is why* it is necessary for us to pay more than the usual attention" to a message of a "salvation of such greatness in that it began to be spoken through our Lord," and not through angels. If we neglect the opportunity for salvation held out by Jesus Christ, whether to a heavenly or an earthly hope in his kingdom, then "how shall we escape" the dire "retribution in harmony with justice," because of spurning a unique provision of such undeserved kindness? (Heb. 2:1-4) Then Paul enlarges on this, quoting from Psalm 8, showing that in God's kingdom it is his purpose to 'subject all things' without exception, "not to angels," but under the feet of the "son of man," who is Jesus. Interestingly, however, in the outworking of this purpose, Jesus was for a time made "a little lower than angels" when he came to earth. To what end and with what result? Note the

4. In view of Hebrews 7:26, what questions arise from the statement at Hebrews 5:8, 9?

5. What is Paul's main theme in Hebrews, chapter 1, and how is it supported?

6. (a) How is the argument continued at Hebrews 2:1-4, showing what responsibility? (b) What grand development of this follows at Hebrews 2:5-9?

grand answer, that Jesus is now "crowned with glory and honor for having suffered death, that he by God's undeserved kindness might taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:5-9) This argues that the provision made for salvation is so comprehensive that no member of the human family is left out. True, it is not automatic or forced on anyone, but anyone failing to get the benefit thereof has only himself to blame. The provision covers "every man." Do you not appreciate this provision? Do you not feel involved? How careful we should be to "never drift away," or develop a "wicked heart lacking faith by drawing away from the living God." —Heb. 2:1; 3:12.

[7] So far so good. We have no difficulty in acknowledging that God's beloved Son was worthy to be raised to such an exalted position. However, what about Paul's next statement, an important one, that "it was fitting . . . in bringing *many* sons to glory, to make the Chief Agent of their salvation perfect through sufferings"? (Heb. 2:10) Who are these "many sons"? Might they be some of the holy angels deserving of special honor? To the contrary, the clue to the answer is seen in verse 16, where we read: "For he [Jesus] is really not assisting angels at all, but he is assisting Abraham's seed." Ah! there we have it, *"Abraham's seed."* To identify this class, we only have to refer to the apostle's explanation at Galatians 3:16, 26, 29, where, after stating that the promise was not to many seeds, but only one, " 'and to your seed,' who is Christ," he then later says: "You are all, in fact, sons of God through your faith in Christ Jesus. . . . Moreover, if you belong to Christ, you are really Abraham's seed, heirs with reference to a promise." Thus we learn that, while Abraham's seed is primarily Jesus Christ, in the enlarged fulfillment it includes the Christian congregation, the "little flock" with the heavenly hope. (Luke 12:32) These share with their Head to a large extent in the promised special blessings of obedience learned through suffering. Even though you may not be of this limited number, you are still involved if you are a sheeplike person, for, as we shall see, all of Jehovah's sheep in this "time of the end" take a similar course with a similar motive, and all alike are required to learn obedience through suffering, especially in these "critical times hard to deal with." —2 Tim. 3:1.

7. How can we identify the "many sons" mentioned at Hebrews 2:10?

THE CHIEF AGENT MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING

[8] In order to appreciate why it was fitting to make the "Chief Agent . . . perfect through sufferings," and how this was done, we propose to link together the various expressions found in the context of this passage that bear directly on this question. First, we will consider Hebrews 2:17, 18. Here it is explained that Jesus "was obliged to become like his 'brothers' in all respects, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, in order to offer propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the people." This had to be done first in order to provide a satisfactory basis on which these "many sons" of God, these "brothers" of Jesus, could be acceptable and given a righteous standing in God's sight. But this is not all. These, like all Jehovah's "sheep," are taken from the human family, beset by many imperfections and infirmities, and need further help from their merciful high priest, as we next read: "For in that he himself has suffered when being put to the test, he is able to come to the aid of those who are [also] being put to the

8. (a) What provision was first made by Jesus as high priest, and why? (b) Is there need for further aid, and how has it been provided?

test." Now we can begin to see one of the main reasons for all the suffering that Jesus endured right here on earth. Because of this, not only can he provide aid from a distant point, as it were, but he is 'able to *come* to our aid' when we are in need. Though highly exalted to God's right hand, he is not remote, impersonal. What a close relationship is thus implied, and how comforting!

9 Next, consider Hebrews 4:15, 16, where we find further comfort and encouragement. Paul tells us that "we have as high priest, not one who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tested in all respects like ourselves, but without sin." How close this brings our high priest to us! He can sympathize not only with our limitations, but even with our weaknesses. He knows what it is to feel the many pressures that cause one either to stumble or to swerve from the course of perfect obedience, the pressure coming either due to opposition causing fear, or due to enticement causing wrong desire. He was "tested in *all* respects like ourselves," though for his part he never stumbled or swerved in the slightest degree. What a comfort to know that "he is able to deal moderately with the ignorant and erring ones," like the high priests of Israel, though not because he ever needed to make an offering for his own sins, as they did. (Heb. 5:2, 3) This makes us feel as Paul next wrote: "Let us, therefore, approach with freeness of speech to the throne of undeserved kindness, that we may obtain mercy and find undeserved kindness for help at the right time." Both the statements at Hebrews 2:18 and 4:16 are true, each from its own viewpoint. On the one hand, our high priest is ready to come to our rescue and provide aid when we are being put to the test. On the other hand, we can always feel free to approach God's throne of undeserved kindness with absolute confidence, assured of receiving kindly help just at the right time.

10 Having traced the outline of Paul's argument thus far, and appreciating some of its fine points, let us look once more at his words recorded at Hebrews 5:8-10. Just previously he reminds us that Jesus' sufferings were intensely real, that he "offered up supplications and also petitions to the one [God] who was able to save him out of death, with strong outcries and tears." Yes, it was indeed a superhuman test. Then comes the key statement: "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered; and after he had been made perfect he became responsible for everlasting salvation to all those obeying him." Continuing, the first reason is given for this trialsome course: "Because he has been specifically called by God a high priest according to the manner of Melchizedek." He was now fully qualified.

11 Notice the emphasis laid on obedience. Not only did Jesus have to learn and prove his own obedience, but he is responsible for salvation only "to all those *obeying* him," not just trusting him. Only those learning obedience under test, involving suffering, gain the blessing of obedience, eternal salvation. Notice further how Jesus strongly supported this when fully qualified, after his resurrection. In giving his commission to his followers, he started by saying: "*All authority* has been given me in heaven and on the earth," thereby having the right to command obedience. Then he said: "Go therefore and make disciples . . . teaching them to observe [to keep and obey] all

9. (a) In what way and to what extent can Jesus sympathize with our weaknesses? (b) What benefits do we thereby gain?

10. (a) How do we know Jesus' sufferings were intensely real? (b) What objective was gained because of passing the supreme test?

11. How is obedience stressed at Hebrews 5:9, also when Jesus gave his commission to his followers?

the things I have commanded you." He did not request or suggest; he commanded. Obedience to him cannot be sidestepped, either for ourselves or for those we are privileged to teach, though this must be balanced, as in our high priest, with mercy and the other fruits of the spirit. Rather than for us to feel frightened about this, it really proves to be a grand support, for Jesus added: "And, look! I am with you [backing you up with all authority] all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." What more could we want?—Matt. 28:18-20.

12 We come now to the consideration of those leading questions: How did Jesus learn obedience? and how was he thereby made perfect? The question of obedience involves a fundamental principle, or truth, that applies, not only to Jesus and those making up Abraham's seed, but to all God's intelligent creatures. That great truth lies in the fact of Jehovah's rightful and righteous universal sovereignty over all his creatures. All must prove their full recognition of this by proving obedient under whatever test Jehovah provides or allows. The first test was made in Eden. The final test comes after the thousand-year reign of Christ. (Rev. 20:7-10) In each case the Bible shows this test cannot be treated lightly, that no one can take for granted that he will succeed. The test is real, revealing the heart attitude prompting the obedience or disobedience to Jehovah's expressed will. Are you willing to accede to Jehovah's sovereignty over you, without qualification, over your heart and mind and your whole life?

13 Before further discussing obedience, let us consider the question of perfection. To understand this properly, we must first realize that both in the Bible and everyday speech, perfection is spoken of in two senses. (1) When we say something is perfect we sometimes mean it is entirely flawless and cannot go wrong. It is fully developed, the finished article. That would be perfection in the absolute and final sense. Primarily, this is true of Jehovah. The Bible says of him: "The Rock, perfect is his activity, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he." (Deut. 32:4) (2) Perfection, however, is often used and spoken of in a relative or limited sense, limited to a certain sphere and not going beyond that. A synthetically produced commercial diamond, for instance, is perfect for use in an electric drill, but not, please note, for an engagement ring.

14 In this connection, take the Bible example of Adam and Eve where obedience also comes into the picture. The man was perfect in a relative sense in his own sphere, perfectly fitted to exercise headship in carrying out the Creator's purpose regarding the earth and his immediate family. The woman, in her sphere, was perfectly suited for being a mother and an ideal companion for her husband. But all too soon she went wrong. She sinned, that is, she missed the mark of perfection. How? She went beyond her God-given assignment and tried to assume her husband's God-given quality and acted as her own head. She proved disobedient to her husband and to her Creator. Still, the age-old question crops up, How could they possibly have sinned, seemingly so quickly and easily, if they were really perfect? Well, do not forget that other marvelous quality they each enjoyed in perfection, namely, a perfectly free mind and will,

12. (a) What fundamental principle highlights the importance of obedience? (b) In the light of God's Word, how searching is the test of obedience?

13. In what two senses is perfection spoken of in the Bible and in everyday use?

14. (a) How did Eve come to miss the mark of perfection, leading to what question? (b) What special quality and ability were given man, thus magnifying God's purpose regarding man?

the ability to think and reason things out, each along one's own lines if one chose to do so, reaching one's own conclusions and making one's own decisions. They had perfect freedom of choice. In fact, if it had been that they lacked the ability to be either obedient or disobedient, having no choice, then they would have been imperfect from God's viewpoint. Please note that God's purpose is to have this earth filled, not just with obedient men and women, but with men and women who have passed the test as to their voluntary and deep-rooted devotion and loyalty to him in acknowledgment of his rightful sovereignty. He does not desire from any one of us an automatic, mechanical, matter-of-course or enforced worship and service. Rather, he desires a reasoned-out, willing service, springing spontaneously from a loving heart.

[15] So, then, man's fall from perfection resulted from his bringing wrong thoughts into his mind. First Eve and then Adam of their own free choice meditated long enough on what was wrong so that it took root and motivated them to bad action. This is exactly as the Bible says: "Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire [that is, he chooses to make it his own desire, though, as with Eve, it may not be his own to begin with]. Then the desire, when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin." (Jas. 1:14, 15) This principle holds true for all, whether perfect or imperfect. If we said that a perfect man could not go wrong, then we would have to say that an imperfect man could not maintain a right course, especially under pressure. Yet today we see that many imperfect creatures do stick to a right course in obeying God, even if it means suffering; whereas others deliberately pursue or abandon themselves to a wrong course. It is good to realize that the choice is set before us just as when God said to the children of Israel: "See . . . I have put life and death before you . . . and you must choose." (Deut. 30: 15, 19) Being imperfect did not stop them from choosing, did it? Getting it clear in our mind concerning perfection and obedience helps and encourages us to get the right view as to our responsibility and the privileges open to every one of us. Granted, we are imperfect, but to a large extent, even after six thousand years of sin and imperfection, we still have freedom of choice as to how we think and how we decide. This freedom of mind and will is a precious gift and carries with it a big responsibility. We should pay more than the usual attention as to how we use it.

[16] These same things apply in the case of Jesus. See how perfection in a relative or limited sense was true of him. When born here on earth, he was a perfect baby, but no more than a baby. When at the age of twelve he questioned those teachers at the temple, he was a perfect boy, but no more than a boy. (Luke 2:41-52) Similarly, in his prehuman existence, he was perfect as God's "master worker" (Prov. 8:30), but God had in mind a much higher position for him, one demanding assured qualities in a superlative degree of proved perfection and trustworthiness and maturity. So, before reaching this high office of being king and high priest, it was fitting that God's Son should undergo the required development, the necessary training and education, the necessary disciplining and testing, in order to perfect him for his high office beyond any possibility of failure.

15. (a) How does the Bible explain the operation of sin from its inception? (b) How should freedom of choice be viewed and treasured?

16. (a) When on earth and before, how was Jesus perfect in a relative sense? (b) What high office was to be given him, demanding what qualities?

17 The matter of obedience also comes into the picture. True, Jesus had always been obedient before coming to earth, but his obedience had never been put to a severe test. When in conflict with spirit creatures, the 'prince of Persia' in Daniel's time, also earlier with Satan himself over the body of Moses, he was not then subject to those opposers. (Dan. 10:13; Jude 9) He did not have to pay a high price for being obedient. But when he came to earth and began his ministry, his field service, it was altogether different, was it not? From Jordan to Calvary he was continually put to the test, involving much suffering. After a direct encounter with the Devil in the wilderness, there were all those hostile religious pressure groups continually at him and after him until they finally got him. Yes, he went through the mill, as we say, "with strong outcries and tears." It was a terrible ordeal. Finally, he was crushed to death between the upper and lower millstones of those pressure groups and of Rome. However, he was not crushed or broken in spirit, or in his integrity and perfect obedience to his heavenly Father.—Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 5:7.

18 Jesus always had faith, but now it had the tested quality. He was always true as steel, denoting loyalty and constancy, but now it was tempered steel, tempered by fire. Thus we can more fully appreciate why it was necessary for Jesus to learn by actual experience what it meant to be obedient under extreme adversity and suffering. Primarily, it was in view of the unique position ahead of him at God's right hand, all things being put in subjection to him. Additionally, we realize that by enduring such a course faithfully he was thereby made perfect in a much wider and deeper sense than ever before. He was now fully qualified as high priest to come to our aid and give help at the right time, thus becoming responsible for the ultimate salvation, first for the many obedient sons who are to share with him in his heavenly throne, also for the many others of humanity for whom he tasted death. These, too, must learn that "in the name of Jesus every knee should bend" in submission, because of the "superior position" kindly given by God to his faithful Son. All this, of course, is "to the glory of God the Father."—Phil. 2:5-11.

19 There is one more thing worthy of note regarding Jesus. The tests were not forced on him. He willingly and deliberately chose to enter the ministry, including the public exposure of all the false religion and tradition practiced in his day, knowing full well it would draw the fire of the enemy. As was foretold of his frame of mind and determination: "I had faith, for I proceeded to speak. I myself was very much afflicted." Above all, Jesus had faith in God's kingdom and that he would be installed as its king. On the basis of this faith he "proceeded to speak" and "bear witness to the truth" on all occasions. As a result, he was "very much afflicted." Still, even when facing the end and he could say: "The ropes of death encircled me and the distressing circumstances of Sheol themselves found me," he also said at the same time: "My vows I shall pay to Jehovah, yes, in front of all his people." He was Jehovah's foremost loyal one, and it likely was a great comfort to him at that time to recall that it was written: "Precious in the eyes of Jehovah is the death of his loyal ones."—Ps. 116:3, 10-15; 2:6; John 18:37.

17. How was Jesus' obedience crucially tested when on earth?

18. From all that he suffered and endured, what blessings did Jesus gain for himself, and what benefits for others?

19. How do we know that the tests were not forced on Jesus, and how was this foretold?

20 As we have already indicated, these experiences of Jesus' in learning obedience the hard way were not only of benefit to himself, also enabling him as high priest to minister to our benefit, but he thereby set a pattern for us to follow in certain respects. This is true of those whose hope of life is in a restored earthly paradise, besides those who have the hope of sharing with Jesus in his heavenly throne. We wish to discuss this more fully with you and invite your interest. We trust you will feel involved, but you might say, as many do, I cannot be interested from this angle. It was all right for Jesus, he was perfect. I am too conscious of my own imperfections, preventing me from going beyond just the grateful acceptance of the benefits of Jesus' ransom sacrifice. Is that good reasoning? Is it correct thinking?

20. Besides appreciating his ministry on our behalf, from what other viewpoint should we consider Jesus and take keen interest?

The HOUR of TEST IS ON!

A SOLDIER actively engaged in bitter fighting cannot get a comprehensive view of the battle as a whole. It is not expected of him. He is too occupied otherwise, and his view of the whole thing is largely affected by his own experience. Similarly, if trouble breaks out on the industrial front, involving a strike and maybe violence, the average workman will likely only have listened to the harangue and propaganda of those supposed to be on his side. Like the soldier, he views the whole thing subjectively, that is, as it affects him personally. The opposite of this is to view a thing objectively, which means to take a detached view, not swayed or prejudiced by personal feelings or involvement. Humanly speaking, perhaps it is the historian who is in the best position to do this when he can look back and see the incident in its entire context. If this is true of occasions where there is great pressure, what about an entire world situation that is daily becoming more threatening? What individual is in such a superior position that he can rightly assess the true situation, properly understand the principles involved, and give reliable guidance on which others can depend? Leading figures in the political and religious world often make such a claim and make their pronouncements, but are they justified? How often it happens that their word is soon forgotten, or later used as evidence against them.

2 Where can we turn for enlightenment and guidance that is wholly trustworthy? Why, surely we would expect to find it in the Holy Scriptures that contain the "word of God," for it is so extremely powerful and penetrating, and it expresses what God's "holy spirit says." (Heb. 3:7; 4:12)

1. Why is it difficult to view the world situation objectively, and what proves this?

2. On what grounds can we look to the Scriptures for reliable guidance?

That was the word that guided Jesus throughout his ministry, concerning which he testified: "Your word is truth." (John 17:17) It gave him the right viewpoint, God's viewpoint, of things when under tremendous pressure, so why not let it be our guide? It never let him down, and we too can have strong confidence that as we approach the complete end of this system of things we will have the authoritative backing both of the living "Word of God," Christ Jesus, and of the written Word of God.—Matt. 28:20; Rev. 19:13.

3 The Bible is the most remarkable history book. It objectively records past history, giving the correct viewpoint of events and of the characters and nations involved, against their true background. More wonderful, it is history written in advance. Its penetrating beam focuses on our day, showing how "all the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction," yes, "written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived." (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11) This is called prophecy, much of which has already been fulfilled, and never once has it been proved that the Bible is at fault, despite its many critics. If you really believe that Jehovah is its Author, this will not surprise you. As Jehovah himself says: "I am the Divine One and there is no other God, nor anyone like me; the One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done."—Isa. 46:9, 10.

4 However, you may have felt, as many have when reading the Bible, that it is largely a closed book, except for making plain certain moral lessons and standards. Do not be discouraged. That is likely how John felt when, in vision, he saw Jehovah enthroned in heaven in the awe-inspiring, glorious setting described in Revelation, chapter four. He then noticed in Jehovah's right hand a "scroll written within and on the reverse side, sealed tight with seven seals." Such a scroll in Jehovah's hand obviously contained vital information well worth knowing, yet at first "no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it." John felt so grieved about this that he "gave way to a great deal of weeping," but was shortly told: "Stop weeping. Look! The Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so as to open the scroll and its seven seals." —Rev. 5:1-5.

5 We have no difficulty in identifying the conquering "Lion" as Christ Jesus, for he is also described as "a lamb as though it had been slaughtered," and a song is sung in his praise: "You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because you were slaughtered and with your blood you bought persons for God . . . and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth." (Rev. 5:6-10) As we have already discussed, Jesus proved his obedience under the severest pressure and thereby qualified for his lofty position at God's right hand. Through his priestly work he is used as the Chief Agent in "bringing many sons to glory" to share his heavenly throne. These many sons making up the Christian congregation must likewise prove to be conquerors. As Jesus could say: "I have conquered the world," despite all its pressures, so the same must be true of each one of these who "have been given a new birth" into God's family of sons. Besides confirming this, John gives the underlying reason as to how it can and must be done. He says: "This is what the love of God means, that we ob-

3. As a history book, how is the Bible proved to be unique, and why so?
4. Regarding the scroll in God's hand, why did John weep, and with what outcome?
5. (a) How can we identify the Lion of the tribe of Judah? (b) In what way must all true Christians prove to be conquerors?

serve his commandments; and yet his commandments are not burdensome, because everything that has been born from God conquers the world. And this is the conquest that has conquered the world, our faith." Did you notice the fire-resisting qualities of an obedient faith, motivated by *agápe* love? This personal responsibility is strongly emphasized when we recall that at the close of each message to the seven congregations comprising the true church, the reward is promised individually "to him that conquers."—Heb. 2:10; John 16:33; 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 5:3, 4; Rev. 2:7–3:21.

HOUR OF TEST ON ALL EARTH'S INHABITANTS

6 You may say this requirement is quite clear for the comparatively few who share Christ's throne, but does it stop there? Well, let us take a look at what was later revealed to John as a result of that scroll's being opened by the one found worthy and revealing its hitherto closely guarded secrets. It led the way for further visions "which God gave him [Jesus], to show his slaves the things that must shortly take place." (Rev. 1:1) We refer particularly to a series of vivid scenes portraying a situation of great pressure bearing heavily on all persons then living. No one is exempt. As we shall see, that time is now and the hour of test is on!

7 Touching only on those points related to our theme, we recall that in Revelation, chapter twelve, we are told, by symbols, of the birth of the Kingdom and the enthronement of its King in 1914. It tells of the Devil, after being hurled out of heaven, as "having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." He feels he is under great pressure himself. No time to lose. He is enraged because he knows that "they [Christ's brothers] conquered him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their witnessing." So he goes off "to wage war with . . . [those] who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus."—Rev. 12:11, 12, 17.

8 However, these are not the only ones involved. John next sees a "wild beast . . . with ten horns and seven heads," symbolizing Satan's visible earthly political organization that has continued down to our day. Now notice how the situation develops, showing how the issue causing the pressure can be summed up in the question, Whom do you worship? John records that the "dragon [Satan] gave to the beast its power and its throne and great authority . . . and all the earth followed the wild beast with admiration. And they worshiped the dragon . . . and they worshiped the wild beast." John also says that "authority was given it [the beast] over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all those who dwell on the earth will worship it; the name of not one of them stands written in the scroll of life of the Lamb." (Rev. 13:1-4, 7, 8) Certainly none are exempt, but that last expression indicates that, though people in general succumb to the pressure to engage in false worship, there are exceptions, as will be mentioned again shortly. How well this describes the present situation. Do not people in general give their service and allegiance and patriotic support to one part or another of the current political setup? They submit to its authority, perhaps unwillingly if under any form of conscription. To them, "Caesar" is the only and final authority. In God's eyes, this constitutes worship of the wild beast and

6. What characteristics mark some of John's visions? Is time involved?
7. How does Revelation explain why the Devil has great anger?
8. (a) What vision was next given to John? (b) What was thus symbolized, involving what issue and what pressure?

All persons are put under pressure to give worship to the Devil's visible earthly political organization, pictured by the wild beast out of the sea. Whom do you worship?

of the dragon, the Devil, the "god of this system of things."—2 Cor. 4:4.

[9] Where do you stand on this issue? Do you remember how Jesus answered Satan when under the pressure of the temptation to "fall down and do an act of worship" on consideration of receiving from Satan "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" (making up the "wild beast")? Jesus replied: "Go away, Satan! For it is written, 'It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.'" (Matt. 4:8-10) Notice how worship and service are closely linked. If you claim to worship Jehovah, prove it by rendering sacred service to him and to him alone. This principle was stressed from earliest times. Joshua told the people: "He [Jehovah] is a God exacting exclusive devotion." That is the stand you must take, learning how to view the present situation and the issue as it affects you from God's viewpoint.—Josh. 24:19.

[10] There is more to follow, however, with no letup on this theme of worship. John next sees "another wild beast . . . [with] two horns like a lamb . . . And it makes the earth and those who dwell in it worship the first wild beast." Further, "it tells those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the wild beast," which is given breath (or life), "so that the image of the wild beast should both speak and cause to be killed all those who would not in any way worship the image of the wild beast." As if that were not sufficient, the record continues: "It puts *under compulsion* all persons, . . . that nobody might be able to buy or sell except a person having the mark, the name of the wild beast or the number of its name." (Rev. 13:11-17) Here is pictured the development of Satan's visible organization, seen in the Anglo-American dual world power, also the creation of an "image" by this great world power, seen first in the League of Nations and today revived in the form of the United Nations. But whatever the developments, it is the same story time and time again. *"All persons,"* small and great, rich and poor, free and slaves, are

9. How did Jesus exemplify the stand we should take respecting true worship?

10. How does John's next vision portray further modern developments?

put under inexorable pressure to worship and serve these beastlike instruments and, through them, Satan the Devil himself.

[11] So much for the dark side of the picture. See now, though, how it is counterbalanced by what follows. John next sees those who comprise the bride of Christ, 144,000 in number, standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Instead of the mark of the wild beast on their foreheads, they have the name of the Lamb and of his Father identifying them as conquerors. Stressing their loyalty and singleness of devotion to their heavenly Bridegroom, the record says they "did not defile themselves with women; in fact, they are virgins. These are the ones that keep following the Lamb no matter where he goes. . . . no falsehood was found in their mouths; they are without blemish." Their names are written in the "Lamb's scroll of life," though we must not overlook another "scroll of life" for all who will live on earth and who prove faithful under test, especially the final one at the close of Christ's thousand-year reign.—Rev. 14:1-5; 21:27; 20:12.

[12] Then John hears and records a message declared to all earth's inhabitants: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of the judgment by him has arrived, and so worship the One who made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters." (Rev. 14:6, 7) How clear and forceful! The great Creator and Source of life has the sovereign right to require the worship and service of all creatures without exception. He is worthy of it. He sees to it that this message is declared earth wide, for it is the underlying theme of the message of truth proclaimed by Jehovah's witnesses and "preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." It is a part of the "sign" that Jesus said would be fulfilled before this present generation passes away. The message is being declared today with more intensity and penetration than ever before.—Matt. 24:3, 14, 34.

[13] Shortly after, John heard announced by another angel what would happen in the way of final adverse judgment "if anyone worships the wild beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand." (Rev. 14:9-11) Thus the two alternatives are made abundantly clear in God's Word. This warning forms part of the Bible message declared by Jehovah's witnesses. They view it as their God-given commission. They desire to say as Paul did: "I am clean from the blood of all men, for I have not held back from telling you all the counsel of God."—Acts 20:26, 27.

[14] Though the requirement and commandment to render our worship and service to Jehovah alone is made so clear, you may feel inadequate to withstand all the fierce opposing pressure mentioned in the foregoing scriptures. Jehovah, "remembering that we are dust," is not unmindful of our frailty and need. So let us examine further a fine provision he has made whereby you can escape and yet, strangely enough, stay where you are. How can that be possible?—Ps. 103:14.

BUILDING UNDER SKILLFUL DIRECTION

[15] There are four scriptures in particular that tell about escape and deliverance. We have already mentioned Jesus' reference to the judgment day that would come "as a snare" upon all earth's inhabitants, similar to the flood of Noah's day that en-

11. What fine contrasts are recorded at Revelation 14:1-5?
12. The message at Revelation 14:7 stresses what vital truth, and how is this fulfilled?
13. What further message makes clear the two alternatives?
14. If feeling inadequate, what course should we take?
15. (a) How can we escape the snare that Jesus mentioned? (b) What fine example did Noah give respecting this?

snared and entombed the whole human family, except eight, because "they took no note" of the warning message. As Jesus said, the way to escape is to take careful note, "pay attention" to avoid selfish indulgence, "keep awake" in a prayerful attitude. By so doing, staying where you are, you will "succeed in escaping" the final adverse judgment shortly due. You will "succeed . . . in standing before the Son of man" in his favor and approval. Be like Noah and his family, who stayed where they were, though avoiding contamination with that dreadful generation, and got on with the job of building the ark under skillful direction.—Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 21:34-36; Gen. 6:14-16.

[16] To the "congregation in Philadelphia" Jesus promised: "Because you kept the word about my endurance, I will also keep you from the hour of test, which is to come upon the whole inhabited earth, to put a test upon those dwelling on the earth." (Rev. 3:7, 10) Not by running away from the test, or hiding in a convent or monastery, but by staying where you are and daily practicing obedience and endurance, following Jesus' example in staying where God placed him, in the world but no part of it, not contaminated with it. By so doing you will be kept from weakening under the pressure of Satan's beastlike system of things. Instead, by staying with God's people, and with their help, you will prove to be adequate in maintaining your service and worship to Jehovah in support of his kingdom. During his ministry, Jesus got on with the work given him by his Father and built under skillful direction.—John 9:4; 17:4.

[17] This is confirmed by Paul's words: "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out in order for you to be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10:13) God tests, and allows Satan to tempt. There is no way out from this. However, while Satan's purpose is to break down your faith and devotion, God's purpose is always to build up by a course of training and discipline under skillful direction, even as he did with Jesus. Like a kind, wise father, he knows far better than you how to develop your powers of endurance, and "happy is the man that keeps on enduring trial." Never fear; if you leave yourself in his hands, he will not allow Satan to overload you so that you have no way out.—Heb. 12:7-11; Jas. 1:12.

[18] Finally, in a prophecy now being fulfilled, preceding the "great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah," we read: "And it must occur that everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will get away safe; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will prove to be the escaped ones, just as Jehovah has said, and in among the survivors, whom Jehovah is calling." (Joel 2:31, 32) What a fine, reassuring provision! But where will you find this Mount Zion and Jerusalem to which you can escape? This question brings up the subject of housebuilding. The psalmist said: "Unless Jehovah himself builds the house, it

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- **Why Are They Leaving the Churches?**
- **A Yoke That Is Kindly and a Load That Is Light.**
- **The Man Who Forgot God.**

16. How is the promise at Revelation 3:10 fulfilled, calling for what action?

17. What guidance and comfort can we gain from the promise at 1 Corinthians 10:13?

18. (a) Joel 2:32 tells of what fine provision? (b) In what various ways is the word "house" used in the Bible?

is to no avail that its builders have worked hard on it." (Ps. 127:1) The converse of that is true. If Jehovah does build the house, acknowledging it as his, then those who work under the direction of the great Master Builder can be assured of certain success. Where and what is Jehovah's house? Besides referring to a literal dwelling place, the word "house" is often used with regard to a family, or even a nation, such as the "house of Aaron" and the "house of Israel." (Ps. 115:10; Lev. 10:6) As a nation, Israel proved unfaithful, resulting in Jesus' saying to them concerning their temple at Jerusalem: "Look! Your house is abandoned to you." (Matt. 23:38) However, Jesus had already commenced preparing for a different kind of house or temple, a spiritual house. During his ministry, he began to gather and prepare the building materials, that is, his disciples, who, at Pentecost of 33 C.E., were openly recognized by God as his spiritual house, or temple, "built up upon the foundation of the apostles and [Christian] prophets, while Christ Jesus himself is the foundation cornerstone."—Eph. 2:20-22. (See also Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 2:5.)

[19] In ancient Israel, Zion, or Jerusalem, became the center of worship, with its temple, housing the ark of the covenant, representing Jehovah's presence. Similarly with the Christian congregation, spiritual Israel, it is spoken of as approaching "Mount Zion and a city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem." (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:2) Today, there is a remnant of this spiritual temple class, this remnant forming the nucleus of Jehovah's Christian witnesses, and around this nucleus a beneficial and effective building work in a spiritual sense is in progress. It is carried on by the power of God's spirit, in full harmony with God's Word in every respect, under the skillful direction of the Head of the Christian congregation, Christ Jesus. You are warmly invited to share with Jehovah's witnesses in this fine building program, attending and sharing in their meetings, also sharing in all the activities of their preaching and teaching work. You will not only receive skillful direction, but will be helped to acquire skillful direction and become increasingly adequate for the work of Bible education, along with the "escaped ones."

[20] Besides this collective aspect, the Scriptures also encourage you in *personal* housebuilding. Jesus, stressing obedience, made a sharp contrast between the one who "hears these sayings of mine and does them," and the one hearing but "not doing them." The house of prospects for life everlasting, as built by the former on the rock mass of obedience to God-given instruction, withstands the storm, but that of the latter, built on shifting sand of disobedience, quickly collapses under pressure. (Matt. 7:24-27) Paul, too, the skillful and "wise director of works," made a sharp contrast between the one whose personality pattern was built with the sterling qualities of endurance, integrity, steadfast devotion, likened to "gold, silver, precious stones," and the one whose religious personality, lacking these qualities, was built with "wood materials, hay, stubble." The former's Christian personality survives the fiery test, and the one or ones who built him up receive a reward. But of the latter improperly built religionist it can be said, as James wrote, he does not "let endurance have its work complete . . . let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from Jehovah; he is an indecisive man, unsteady in all his ways." —1 Cor. 3:10-15; Jas. 1:4, 7, 8.

19. Where today can we find God's "house" and "city"?

20. How did both Jesus and Paul stress the importance of spiritual building?

[21] Humbly and obediently "receive the discipline that gives insight, righteousness and judgment and uprightness [fire-resisting qualities] . . . A wise person will listen and take in more instruction, and a man of understanding is the one who acquires skillful direction." (Prov. 1:3, 5) Dedication of oneself to Jehovah and sharing with his people, this is the way to the right kind of spiritual building. True, you cannot yet build to absolute perfection in the flesh, but you can build a new life pattern, based on a "new personality . . . according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Eph. 4:24) Remember what Jesus said about perfection. After explaining to his disciples about Godlike love as being the essence of unselfish and genuine concern for others, even to loving your enemies and praying for your persecutors, he said: "You must accordingly be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Even to one not a disciple, the rich young ruler, Jesus spoke of perfection in the same way, saying: "If you want to be perfect, go sell your belongings and give to the poor . . . and come be my follower."—Matt. 5:43-48; 19:21.

[22] This Godlike love is the greatest quality, the main requirement. Though it is not an automatic, built-in part of perfection, there is every encouragement to develop it as part of your new personality. It is possible. Jesus evidently saw that it was a real possibility with that young ruler, else the Gospel writer Mark would not have recorded that Jesus "felt love for him." (Mark 10:21) His heart did not go out to someone just because of outward attraction. Like faith, love can have the same tested quality. "Love is long-suffering . . . [and] endures all things." (1 Cor. 13:4-7, 13) It is the key to proving yourself a conqueror. You cannot conquer the pressure for evil just by trying to avoid pressure, leaving a vacuum that Satan and his demons would be quick to fill. (Matt. 12:43-45) Rather, voluntarily place yourself under the pressure for good. As Paul said: "Do not let yourself be conquered by the evil, but keep conquering the evil with the good." (Rom. 12:21) That is what you are invited to do by dedicating yourself to Jehovah. Learn how to view all things from his viewpoint, the Scriptural viewpoint. That is good reasoning and correct thinking. Submissively keep under the wholesome pressure of his Word and his organization. Invite others to come to his organization, to the "house of Jehovah," to heavenly Zion and Jerusalem, out of which center of worship issue forth Jehovah's law and word. Share with his people in all their expressions of service and worship of Jehovah in acknowledgment of his rightful sovereignty over you and over all his creatures.—Isa. 2:2-4.

21. (a) Can we build to perfection in any sense from God's viewpoint? (b) What did Jesus say respecting this?
22. (a) How can Godlike love be developed? (b) In what way is it the key to becoming a conqueror?

Rewards from Enduring Persecution

● In Nigeria a young witness of Jehovah had to attend a Catholic school, as only church-operated ones were in his area. He refused to attend catechism classes and for this he was frequently punished.

In the course of time he was summoned before the whole school to be publicly whipped. But this incident only served to arouse sympathy for him from the other students. After a long period of faithfully enduring painful opposition, his conduct brought a change in the headmaster's attitude. What resulted? The headmaster, his wife and three children all left their church and are now Jehovah's witnesses. One of the students whom the young Witness helped to learn the Bible is now a full-time traveling minister of Jehovah's witnesses.

BEWARE of the HARDENING EFFECTS OF SIN

MANY persons today scoff at the term "sin." They hold the same as do the Buddhists, namely, that an act is wrong only if it harms oneself or another. Thus they hold that fornication, if it does not harm those engaging in it, is not wrong.

But the Word of God proves them mistaken on two counts. On the one hand, it makes plain that as the Creator and universal Sovereign, Jehovah God has the right to dictate to man what is right and what is wrong. He is man's King, Lawgiver and Judge. (Isa. 33:22) Therefore, to go contrary to his law is to "miss the mark," which is what the word "sin," as used in the Bible, literally means. And on the other hand, since the Creator not only has all authority, but is also omniscient, all-wise, as well as loving, and so knows what is best for mankind, to violate his laws not only is wrong and bad, but is bound to bring harm, eventually if not immediately.

Among the things that make it plain that going against God's laws is wrong is the hardening effect of sin. Take, for example, our first parents, Adam and Eve. Because Jehovah God had explicitly forbidden them to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, their doing so constituted sin. Did it have a hardening effect upon them? It most certainly did.

When asked by his Maker if he had eaten of the forbidden fruit, Adam callously blamed both God and his wife, saying: "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree and so I ate." In effect he said, 'She gave me the fruit; she is to blame. And so are you, God, for you, in the first place, gave this woman to be my wife.' How lonely he had been before God gave him Eve! When he at last received her, he exclaimed, "This is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." But now Eve was "the woman whom you gave to be with me." And Eve, instead of expressing sorrow and showing repentance, likewise tried to shift the blame, to the serpent.—Gen. 2:23; 3:1-19.

No question about it, their sinning had a hardening effect upon the hearts and consciences of these first two sinners. And did it work harm to them? It most certainly did, bringing them unhappiness, sorrow, suffering and death.

Cain, their firstborn son, likewise illustrated the principle that sin hardens. Out of envious hatred he had murdered his brother Abel. When Jehovah God asked him where his brother was, did he feel sorrow or regret? No, but hardheartedly he replied: "I do not know. Am I my brother's guardian?" He not only betrayed hardened indifference but also lied, showing utter disregard for the truth. Cain's sin also worked harm to himself, for he was separated from his family and ever after had a guilty conscience.—Gen. 4:8-16.

KING SAUL AND JUDAS THE APOSTLE

And then there was the first king of Israel, Saul. He so allowed an envious hatred to take possession of him that to murder David became the consuming passion of his life. How hard this made him can be seen from the fact that he ordered the slaying of the entire priestly community at Nob, eighty-five priests together with all their families. And why? All because their head priest had befriended David, not knowing that David was fleeing from the wrath of Saul. How his hatred of David had hardened his heart! No respect for Jehovah's priesthood! No regard for the lives of the priests nor of their families! In the end it cost Saul his kingdom and his life.—1 Sam. 21:1-9; 22:6-23; 31:1-6.

Judas Iscariot, one of the apostles of Jesus, furnishes another example. He must have had a good heart to begin with or Jesus would not have chosen him. But then he let selfishness take over. He hardened his heart by a practice of sin, stealing from the treasury of Jesus' group, the money box being in his charge. Thus it appears that when Jesus approved of the costly ointment being used to anoint him, to which Judas had strenuously objected, Judas went out and betrayed his Master for thirty pieces of silver. Further indicative of his hardness of heart was his brazenly asking, "It is not I, is it?" when Jesus said that one of the twelve would betray him. How that sin harmed him! It made him a suicide with no hope of a resurrection.—Matt. 26:6-25; John 12:3-8; 17:12.

That sin hardens, the Word of God also makes clear in so many words: "Here is the way of an adulterous woman: she has eaten and has wiped her mouth and she has said: 'I have committed no wrong.' " "Did they feel shame because it was something detestable that they had done? . . . they positively do not feel any shame; . . . they have not come to know even how to feel humiliated." Yes, "the unrighteous one was knowing no shame."—Prov. 30:20; Jer. 6:15; Zeph. 3:5.

WHEN SIN HARDENS ONE

When a person is overtaken by a weakness of the flesh, quickly repents and recovers, his sin may not harden him, although it may leave a scar. But it does harden him when it is committed repeatedly as in the case of Judas' stealing money, or when it is done deliberately and willfully as in the case of Adam. It hardens in that it makes a person more selfish and insensitive to repentance. As a result he goes from bad to worse.

Our Creator endowed us with a conscience that can be trained to distinguish right from wrong. With proper knowledge it is a sensitive indicator. But if one deliberately, or carelessly or indifferently keeps violating it, it gradually ceases to make itself felt. Among such whose conscience is no longer sensitive is the hypocrite. As the apostle Paul expresses it: "By the hypocrisy of men who speak lies, marked in their conscience as with a branding iron." Yes, just as the nerve endings are killed in a part of our body that is burned, so that it no longer is sensitive to pain and is without the protection that the warning of pain gives, so it is with the conscience of these people.—1 Tim. 4:2.

To illustrate: The first time a person does something he knows he should not do, yielding to temptation or pressure, his conscience may prick him and he may feel guilty. But if he does it again and again, his conscience will gradually fail to respond, for it does no good, and so he gradually becomes hardened by his sin. Not only that, but he may find himself committing ever grosser sins. Thus he may

begin by stealing small amounts from his employer or by being negligent in little things. But as he continues to do so he will find himself stealing ever larger amounts or becoming ever more grossly negligent, loafing more and more.

Or it may be in relation to one's marriage. Husband or wife may start gambling and not say anything to the other. Then that one keeps on gambling with ever larger amounts, finally bringing misery upon the family. Or one or the other may begin a flirtation. If unchecked it can lead to an infatuation, adultery and a broken home. It is even as Jesus Christ said: "The person unrighteous in what is least" hardens himself so that eventually he becomes "unrighteous also in much."—Luke 16:10.

To take a true-life illustration of recent months: A certain youth professed to be a Christian minister. Yet he was carrying on homosexual acts with professed friends of his. When he found it expedient to travel to another part of the country he missed his homosexual friends. So he wrote one of them threatening to expose him if he did not come to where he lived so that they could continue their homosexual relations. But it was not long before this young professed Christian made some overt acts that exposed him and today he is under a ban of at least three years from any Christian congregation of Jehovah's people.

GUARDING AGAINST SIN'S HARDENING EFFECTS

How can we guard against the hardening effects of sin? Most important is guarding one's heart. "More than all else that is to be guarded, safeguard your heart." How can one do that? By watching one's thoughts. Wise counsel therefore is to keep considering 'whatever things are righteous, chaste, virtuous and praiseworthy.' What the mind dwells upon the heart desires, and it is easy to become enticed by desire. Then, as the disciple James warns, "desire, when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin; in turn, sin, when it has been accomplished, brings forth death."—Prov. 4:23; Phil. 4:8; Jas. 1:14, 15.

Not without good reason did Jehovah say that "the heart is more treacherous than anything else." Its sinful inclination is something we have inherited from our first parents: "The inclination of the heart of man is bad from his youth up." We must keep guard, for the very fact that something is forbidden may tempt one to want to do it.—Jer. 17:9; Gen. 8:21.

We must acquire a hate for what is bad regardless of how pleasurable it might seem to be. "You lovers of Jehovah, hate what is bad." (Ps. 97:10) Very helpful to this end is reading God's Word regularly, giving particular attention to such admonition as relates to one's own weaknesses. As the psalmist expressed it: "Owing to your orders I behave with understanding. That is why I have hated every false path." Another great help is association with those who love what is right and hate what is bad. Important also is heeding reproof, letting oneself be corrected, for "a man repeatedly reproved but making his neck hard will suddenly be broken, and that without healing."—Ps. 119:104; Prov. 29:1.

As the world gets more and more wicked, it becomes increasingly difficult for Christians to be on guard against sin. But you can protect yourself by taking to heart the counsel: "Blessed is the man who fears [Jehovah] always." (Prov. 28:14, *Revised Standard Version*) Reading God's Word, watching our thoughts and associating with good companions will aid us to fear Jehovah always and so to avoid the hardening effects of sin.

'I Am So Thankful That They Called'

THE Watch Tower Society in Brooklyn, New York, received this letter of appreciation from a woman living in New Zealand:

"I am writing this letter to express my appreciation of your wonderful organization. I am a twenty-five-year-old mother of three boys. For some time I wanted to understand the Holy Bible. My husband was a Baptist, and I had no religious background at all. When he gave me a Bible I began going to church with him, but I did not learn anything about the Bible there. After our sons came along we could not go to church, and we were too shy to contact the Baptists in the new area where we moved.

"One day a young lady came around asking us if we would like to enroll our boys in the Sunday school. We agreed and she told us that we would be notified when to bring them. They never did this. They just were not that interested in us. Jehovah's witnesses had called on us, but I never listened to them. I took their literature, but I never read it. I thought they were just a bunch of cranks.

"After our disappointment with the Baptists, we did not know what to do. I did not know how to find the true religion and I could not see myself going to every church. That was impossible! One day we were so desperate to understand the Bible that we prayed to God to show us the truth. Three days later there was a knock on the door and there stood a man who said, 'I am a Bible student.' I was so thrilled that I just dragged him in. I eagerly accepted his offer to help me learn the Bible. It was not until after he left that I realized that he was a witness of Jehovah, and this made me a little apprehensive. But I began studying the Bible and later my husband did also.

"In the course of time we knew we had found the true faith. And the happiest day of my life was when we were both baptized at the 1969 'Peace on Earth' Assembly. I go down on my knees and thank Jehovah God for answering our prayers that day. Yes, I thank him that his Witnesses called back on us regularly. No matter what the weather was, they came to help us. Yes, they were genuinely interested in us.

"If that dear Witness had not gone out in the preaching work that morning we might not have God's truth today. Jehovah's witnesses brought us the greatest gift any man could bring—the hope of living with our children forever in God's new order."

● In view of the fact that pagans made floral offerings to the dead, is it proper for Christians to send flowers to a funeral or to lay flowers on a grave?—G. T., U.S.A.

It is true that ancient pagans made floral offerings to the dead. The publication *How Did It Begin?*, by R. Brasch, states: "To send a wreath to a funeral and to lay it on the coffin or the grave is a relic of ancient superstition and idol worship."

What was the purpose of their so doing? The author of the same publication adds: "The floral wreath is a survival of the belief that it was necessary to provide comforts for the departed. The flowers were also regarded as, literally, a floral offering, a sacrifice to the dead. They were meant to keep them happy, lest, being dissatisfied, they might haunt the mourners." So the pagans, in their mistaken belief that the deceased had an immortal soul, honored these dead with floral offerings.

However, did the pagans originate flowers? Should we conclude that using flowers on such occasions is wrong just because the pagans used them to sacrifice to their dead? It is interesting to note that author Brasch also states: "None of these various early roots are remembered. There is no magic left in the wreath, and to 'say it with flowers' has become an established custom in the Western world."

Generally, in the Western world, flowers are not given to placate the dead. Usually they are sent as a gesture of kindness to the family of the deceased. And flowers, created by Jehovah for man's pleasure, do have a brightening effect.

If a person thinks he is honoring the dead when he sends flowers, then he is doing what

the pagans did. Such a motive would be wrong from the Christian viewpoint. But if he sends flowers to comfort the survivors, to make the sad occasion a bit more pleasant, then it is certainly not objectionable.

It should be said, however, that, while it is customary to send flowers as a gesture of respect to the family, certainly one is not obligated to do so. Indeed, other things can be done for the family of the deceased that may be even more meaningful. Instead of sending flowers, one may choose to assist the family by cooking a meal, since the family in their grief may be burdened with many other details. Or one may lovingly offer to help take care of young children until the funeral is over. After the funeral, those close to the deceased, such as a widow, will be lonely. A kind gesture would be to invite such ones for a meal, or for an outing. They will be made to see that they are wanted, that they have friends who want to share their activities. As James 1:27 says: "The form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself without spot from the world."

So while flowers sent with the right motive, without the pagan belief as a background, are not objectionable, it can be seen that other more helpful things can be done. And these may be more appreciated than a mere sending of flowers, with no personal assistance offered.

Often flowers sent to the funeral are later deposited upon the grave. But here, some may choose to do something else with these flowers. They may choose to give them to others, take them to those who rarely get flowers, to sick persons or to the elderly. A person may feel that the living will appreciate the flowers, but that they serve little purpose at the gravesite, since the deceased cannot appreciate them. —Eccl. 9:5.

Of course, others may choose to lay flowers on a grave simply to beautify the site, and not to give honor to the dead. This too is a matter for personal decision.

Hence, when one has the proper motive and understanding of what happens to the dead, what he does in connection with flowers is a matter of personal choice. But it can be seen that there are other things even more meaningful that can be done for the family of one who has died, and in regard to the use of flowers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

October 18: The Blessings of Obedience Learned Through Suffering. Page 557. Songs to Be Used: 116, 118.

October 25: The Hour of Test Is On! Page 564. Songs to Be Used: 66, 45.