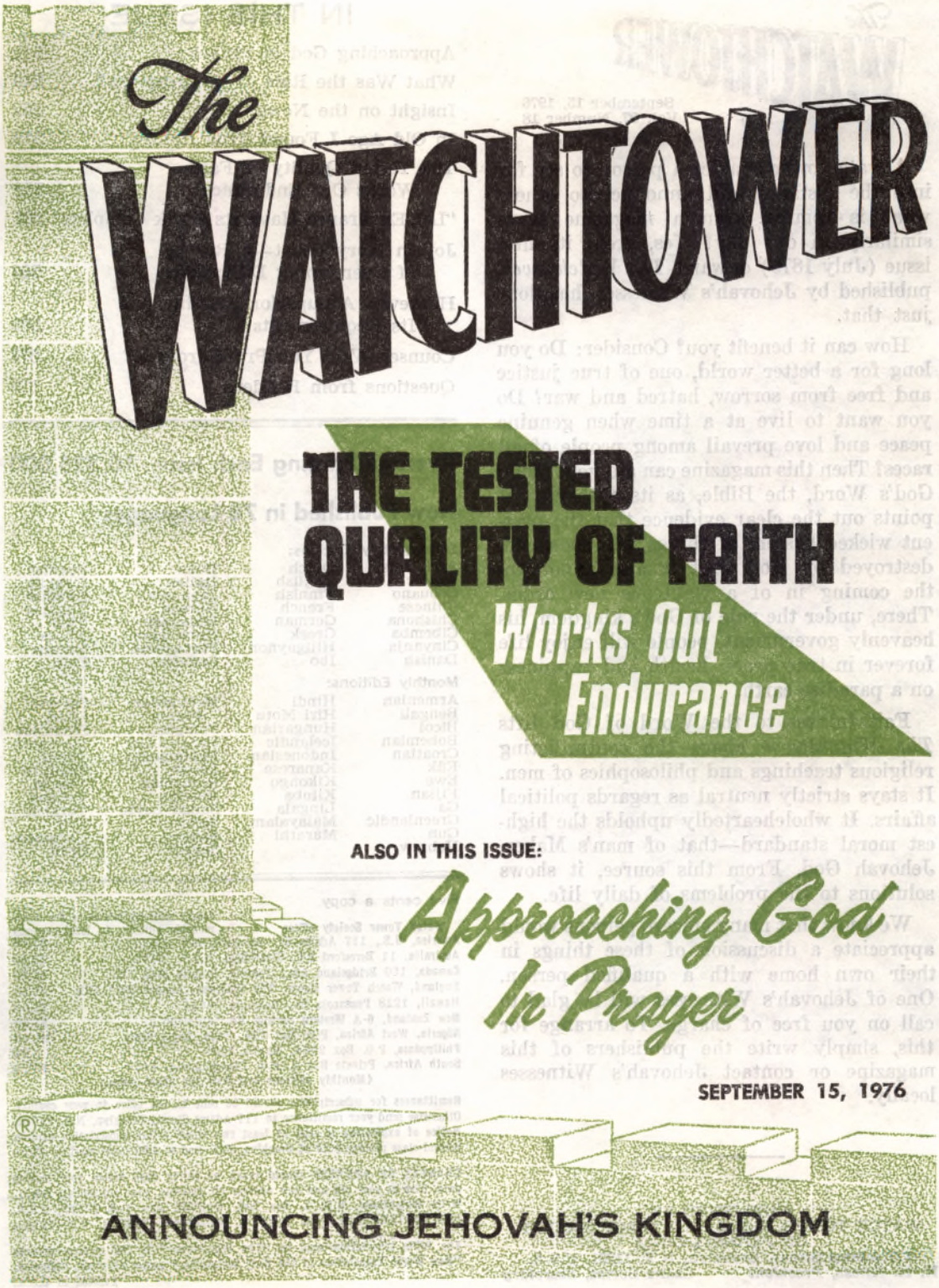
The
WATCHTOWER
THE TESTED QUALITY OF FAITH
Works Out Endurance
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
Approaching God In Prayer
SEPTEMBER 15, 1976
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The WATCHTOWER

September 15, 1976
Vol. 97, Number 18

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APPROACHING GOD in PRAYER

JEHOVAH GOD says: "The One planting the ear, can he not hear?" (Ps. 94:9) Anyone, small or great, who prays to him sincerely from the heart, can be fully confident that his petition will be given God's interested attention. The Bible tells us: "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for there is the same Lord over all, who is rich to all those calling upon him."—Rom. 10:12.

However, we must approach God with the right attitude, one of great respect, and with an understanding of our relationship to him. He is King of the universe, our almighty Creator.

Accordingly, just as a person would not rush into the presence of an earthly king unannounced, ignoring all proper decorum, so the one earnestly seeking God's attention in prayer will approach him in the proper spirit and manner. But this does not remove him far away, as a cold, distant God, for the apostle Paul told a group of men and women in Athens that God has arranged for men to seek him and that, "in fact, he is not far off from each one of us. For by him we have life and move and exist . . . 'For we are also his progeny.' "—Acts 17:26-28.

God has kindly informed us of the way in which we can be sure to get a hearing ear. He has made it very clear that he must be approached "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. 5:20) Jesus repeatedly pointed out to the apostles that after his resurrection they should make request *in his name,* and that anything they asked in harmony with God's arrangement would be granted. (John 14:13, 14; 15:16) He showed that, for those who are dedicated servants of God, it would not be a matter of asking in Christ's name because God was more reluctant to grant an answer than Jesus would be. No, Jesus said: "In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I shall make request of the Father concerning you. For *the Father himself has affection for you,* because you have had affection for me and have believed that I came out as the Father's representative." (John 16:26, 27) Jehovah is as ready to bestow blessings as we ever are to receive them.

Why, then, is approach through Jesus Christ required? Because on our own we rightly have no approach to God, since as sinners we are not members of his clean family. (Rom. 3:21-23) Jesus' sacrifice provided an atonement covering for mankind's sins and a basis for his becoming a High Priest of God in behalf of man. Of this important position of Jesus Christ, the inspired writer said: "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. Let us, therefore, approach with freeness of speech to [God's] throne of undeserved kindness, that we may obtain mercy and find undeserved kindness for help at the right time." —Heb. 4:15, 16.

At the close of our prayers we should also acknowledge Jesus as the way of

approach. The apostle Paul wrote: "No matter how many the promises of God are, they have become Yes [that is, sure, affirmed] by means of him. Therefore also through him is the 'Amen' said to God for glory through us." (2 Cor. 1:20) "Amen," after closing the prayer in the name of Christ, means "so be it," a statement of affirmation, namely, that all of God's promises are and will be fulfilled through Christ. In their saying "Amen" Christians thereby glorify God. If one is praying, others hearing and agreeing with the prayer may also say "Amen" silently, in their hearts, or audibly, if they feel moved to do so.

The apostle Paul encourages Christians to keep up their fight of faith 'while with *every form of prayer* they carry on prayer on every occasion in spirit.' (Eph. 6:18) Every prayer, given either audibly or silently, has a point or purpose. There are various forms of prayer, for example, "intercessions," in which the Christian prays in behalf of others, "offerings of thanks," of asking blessings, prayers of "supplication" with regard to certain needs or problems. (1 Tim. 2:1; Phil. 4:6) There are also many *occasions* for prayer. Certain circumstances may arise in which we need to call on God, or there may be regular times or occasions, such as Christian meetings. (Jas. 5:13-16; Acts 6:5, 6) The prayers should fit the occasion.

Hence, it is good when praying to be as specific as possible. There should be a point or purpose served on that occasion; the prayer should not be scattered, rambling, incoherent. For example, in giving thanks at mealtime it would *usually* be inappropriate to make a long prayer, dealing with matters far afield or not connected with the occasion. A brief prayer would here serve the purpose. But to start off the day or to conclude the day with prayer we may wish to mention things that arise daily in our lives and those of the association of brothers throughout the world. Thus such a prayer may cover more ground. Of course, there are times when "what we should pray for as we need to we do not know, but the spirit itself pleads for us with groanings unuttered." (Rom. 8:26) God accepts our earnest prayer in these circumstances, answering according to what we need, as though we had prayed for just that very answer.

When teaching his disciples how to pray, Jesus gave them a brief outline setting matters forth in order of importance. (Matt. 6:9-13) He also counseled against vain repetition in prayer. In speaking to a person in ordinary conversation we would consider it foolish to say the same thing over and over again. How much more so in speaking to God, who "knows what things you are needing before ever you ask him." (Matt. 6:8) And, just as in talking to a friend, we would not use his name in every sentence or so, likewise we would not repeat Jehovah's name over and over in a prayer.

The Bible examples of prayer reveal to us that there is no prescribed posture or any required position of the hands. Jesus *"fell upon his face,* praying" in the garden of Gethsemane. (Matt. 26:39) He *"raised his eyes heavenward"* on some occasions. (John 11:41; Luke 18:13) He spoke of *standing* in prayer. (Mark 11:25) The apostle Paul *"kneeled down"* with the elders of Ephesus.—Acts 20:36.

At a meeting when one is leading a group in prayer it is therefore inappropriate to direct the audience to "bow their heads." Everyone should, of course, assume a respectful posture, but no specific posture makes the prayer more holy. We should consider also the fact that, at a public meeting, unbelievers, though friendly, might not feel like bowing their heads along with the congregation. Simply to announce that 'we will now approach Je-

hovah in prayer,' or some similar expression, would be sufficient.

Prayer presented to Jehovah God in the name of Jesus Christ has much power. At mealtimes, prayers of thanks please God and move him to bless the eaters in their use of the sustenance gained. The apostle wrote: "Every creation of God is fine, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified through God's word [approving of all things God has created for food] and prayer over it." (1 Tim. 4:4, 5) One not giving thanks to God for his food is unappreciative, and cannot expect the full blessing of God. We do not want to be like animals, unaware of the real Source and Provider of all good things.

Jesus' half brother James says of the effectiveness of prayer: "A righteous man's supplication, when it is at work, has much force. Elijah was a man with feelings like ours, and yet in prayer he prayed for it not to rain; and it did not rain upon the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the land put forth its fruit."—Jas. 5:16-18.

So there is a great reward in praying to God. Consider the unparalleled blessing that the Roman officer Cornelius received from prayer. (Acts chap. 10) We should, therefore, pray in full faith and confidence. For Jehovah, who gives a name to each of the trillions of stars, is able to hear the prayers of all his hundreds of thousands of worshipers and to give them individual consideration.—Ps. 147:4.

What was THE ROLE OF THE PROPHETS?

WHEN mention is made of the Hebrew prophets of ancient times, what comes to your mind? Do you think of men who made predictions about the future? Or, do you think primarily of men who urged people to do God's will?

The ancient Hebrew prophets did, of course, foretell certain events. Yet their prophesying was by no means limited to making predictions. This is evident from the Hebrew term for prophet, *na·vi"*. In itself that word does not convey the thought of making predictions. *Na·vi"* means 'one who pours forth words abundantly' or 'one whose speech flows forth.' The actual use of the term shows that true prophets were spokesmen for God, with effervescent inspired messages. Just what the commission of God's prophets involved can be better appreciated by comparing their conduct with that of false claimants to the prophetic office.

Consider, for example, the situation in the time of the Hebrew prophet Micah. A tremendous moral breakdown had taken place in Israel and Judah. The leaders were oppressing the people, especially the poor and needy. Judges and priests had an

insatiable greed for money. Bloodshed and corruption of every kind were the order of the day. A person could not trust even friends or close family members.

Surely, this was a time for exposing the error of the Israelites and appealing to them to change their ways. Is that what false claimants to the prophetic office were doing? No. At Micah 3:5 these prophets are described as leading the Israelites astray, men "who promise prosperity in return for a morsel of food, who proclaim a holy war against them if they put nothing into their mouths." (*New English Bible*) So the nature of the message delivered by these false prophets depended upon their receiving payment. As long as they got their reward, they were willing to make promises of prosperity even for morally degraded people. These false prophets gave not the slightest encouragement for people to abandon their wicked ways. As a result, the people felt secure, and continued in their lawless ways. But if a person should dare not to give them something, these false prophets would be ready to 'call down the wrath of the Lord' upon such a one.

Jehovah's true prophets, however, did not look for any personal gain. They appreciated that their appointment was from God and, therefore, they did not try to please men. Contrasting his own course with that of the false prophets, Micah declared: "I myself have become full of power, with the spirit of Jehovah, and of justice and mightiness, in order to tell to Jacob his revolt and to Israel his sin." (Mic. 3:8) Courageously, Micah laid bare the sins of the Israelites—their idolatry, fraudulent practices, merciless oppression and injustices. This exposure was accompanied by predictions regarding the execution of God's judgment against Judah and Israel. He foretold the coming destruction of Samaria, the capital of the ten-tribe kingdom, and of Jerusalem, the capital of the two-tribe kingdom.

The prophecies about coming judgment upon unfaithful Samaria and Jerusalem served a double purpose. On the one hand, they reemphasized the badness of what the people were doing. On the other hand, they encouraged the Israelites to repent, with a view to their becoming recipients of God's mercy. That the prophecies portending calamity included also opportunity for repentance is shown at Jeremiah 18:7-10. There we read regarding Jehovah's expressions of judgment and blessing: "At any moment that I may speak against a nation and against a kingdom to uproot it and to pull it down and to destroy it, and that nation actually turns back from its badness against which I spoke, I will also feel regret over the calamity that I had thought to execute upon it. But at any moment that I may speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to build it up and to plant it, and it actually does what is bad in my eyes by not obeying my voice, I will also feel regret over the good that I said to myself to do for its good."

NOT MERE DOOM-SAYERS

In view of the fact that God's prophets had the responsibility to urge people to abandon their wrong ways, does this mean that they foretold merely doom and gloom? No, their proclamations often included stirring messages of hope. Though the Israelites as a whole might turn a deaf ear to the announcement of Jehovah's coming judgment, individuals could prove that they were not in harmony with the violence and lawlessness prevailing at the time. In their case, the execution of judgment against the wicked would result in welcome relief from injustice.

Furthermore, because Jehovah is a just and merciful God, rightly inclined persons could have the confidence that expressions of divine displeasure would not continue

indefinitely. This point is stressed at Lamentations 3:31, 32: "Not to time indefinite will Jehovah keep on casting off. For although he has caused grief, he will also certainly show mercy."

In harmony with his mercy and loving-kindness, Jehovah God moved his prophets to point forward to a hope. Micah, for example, foretold a restoration to follow the desolating of the land inhabited by the Israelites. Quoting Jehovah's word, Micah stated: "I shall positively gather Jacob, all of you; I shall without fail collect the remaining ones of Israel together. In unity I shall set them, like a flock in the pen, like a drove in the midst of its pasture; they will be noisy with men." (Mic. 2:12) Hence, after witnessing the desolation, repentant Israelites could draw comfort from this restoration hope.

Primarily, then, the prophets served as Jehovah's representatives to the Israelites. They were concerned about helping their fellow countrymen to follow a God-approved course and thereby to avoid calamity. They were bearers of gloom only to those who refused to do God's will. But to persons who were rightly disposed the prophets were messengers of deliverance and hope. A basic theme running through the various prophecies is expressed in the words of Ezekiel 33:11: " 'As I am alive,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, 'I take delight, not in the death of the wicked one, but in that someone wicked turns back from his way and actually keeps living. Turn back, turn back from your bad ways, for why is it that you should die, O house of Israel?' "

TODAY'S PROPHETIC MESSAGE

The basic message of the ancient Hebrew prophets applies even today. As in the past, Jehovah God does not look with approval upon the lawlessness, violence, injustice and oppression that continue to increase in various parts of the earth. In his Word, Jehovah God has decreed to bring all wickedness to its end. Says the Bible: "God's wrath is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who are suppressing the truth in an unrighteous way." (Rom. 1:18) However, before the day of wrath comes, people have an opportunity to change their ways, putting themselves in line for preservation should that execution come within their lifetime. Moreover, the grand hope before all surviving that destruction is everlasting life in a righteous new order. (2 Pet. 3:9, 13) The marvelous news for our day is that the realization of that hope is very near.

Is this news not something to be proclaimed today? But who should be making it known? Would you not expect the ones doing so to be persons who conduct themselves much like the ancient Hebrew prophets? They should be persons who themselves uphold the righteous standards of God's Word and urge others to do the same. They should be giving warning about the coming execution of wickedness and should be pointing to a glorious future in a righteous new order.

From what you have seen, are the churches of Christendom really striving to help people to change their ways? Or, have you not, rather, found that clergymen often tolerate all kinds of wrongs among their church members as long as they are receiving their pay?

What about the group known as Jehovah's Christian witnesses? Many people have come to appreciate that there is a marked difference between Jehovah's Witnesses and the churches of Christendom. They have found that the Witnesses insist that those actively associating with them live by the Bible. Have you also noted this about Jehovah's Witnesses? If so, are you acting on what you have observed by sharing with them in helping others to live in harmony with God's ways?

Insight on the News

Conscience at Work

● God created mankind with an inherent sense of conscience. That is why, even in atheistic societies, "the nations that do not have law do by nature the things of the law. . . . Their conscience is bearing witness with them and, between their own thoughts, they are being accused or even excused."—Rom. 2:14, 15.

For example, although adultery is more common than ever in these "last days," as Bible prophecy foretold, most people involved have a troubled conscience. In France, a poll found that only 8 percent of the people who were asked about marital infidelity found that it was "agreeable." Many others found that it troubled their conscience in varying degrees, and a large number found it "unthinkable" altogether. So while a conscience can be seared by wrong thinking and conduct, people generally are "accused" by it where marital infidelity is concerned. A basic reason why is that adultery is against God's law.—1 Cor. 6:9.

Love Most Important

● What makes people happy? Many would answer: money, material things, a good job, fame or power. But Dr. Robert Gordon, a psychologist in Pennsylvania, concludes that "love is by far the most important resource in people's lives." He says that it plays the biggest role in determining whether a person will be happy. When love is lacking, people commonly substitute money or material goods. But Gordon points out that 'if this materialism is an attempt to compensate for a lack of love, it isn't likely to work.'

Long ago, God's inspired Word pointed to love as the key ingredient in man's relationship to others. (1 Cor. chap. 13) Indeed, it will be the basis for the peaceful and righteous new order of God's making. That is why even now, among those who worship Jehovah, love is being cultivated; this helps to build a peaceful international society of people. That love has helped them to conquer war and nationalism; it has given *them a* society remarkably free from crime, corruption, dishonesty, immorality and broken homes. Since "God is love," it is only logical that love would be a most powerful force for happiness. "Love . . . is a perfect bond of union."—1 John 4:8; Col. 3:14.

"Immoral" Pallottines

● Baltimore's Catholic Archbishop William Borders recently admitted that the city's Pallottine priests had "become involved in [fund-raising] practices which are immoral." After years of prodding by the press, an audit revealed that of $20 million raised in 18 months, only 2.5 percent went to foreign missions. The rest went into real estate ventures and questionable "loans to Maryland business and political friends," reported the New York "Times."

Catholic news columnist Garry Wills also deplored a claim made in Pallottine mail pleas for money that "we employ no professional fund-raisers." It is hard to imagine, wrote Wills, how the order "could have lied more elaborately, ingeniously, endlessly about that simple statement." What does the Church do about such admittedly "immoral" ones? Embarrassed Pallottine authorities said that the order's head fund-raiser faced no discipline other than removal from his post. However, Maryland officials said that the priest could face "criminal prosecution."

Priests Commend Witnesses

● Two Catholic priests who publish a news letter for their parish in Westport, New Zealand, stated: "Catholics have much to learn from people like Jehovah's Witnesses; an unwavering belief in the teachings of their organisation and the determination to spread their beliefs. How do Catholics, and that means you and I, compare in these respects?—very unfavourably, I fear."

The priests concluded: "Next *time you are* tempted to sneer at Jehovah's Witnesses, stop and think and perhaps pray that we may have just a little of the courage they have; their unwavering loyalty to their Church and the will to spread their faith."

However, the priests overlook a most crucial point. What power impels such courage and conviction? It is the power of the truth, which Christ's apostles pointed out stems from God's holy spirit.—Acts 5:32.

In Old Age I FOUND TRUE REFUGE

As told by Louisa Gregorio

I HAVE lived nearly one hundred and two years—much longer than our allotted seventy years. (Ps. 90:10) But it was not until I lived past seventy years that I was able to find what I had always wanted—true refuge and hope.

I am a descendant of refugees who sought freedom of worship many years ago. Early in the reign of Queen Victoria, who ruled England from 1837 to 1901, residents of the Portuguese island of Madeira experienced religious persecution from Roman Catholics. Their Bibles were burned, and they suffered other mistreatment. In time, Queen Victoria sent a boat to the island so that all who wished to leave might do so.

Among those who boarded that ship were two young girls. The ship was bound for the British West Indies. Some of the refugees disembarked on the island of Antigua. The others, including those two girls, came here to Trinidad. They were an industrious, sincere group. They carried stones from the nearby East Dry River and built St. Ann's Church of Scotland, which stands to this day.

One of those refugee girls was my great-grandmother. She bore a daughter, Marceliana, who was my grandmother. When Marceliana married and bore children, my mother Mary was born. In time, she married Manuel Pereira, who became my father. Our family came to have three girls and a boy who died at an early age. Father also died, and so my mother found employment in a store to care for her family and home.

EARLY EDUCATION AND MARRIAGE

We lived at the corner of Henry and Duke Streets, which is now downtown Port of Spain. Not far away on Victoria Street was the Girls Model School, where I received my schooling. When I was sixteen years of

age, two young men in the neighborhood began to take notice of me. One belonged to a wealthy family; the other was a poor young man. My affections became centered on Albert Gregorio, the poor boy. We were married when I was twenty years old, and I have never regretted the choice.

Albert and I were happy together and worked hard to have a good home for our growing family. We had three boys and three girls. Albert kept horses and carriages as a means of making a living for us. Our home in Belmont was modest, but we were a happy and close-knit family.

After some years Albert opened a small funeral home in Belmont, and for a long time, Gregorio's Funeral Home was a landmark on Observatory Street. My husband became known as the poor man's friend, for even if a family could not afford to pay for a funeral, Albert still arranged to care for the burial.

NO DESIRE FOR SPIRITUAL THINGS

During World War I a man named Evander J. Coward came to Trinidad and drew large crowds to his Bible lectures. He was one of the Bible Students, now known as Jehovah's Witnesses. My sister Annie, and her husband, Wilfred Ferreira, as well as my mother, started associating with the Bible Students. Willie, as Wilfred was known, became a very zealous Bible Student and traveled to the other islands in his preaching work. Although I would listen to Willie, I did not respond.

In 1931 my husband contracted pneumonia. Until the last he tried to get up and move about, but in a short time he collapsed and died in our home. He never became a Bible Student, but he was a very good husband to me. I missed him very much. Now the burden of maintaining the home fell wholly on me. I would make blouses, skirts and other items, and sell them at a reasonable price. This is how I supported myself for many years.

RESPONDING TO BIBLE TRUTHS

It was in the late 1940's that I finally learned where true refuge and hope were to be found, although I could have learned much earlier if my attitude had been different. Jehovah's Witnesses had opened a special school in the United States called Gilead to train missionaries to go to other lands and freely teach the Bible to any who wished to learn. In 1946 some of these missionaries were sent to Trinidad.

One of these was a young woman named Ann Blizzard. I liked her and responded to her offer to study the Bible with me, and I appreciated the truths I began to learn. One day we studied Second Peter 3:13, which says: "But there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell." Thinking of these righteous heavens and earth brought me great happiness. I wanted to be in that righteous arrangement. At the time I was about seventy-six years of age.

I encouraged my granddaughter, Joy Hearn, who lived with me, to join our study. She was glad to do so, and she too soon accepted the Bible truths we were learning. Eventually I began attending all the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses at 6-B Norfolk Street in Belmont, and I enjoyed them very much.

I also enjoyed telling others about the wonderful things I was learning. I had many interesting experiences in calling on persons from house to house and in conducting home Bible studies. I remember having a Bible study with Alma Ford. She received the truth with a good heart, and became an active witness for Jehovah.

I encouraged my daughter Ivy, who lived in San Fernando some thirty miles south of Port of Spain, to study with the missionaries there. She did, and she and her daughter Jean accepted the Bible truths they learned, and eventually so did her husband Jack. My grandson Peter also

listened and believed. I can recall how happy I was that day, November 25, 1950, when my daughter Ivy and my two granddaughters, Joy and Jean, all were baptized at an assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses.

THE ENEMIES, OLD AGE AND DEATH

All during the 1950's and early 1960's I attended meetings and shared in preaching and teaching the truths of the Bible to others near my home. Then frailties of old age became a common experience to me. I well know the truth of Psalm 90:10: "In themselves the days of our years are seventy years; and if because of special mightiness they are eighty years, *yet their insistence is on trouble and hurtful things.*"

Contributing to my troubles was the fact that one of my sons grew ill and failed to recover. Just as he seemed to be getting better, he suffered a relapse and died. Even though I knew the Bible's promise of a resurrection and the paradise earth, I still grieved for Cecil.

Then one day when I was past ninety-six years of age, I started to open a window in our living room. Suddenly, I slipped and fell, suffering great pain. The doctor was called and he immediately arranged to take me to a nursing home. I had broken my hip and needed an operation.

The doctors and nurses put pressure on me to have blood transfusions, saying that I would surely die if I did not receive them. I refused, for God's Word forbids the taking of blood. (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:10; Acts 15:20, 29) I thank Jehovah that I *could* survive the operation and recuperate. At the same time, two elderly ladies in their eighties in the same nursing home had broken their hips. Both took blood transfusions. Both died.

Well, I had one leg shorter than the other after my hip healed. A special shoe was made for me and I was given a walker. With these I was able to move about my home and do much of my housework and get meals. It was a trying time, but the members of the local congregation were very kind and encouraging to me. I continued to have a strong desire to survive the battle of Armageddon into God's new order.

Then my son Vivian died, and a little later Kenneth also died, leaving me without sons. My three sisters had also died. All these deaths of my dearly loved ones were hard to accept, but I know I shall see them in the resurrection. I also look forward to seeing my husband again in God's righteous new order. This Bible-based hope has given me great courage. I enjoy reading Psalm 56:11: "In God I have put my trust. I shall not be afraid."

I am presently in a very weak physical condition, being unable any longer to get out by myself. Sometimes I express the thought that it is a bit hard to be alive at this age. I always desired to live through Armageddon, but at my age it may not be possible. So I look forward to coming back to life in the resurrection at a time when all my joys will be realized and the present unhappy conditions will not be remembered nor come to mind.—Rev. 21:3, 4.

IN COMING ISSUES

- **The Secret of Happy Family Life.**
- **Appreciating the Treasure of Sacred Service.**
- **The Worship of the "Wild Beast"—Why True Christians Refuse.**

The TESTED QUALITY OF FAITH WORKS OUT ENDURANCE

"This tested quality of your faith works out endurance."—Jas. 1:3.

WHAT is faith? The most complete definition or description is found in the eleventh chapter of the Bible book of Hebrews. We read: "Faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld."—Heb. 11:1.

[2] "Assured expectation" is translated from the Greek term meaning "substanding." (*Kingdom Interlinear*) It means ground, basis, support, foundation, confidence, and also reality, substance, in contradistinction to that which is unreal or imaginary.

[3] Jesus said to a Samaritan woman: "God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and *truth,*" not according to fables or imaginary ideas. (John 4:24) The writer of the letter to the Hebrews also went on to say that faith is "the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld." Faith, then, causes a person to act as though the things unseen were real, just as if he saw them. The reason is that the things are *positively real,* and the one having genuine faith *knows* it, though these things are unseen at the time. What may be called "faith" but which is not based on reality is not really faith, but credulity.—Compare Hebrews 11:27.

[4] For example, you have faith that certain cities such as Moscow and Peking exist, even though you probably were never there. You may not even have seen a picture of these cities. But you have heard and read news reports and have seen the location of these cities on maps. Because of the firmness of your faith, not founded on supposition or imagination, you would not hesitate to board a plane to fly to either of these cities if you found it necessary to make the trip. You would be sure that your hope of seeing the city there would be realized when the plane landed. Or, if you have a loved and trusted friend who has never deceived you, you believe what he tells you and will go so far as to act on it as reality, unless what he says positively contradicts the known facts as well as what he is personally, which you know well. You have an abundance of previous instances of his truthfulness on which to base faith.

1. What is faith, as defined in the Bible?
2, 3. (a) What is the force of the expression "assured expectation" in the definition of faith? (b) How is faith "the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld"?
4. Give an illustration, from everyday affairs, of what faith is.

[5] In showing even more distinctly what faith is, the apostle uses the Greek word for "reproof" or "reproving," rendered by various translators as "evident demonstration," "conviction," 'make certain,' and similar expressions. (Heb. 11:1; 2 Tim. 3:16; *Kingdom Interlinear, Diaglott, New English Bible*) When we reprove someone we go into a matter thoroughly, looking at it from every angle. We bring to bear pertinent facts and strong arguments *proving* the point at issue, so that the hearer is convinced beyond a doubt by the powerful evidence. Faith, then, has to be based on evidence that is convincing. Mere emotional feeling is not faith. Faith must have facts, previous experience or irrefutable testimony in which to place confidence. Then the things believed or the things hoped for will not come to be disappointing.—Compare Romans 9:33; 10:11.

5. When the Bible writer says that faith is "the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld," just what does he show about faith?

FAITH REQUIRES SOUND EVIDENCE

[6] To exercise faith in something unseen we must have evidence from reliable sources. As to the existence of God the Creator, we have the evidence of creation

6, 7. What are two, yes, three "witnesses" that establish faith in the existence of God?

Jehovah did not take Abraham's faith for granted but put him to the test in connection with offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice

—too marvelous for mere humans fully to comprehend. We view life on earth, with its creatures interdependent and essential to one another. Then we have the Bible, which tells us that God created these things, and his purpose for doing so. So we have the testimony of the created things themselves, and the word of God, spoken through, not one man, but many men of integrity and faithfulness.—Rom. 1:19, 20; Acts 4:24.

7 We also possess the faculty of logic, which tells us that a Creator obviously must be beyond the complete comprehension of those whom he creates. When we look at the tremendous expanse of the physical universe in which we live, we can comprehend only a minute part of it. Must its Creator not be far above it, even invisible to us? This fact God corroborates through the prophet Isaiah: "Who has measured the waters in the mere hollow of his hand, and taken the proportions of the heavens themselves with a mere span and included in a measure the dust of the earth, or weighed with an indicator the mountains, and the hills in the scales?" "To whom can you people liken God, and what likeness can you put alongside him?" —Isa. 40:12, 18.

8 When Abraham's faith was tested in connection with offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice, for at least two reasons he had faith that God would resurrect Isaac. He had God's word that through Isaac a great nation would come, which, of course, was sufficient. But he also knew that Isaac had been given to him by a miracle, Abraham's and Sarah's reproductive powers being renewed for this purpose. This work of God was as great a miracle as a resurrection. For these reasons, and because of God's loyalty and His love for him, Abraham reckoned that God would resurrect his beloved Isaac.—Rom. 4:17-21; Heb. 11:17-19.

8. How did God kindly supply Abraham with two strong reasons or evidences for faith in a resurrection?

GOD'S SPIRIT ESSENTIAL TO TRUE FAITH

9 A feature of faith in the things pertaining to God—what he promises, facts in fulfillment of his prophecies, and so forth—is that, to the person without knowledge of God, the facts, *on the surface,* may seem to be contrary to or in contradiction to the true Christian's faith. This is because God wants his people to have faith in him, just as a son has faith in a good father, and to prove their faith, even though the things that God has promised seem remote or even impossible from a strictly human point of view. He does not want as his worshipers those who have to see everything literally to believe. Note that Jesus often gave parables that he explained later to those who had enough interest—enough faith in him—to inquire. But those not having sincere, searching hearts—not deeply believing—went their way not understanding and without faith. Jesus said to his disciples:

10 "To you it is granted to understand the sacred secrets of the kingdom of the heavens, but to those people it is not granted. For whoever has, more will be given him and he will be made to abound; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them by the use of illustrations, because, looking, they look in vain, and hearing, they hear in vain, neither do they get the sense of it; and toward them the prophecy of Isaiah is having fulfillment, which says, 'By hearing, you will hear but by no means get the sense of it; and, looking, you will look but by no means see. For the heart of this people has grown

9, 10. (a) Even though evidence for faith is present, how does this evidence appear to one not having faith? (b) What kind of faith does God want his people to have? (c) How does Psalm 27:1-3 illustrate this kind of faith? (d) How did Jesus' words at Matthew 13:11-15 show why "faith is not a possession of all people," as stated in 2 Thessalonians 3:2?

unreceptive, and with their ears they have heard without response.'" (Matt. 13:11-15) Yet, all around the Jews there was an abundance of evidence that the Messiah had indeed arrived.

11 Today, the Bible reader is surrounded by events that indicate that the Messianic kingdom is at hand. But to those putting hope in this world it appears that things are going to go on as they are now to time indefinite. The situation when Jesus was on earth was similar, though the end of the Jewish system of things was only a few years away. Jesus said to them:

12 "When you see a cloud rising in western parts, at once you say, 'A storm is coming,' and it turns out so. And when you see that a south wind is blowing, you say, 'There will be a heat wave,' and it occurs. Hypocrites, you know how to examine the outward appearance of earth and sky, but how is it you do not know how to examine this particular time?" —Luke 12:54-56.

13 Someone may say, Why is it, then, if faith is based on such strong evidence, that other people cannot see things the way the Christian does? The apostle explains this: "Now we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been kindly given us by God. . . . But a physical [carnal-minded] man does not receive the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot get to know them, because they are examined spiritually."—1 Cor. 2:12-14.

14 For instance, it is a common religious belief that when someone dies, particularly if it is a baby, 'God took him.' We hear the complaint, 'Why did God have to take away my baby (or, my husband)?' On the surface it may seem that, since God is almighty, everything that happens is at his direction. However, these people do not see that it was not God but Adam who brought death into his family when he deliberately rebelled against God and lost life for his offspring. (Rom. 5:12) They fail to see that Satan the Devil then challenged God's sovereignty, saying that no one would keep integrity to God when under test. (Job 2:4, 5) They do not understand that God has allowed wickedness and sorrow for a limited time because of this issue. They do not know that the dead are resting in the grave, awaiting the resurrection through Jesus Christ—a merciful provision of God. (John 11:11-14, 24) But, primarily, they do not know the personality of God, that he would never act so cruelly and selfishly as to 'take' someone needed away from wife or parents.—Ex. 34:6, 7.

WHY STRONG, ENDURING FAITH IS REQUIRED

15 Because a Christian's integrity and his course of action are based on faith, and any deviation from the right course represents a measure of weakness in his faith, the apostle continues with his discussion of faith, citing examples, and then says: "So, then, because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also put off every weight and *the sin that easily entangles us,* and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." (Heb. 12:1) Therefore, the quality of the Christian's faith must be of high caliber.

16 Why is it essential that the Christian's faith be of such high quality that it will withstand any attack from any quarter? For illustration, take the case of the

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11, 12. Give an example of an "evident demonstration of realities" that is hidden from the world in general.

13. How does 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 reveal why the physical man cannot see things that are clearly evident to the Christian?

14. Give an illustration showing reasons why those not having faith misinterpret facts.

15. How is loss or weakness of faith "the sin that easily entangles us"?

16, 17. Give two illustrations highlighting why faith and integrity of high caliber are required of those who hope to live in the "new earth."

"great crowd" that will survive the "great tribulation" when it destroys the present world system of things. (Rev. 7:9-14) Entering into a cleansed earth, they will become the "foundation" of a "new earth" society. Being a foundation, they must be strong. They must represent the Universal Sovereign Jehovah without wavering. They will live during the fulfillment of Revelation 20:11-15, and so they will be responsible to teach the resurrected ones the right way, the understanding of Jehovah and of his Son Jesus Christ. These resurrected people from all backgrounds of former life and history will undoubtedly include some who will present resistance to the truth, and the faith of the "great crowd" will have to be firmly founded. They will not be swayed from a faithful course by pressure or personal feelings.

17 Then, at the end of Christ's thousand-year reign, the final test provided by the loosing of Satan will try the faith of all on earth. This test will test out each one's continued integrity and faith toward God, even one's very smallest consideration of the thought of unfaithfulness. This is necessary for the reason that the ones passing this test will be granted *everlasting life.* Because of their demonstrating unbreakable faith Jehovah and his entire universe will know that they will never weaken or turn away from the truth.—1 Cor. 15: 24-28.

18 Seeing that our faith should be able to endure any attack, we should not be surprised at the things that may take place in the way of a test—even things contrary to what we ever expected to happen. The apostle Peter apprises Christians of this, saying: "Beloved ones, do not be puzzled at the burning among you, which is happening to you for a trial, as though a strange thing were befalling you." (1 Pet. 4:12) Jesus' half brother James concurs: "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet with various trials, knowing as you do that this tested quality of your faith works out endurance."—Jas. 1:2, 3.

19 So faith can vary in quality. Each one of us can examine his own faith. The apostle Paul counsels: "Keep testing whether you are in the faith, keep proving what you yourselves are." (2 Cor. 13:5) The Christian can think about the trials and problems he has faced and how he has met them. He can consider how he is meeting his present problems and responsibilities. Is he making progress in producing the fruits of the spirit? Is he doing what he can to help others? Is what he does toward his brothers always for their good? Is he making public declaration of his faith?

GOD REWARDS ENDURANCE WITH APPROVAL

20 James says that this tested, tried, proved quality of your faith works out endurance. The apostle Peter speaks of the trials that Christians undergo, and gives the reason: "In order that the tested quality of your faith, of much greater value than gold that perishes despite its being proved by fire, may be found a cause for praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:7) The more we pass tests of our faith successfully the stronger we are—we can *endure.* We also receive Jehovah's approval and make him and his Son happy, because we stand as witnesses *for* Jehovah in the issue of integrity.—Rom. 5:3, 4.

21 In fact, having strong, enduring faith is better than being a great conqueror, because the apostle John says: "This is

18. How do Peter and James show that it should be no surprise to the Christian if his faith is tested in various ways, even severely?

19. How can a Christian test his own faith?
20. What does the successful undergoing of trials do for the Christian?
21. Of value is an enduring faith?

the conquest that has conquered the world, our faith." (1 John 5:4) It is a question of integrity, not of might. Enduring with faith is following the pattern of the one with greatest faith and the conqueror of the world, Jesus Christ.—John 16:33.

[22] Yes, any material thing, even gold, can perish by wearing away or being dissolved by certain chemicals. But faith, being tested and tried and found to be of strong, sterling quality, is "incorruptible." It cannot be destroyed, because it is founded upon the everlasting God, the Almighty. The apostle says that it is impossible to please God without faith. (Heb. 11:6) One without faith cannot believe the truth. He overlooks the greatest truth in the universe, the rightful sovereignty of Jehovah God. He cannot please God because what he does is out of harmony with the entire universe. The man or woman with tested faith will endure forever, because God, who lives forever, loves and protects the life of such persons.—Ps. 145:18-20; Rev. 7:15-17.

22. How does 1 Peter 1:7 show the durability of tested faith and the durability of its possessor?

"Let ENDURANCE have its work complete"

"Let endurance have its work complete, that you may be complete and sound in all respects, not lacking in anything."—Jas. 1:4.

NO PERSON having faith in God can avoid undergoing a test of his faith. This is because the spirit of the world is opposed to faith in God, and its tendency is to put pressure on one having faith, in order to break it down. The Christian, therefore, is going to face the question of endurance.

[2] The test on faith can come in many ways. It may be direct opposition from others, even family and friends. It may be ridicule, hatred, being misunderstood, falsely accused or defamed. It may be physical persecution, and may even be connected with sickness.

[3] The question before the Christian is, How will I take these things? Will my faith be undimmed through such trials? Will I endure with understanding, and with a feeling of joy that my faith is producing an enduring quality? Will my motive be to endure for the sake of righteousness, to glorify God, not self?—Matt. 5:10.

1, 2. Why do all Christians face the question of endurance? (Matt. 10:22, 36)

3. What questions can the Christian ask himself as he faces trials?

ENDURANCE SERVES A FINE PURPOSE

[4] The apostle Peter shows how endurance works. He says: "Supply . . . to your endurance godly devotion, to your godly devotion brotherly affection, to your brotherly affection love."—2 Pet. 1:5-7.

[5] From God's standpoint, then, your endurance serves a purpose—to produce people of godly devotion, people who have brotherly affection. Additionally, it will develop in them greater love and move them to express it toward their fellow humans in this world. These are the kind of people that God wants to live in his new system of things. Of course, Jehovah God does not enjoy seeing his servants on earth being forced to suffer and endure hardships, but he wants to refine them so that they are naturally, from the heart, able to fulfill completely what he asks from humans, namely, "to exercise justice and to love kindness and to be modest in walking with [their] God." (Mic. 6:8) The way God does this is through our endurance. Therefore, endurance is of very great importance.

[6] From the individual Christian's standpoint, endurance produces God's approval. God is pleased with him and draws closer to him. (Rom. 5:3-5; Jas. 4:8) From his experience in successfully enduring, the Christian has greater devotion to God. During severe trials, he learns that he has to lean wholly on *Jehovah* and no one else, for only Jehovah, through Jesus Christ, can supply his needs and the necessary strength. (Phil. 4:13) As a consequence of his own endurance, he develops deep affection for his brothers who are undergoing trials—different trials but equally heart-searching. It helps him to sympathize, not criticize, when their problems and weaknesses cause them to make mistakes.—1 Pet. 5:9.

[7] All of this increases the Christian's appreciation for the undeserved kindness of God, which is expressed in so many ways. He loves God for this. Moreover, he develops more mercy in his heart toward those not in the truth. He sees the difficulties under which they labor and groan. (Rom. 8:22) And his love extends out to them to help them in their need of the life-giving message of truth.—Matt. 9:36.

TO "KNOW" GOD THE VITAL THING

[8] But how does "endurance have its work complete," and how is the Christian thereby made "complete and sound in all respects"? (Jas. 1:4) Peter goes on to explain: "For if these things exist in you and overflow, they will prevent you from being either inactive or unfruitful regarding the accurate knowledge ["personal knowledge," *Rotherham*] of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 1:8) Therein lies the key—accurate personal knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is because to know Jesus Christ is to know Jehovah God, for Jesus said: "He that has seen me has seen the Father also."—John 14:9.

[9] Jesus explained what the above words mean when he said: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one fully knows the Son but the Father, neither does anyone fully know the Father but the Son and anyone to whom the Son is willing to reveal him." (Matt. 11:27) The surpassing importance of this knowledge was further emphasized by Jesus when he declared: "This is what the eternal life is, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ."—John 17:3, *Byington*.

[10] What does it mean to "know" the

4, 5. Using the apostle Peter's words at 2 Peter 1:5-7, show, from God's standpoint, how endurance serves a purpose.
6, 7. From the Christian's standpoint, what good things does endurance do for him?
8. How do the words of the apostle Peter at 2 Peter 1:8 show that endurance, with the qualities that it develops in the Christian, helps him to be complete?
9, 10. What is the Bible usage of the word "know" in scriptures such as Matthew 11:27, John 17:3 and 1 John 4:8?

Father? Does it mean to know that God exists? or, further, to recognize God as Sovereign and to be baptized as a servant of his? Knowing these things, yes. But much more is meant. The Greek word translated "to know" carries a deeper meaning than our English word "know" generally implies, though often when we say we know a person we mean that we understand him and his qualities. In these Bible contexts the verb form of "to know" means "to come to know, to get acquainted with, to understand." In John 17:3 it indicates a continuing relationship between God and the person that brings ever-increasing knowledge of God and Christ; what is known about God is not merely partial information but is of value or importance to the one who grows in knowledge. It also implies a closeness of trust and confidence. (John 17:3, *Kingdom Interlinear*) In fact, the apostle John says: "He that does not love has not come to know God."—1 John 4:8.

11 So to *know* Jehovah God would be to attain to an understanding friendship with him. Since *heart* knowledge, not mere head knowledge, is meant, to *know* God the Christian would be in tune or "rhythm" with God and his ways. He would feel as God feels about matters. He would see things through God's eyes, as it were. And he would immediately "sense" something wrong when confronted by false notions about God and His ways. He would not blame God for his trials and hardships. —Jas. 1:13.

12 The Christian who *knows* God will be a person who 'through use has had his perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong.' (Heb. 5:14) He will not generally have to go to some Bible commentary or to someone else to see what is right or what is wrong about a matter. Because of his Christian training, it will become a part of him to love what God loves and to hate what God hates.—Rom. 12:9.

11, 12. What, then, will a person be like who knows God?

JESUS' EXAMPLE

13 Jesus was a fine example of this advanced development in knowing God. He said: "Righteous Father, the world has, indeed, not come to know you; but I have come to know you." (John 17:25) Jesus, being perfectly in tune with his Father, had an innate love of good and a hatred of bad; he was acting from his innermost heart when he instantly rejected Satan's proposals and the wrong advice of Peter. (Luke 4:1-12; Matt. 16:21-23) He was deeply hurt by any reproach on God's name, or lack of faith on the part of God's professed people.—Mark 3:5; 8:11, 12; Rom. 15:3.

14 Yet Jesus said that no one was good except God. (Mark 10:18) So he was not "righteous overmuch" so that he found fault or looked for faults in his disciples, as a 'spiritual policeman.' (Eccl. 7:16) Neither did he burden or discourage them, in a Pharisaical manner, making their consciences feel bad by demanding perfection of them. (Luke 6:1-4; 11:46) He loved them and had deep sympathy with their feelings and concerning the sad situation into which sin had brought the human race.—John 11:33-36.

15 The principle that 'endurance must have its work complete' applied even in Jesus' case, for it is written: "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) Because of Jesus' perfect endurance under suffering "we have as high priest, not one who cannot

13. How did Jesus' actions toward what is bad show that he really knew God?
14. How did Jesus' actions toward his disciples show that he truly knew God?
15. How did the principle that 'endurance must have its work complete' apply in Jesus' case?

sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tested in all respects like ourselves, but without sin."—Heb. 4:15.

16 We can see from Jesus' example what becoming "complete and sound in all respects" means. We can understand that one has to be a Christian *at all times, enduring* through trials. The apostles recognized this. Paul said: "On account of [Christ Jesus] I have taken the loss of all things and I consider them as a lot of refuse, that I may gain Christ and be found in union with him . . . *so as to know him* and the power of his resurrection and a sharing in his sufferings." (Phil. 3:8-10) As the apostle Paul said, his goal was: "At present I know partially, but then I shall know accurately even as I am accurately known." (1 Cor. 13:12) While Paul knew God, he realized that the pinnacle of knowledge of God and the most intimate relationship with God would come when Paul would receive the full reward of his Christian course.

17 On the other hand, some persons may serve in the congregation of God for years without actually coming to know God. The Israelites were an example of this. They had God's law. They saw his dealings and even his miracles. Yet God said to them: "Your forefathers made a test of me with a trial, and yet they had seen my works for forty years. For this reason I became disgusted with this generation and said, 'They always go astray in their hearts, and they themselves have not come to know my ways.' "—Heb. 3:9, 10; Ps. 95:9-11.

HOW TO COME TO "KNOW" GOD

18 How, then, can a Christian make sure that he will come to know God? First, he must *persistently* pray for God's spirit, since only by holy spirit can a person get an insight into God's mind and his personality. Prayer is one of the most intimate privileges Jehovah has granted us. In pouring out his heart the Christian makes God his most intimate confidant. And prayer has *power,* because Jehovah actually hears and answers prayers in the way that accomplishes the most good for those calling on him.—Ps. 65:2; Rom. 8:28.

19 Many times it has been said that study and meditation on God's Word are essential. This is true. But, in addition, the Christian must put that Word into action. For example, When a question of conduct or a problem in life arises, does the Christian act on his opinion or does he check to see that he is in harmony with God's ways? If he is not absolutely sure, before speaking or acting, does he *make sure* that he has Bible support for what he says or does? Are answers that he gives to others his own opinion or personal viewpoint? or can he back up what he says with plain, clear proof from the Bible?

20 One doing this is following the pattern of Jesus himself, for Jesus said: "I cannot do a single thing of my own initiative; just as I hear, I judge; and the judgment that I render is righteous, because I seek, not my own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 5:30) It was not that Jesus looked up a scripture or even cited or quoted one every time, but, when explaining or reproving, he either quoted from the Hebrew Scriptures or expressed the principle found therein so that his hearers would know that his answer was from *God.* In reading Jesus' words you will be impressed by the fact that a great portion

16. (a) How do we see that to be "complete" one has to endure at all times? (b) What did the apostle Paul mean by his words at 1 Corinthians 13:12?
17. May a person serve God for a long time without coming to know him? Illustrate.
18. What is one of the first things a Christian must do so that he can come to know God?
19. How must one use the Bible in order to come to know God?
20. (a) How did Jesus show that he really was close to God, knowing him and wanting others to know him? (b) Use some of the scriptures cited in the paragraph to illustrate how Jesus used the Hebrew Scriptures to convince his hearers.

of what he said was either a quotation from or an allusion to the Hebrew Scriptures.—Compare John 5:31, 32 with Deuteronomy 19:15; Mark 10:27 with Genesis 18:14 and Job 42:2; Matthew 10:35 with Micah 7:6; John 10:34 with Psalm 82:6.

[21] For a Christian to come to know God, therefore, takes time and experience, with *application* of himself to this objective at all times. The apostle Paul counseled Christians: "I entreat you by the compassions of God, brothers, to present your bodies a sacrifice living, holy, acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason. And quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:1, 2) To *prove* what God's will is we have to experience its goodness by letting it work in our lives, by applying it. By this we come to know that will and its perfectness —God's good and perfect way of thinking. We know what is acceptable to him and in that way come to gain his approval and a fine, close relationship. Then we can feel like a son with a very loving father who cares for him and who stands by him in every time of need.

[22] Next, the apostle, after admonishing Christians to prove to themselves God's will, which is good, goes on to show how they can evince a mind that is not conformed to this world and its thinking and practices. He says: "For through the undeserved kindness given to me I tell everyone there among you not to think more of himself than it is necessary to think; but to think so as to have a sound mind, each one as God has distributed to him a measure of faith." (Rom. 12:3) In this way the Christian will have a real regard for his brothers, not comparing himself with others or, because he has some ability, think that he is better or is entitled to greater deference and privileges. The apostle continues, explaining why:

[23] "For just as we have in one body many members, but the members do not all have the same function, so we, although many, are one body in union with Christ, but members *belonging individually to one another.*" (Rom. 12:4, 5) We are in the congregation for what purpose? To help one another to endure to the completing of our faith through endurance. So we should find our place in the congregation and do all we can to serve there. The apostle concludes:

[24] "Since, then, we have gifts differing according to the undeserved kindness given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy [which includes speaking and preaching] according to the faith proportioned to us; or a ministry, let us be at this ministry; or he that teaches, let him be at his teaching; or he that exhorts, let him be at his exhortation; he that distributes, let him do it with liberality; he that presides, let him do it in real earnest; he that shows mercy, let him do it with cheerfulness." —Rom. 12:6-8.

[25] If we take these words to heart and follow them seriously, we will become "complete" in God's eyes, as the apostle Peter wrote: "After you have suffered a little while, the God of all undeserved kindness, who called you to his everlasting glory in union with Christ, will himself finish your training, he will make you firm, he will make you strong."—1 Pet. 5:10; Jas. 1:12.

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21. How do the apostle's words at Romans 12:1, 2 show that application is needed in order really to know God?
22. What is one major thing the Christian must do to transform his thinking from that of the world, as pointed out by Paul at Romans 12:3?
23. What must be our relationship with others in the congregation in order to be "complete" in faith?
24. Using Romans 12:6-8, explain the many avenues of activity in which Christians can apply themselves, and the spirit in which they should do this.
25. How does the apostle Peter encourage us in our efforts to become "complete" in God's eyes?

JOY IN IVORY COAST —A Result of Overcoming Difficulties

IVORY COAST, as the name suggests, was once the domain of the elephant, but these massive creatures are rarely seen here nowadays. This country is typical of most people's notion of the tropics. The climate along the coast is hot and humid, and lush forests spread north until they give way to the savanna. Industries based on the export of timber and coffee contribute toward making the Ivory Coast a developing country. The official language is French, the country being a former French colony, but the people are a polyglot collection of tribes that speak seventy indigenous languages of five major linguistic groups.

Many difficulties were encountered by Jehovah's Witnesses in starting the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work in this country, and for many years official government recognition was denied. However, under the direction of the Ghana branch of the Watch Tower Society, and with Jehovah's blessing, difficulties were overcome. Even so, from the first report of the preaching activity in 1950 there was continual harassment through to 1967.

In 1952 a missionary graduate from the sixteenth class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead of New York was arrested, his house was searched and his stock of literature was confiscated. Although the policeman in charge of the case personally expressed sorrow, the Witnesses were brought to trial in Grand Bassam, where the Supreme Court then was, and charged with possession of illegal literature. Convictions resulted, and fines were imposed, but the big loss was the Bible literature. However, to the great joy of the Witnesses, several months later they found the confiscated publications in some second-hand bookstalls at the market. They promptly bought all of them back.

Though not the natural expression of the Ivorian feeling, an official government ban was imposed on the Watch Tower Society from 1965 to 1967. The small group of Witnesses, numbering just over a hundred at the imposition of the ban, faithfully endured harassment and imprisonments, and had the joy of seeing an increase to 220 in their number by the time the ban was lifted. By 1971 this figure had again more than doubled, and the Ivory Coast rejoiced to see a branch office of the Watch Tower Society set up there in September of that year.

A PURE ORGANIZATION

The influences that created difficulties for Jehovah's Witnesses in the Ivory Coast were not just external ones. Loose morals are a characteristic of today's system of things, and these are prevalent also in the Ivory Coast. In order to measure up to the standards required by pure Christianity, and to qualify for baptism,

many of the local people have made great changes so as to live clean moral lives. Often, they have had to do this in the face of bitter opposition from their families.

In general, few people in the Ivory Coast accept the standard of legal marriage to one mate. Polygamy abounds and marital unfaithfulness is common. Often the men fear that legal marriage could bring difficulty, with the legal wife's exploiting her secure position and turning rebellious. Consequently many couples live together without a legal marriage, and then marry only after the woman has proved that she can bear children. Jehovah's Witnesses overcome these difficulties by obeying Bible principles, and the result is the joyful occasion of a marriage ceremony presided over by the mayor of the city. Often these officials express surprise at seeing so many smiling faces, as large numbers of Jehovah's Witnesses assemble to share the joy of the happy couple at being legally married.

Getting legally married is not always easy. Many official papers are required, including copies of birth certificates. Often it is difficult to obtain these, as the individuals concerned may have been born in distant villages where no official records of births were kept.

One newly interested person had lived with a woman for five years and had four children by her when he became acquainted with Jehovah's Witnesses. His Bible study with the Witnesses led him to see the need of a legal marriage. He then discovered that official records were in error in showing the woman's age to be now only fifteen years, three years below the legal age for marriage. For two and a half years he made great efforts to obtain accurate documents, meeting up with stiff opposition from the woman's parents, who demanded a large bride price, although this practice has been declared illegal in the Ivory Coast. Finally he was able to be married legally, and both he and his wife now have the joy of serving Jehovah as dedicated and baptized servants, living pure lives.

LEAVING FALSE RELIGION

Many are the ones who have happily overcome difficulties in order to make the break from "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion. (Rev. 17:5, 15) A missionary tells how the desire to preach the good news motivated an interested person, with whom he studied God's Word, to file papers for a legal marriage within three days after they had discussed the matter. Though he was a Catholic, his church had never required him to honor marriage in this way. He now saw the need to cut his ties with the Catholic Church and determined not to let this become too great a difficulty. Joyfully he wrote a letter of resignation and delivered it personally to the priest. Being legally married, and having no ties now with "Babylon the Great," this man and his wife made a 230-mile (370-kilometer) journey to attend a circuit assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses. Within two months this couple had the joy of taking up the house-to-house proclamation of God's kingdom.

Many persons like these are leaving "Babylon the Great." The churches have lost much influence as people discern how difficulties have been provoked by their money-minded efforts. One new Witness relates that, when his son died some years ago, the priest loudly asked at the graveside burial service, "Where is the boy's father?" The bereft parent presented himself sadly at the priest's side, whereupon, to the surprise of many, the priest demanded immediate payment of 1,000

francs ($5) for the prayer just offered. Astounded and upset, the father handed over the money. Some of his friends mocked him for continuing to put faith in a religion that takes such obvious advantage of its members. Later, when Jehovah's Witnesses contacted him, he really appreciated their adherence to the principle 'You received free, give free.' With no hesitation he gave his address, and the resulting Bible study quickly led to his breaking all ties with "Babylon the Great." He now joyfully serves in spreading the Kingdom good news.

FETISH PRACTICES

A major difficulty to be overcome in the Ivory Coast is the grip of animism, which holds 65 percent of the population in fear. These people believe that all aspects of life are affected by the "spirits" of their dead ancestors. Even highly educated men still offer sacrifices to these ancestors. At many road intersections, there are to be seen on the ground a small earthenware bowl or a gourd containing two or three eggs and some cola nuts as a sacrifice for the spirits. Despite the abundance of diseases caused by microbes and amoebas, so common in tropical countries, people rarely attribute death and sickness to natural causes. Consequently they resort to the witchdoctor, or fetish priest, and to charms to protect them from the spirits. Those who want to serve Jehovah have had to learn not to fear demon power.

A man and his wife who began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses had many problems, resulting in irregular studies. Then the man agreed to burn all his fetish objects. Two days later an urgent message came from his home village. The witchdoctor there had looked into the "sacred calabash" (a type of gourd) and had seen the "souls" of all in the village except that of the interested man. The fetish priest said: "This man is no longer one of us. His soul has left us and therefore he is weak and no longer protected against any fetish." The interested man, however, was able to inform the village that this was the best news he could have, because he now enjoyed a far greater protection, that of Jehovah the true God. Although he had many family problems to overcome, good progress was made and he and his wife were baptized at the 1969 "Peace on Earth" International Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses in Abidjan.

So, despite the many difficulties in the Ivory Coast, people are flocking to Jehovah's organization. Almost half of the Witnesses in the country have been baptized in just the last two years. By October 1975, 1,113 persons were sharing in the joys of God's spiritual paradise, which is being extended rapidly throughout the country. March of this year 1976 saw a new peak of 1,148 Witnesses joyfully preaching "this good news of the kingdom." (Matt. 24:14) In January, a circuit assembly was held for the thirteen congregations organized in the capital, Abidjan, with 1,508 persons attending the public talk and 68 being baptized. Truly, many are joyfully overcoming difficulties in order to serve Jehovah God. Other cities and towns in the interior of the country are being opened up by courageous missionaries and special pioneers. The joy of overcoming difficulties in order to serve Jehovah is being expressed by more and more persons, and these look forward also to enjoying, after the "great tribulation," a literal paradise where the elephant with his wonderful tusks of ivory may once again roam freely throughout the land. —Rev. 7:14-17.

HEBREWS:

A SUPERIOR WORSHIP AND ITS REQUIREMENTS

YOU might wonder, What value could there be in an old letter that deals at length with an even older form of worship? Yes, how could a 1,900-year-old letter be of any benefit to you now? But certainly each of us can benefit greatly from what we have available in the Bible book of Hebrews, as we shall now see.

Jehovah's Witnesses (known as Bible Students prior to 1931) have always appreciated the value of this book. In former years, quoting from Hebrews was considered by some outsiders to be the mark of a Bible Student. And for four decades their most basic and most used Bible study aid was *Tabernacle Shadows*, published in 1881, which treated all the aspects of Israel's worship in the light of the book of Hebrews. 'In it,' we are told, 'the "divine plan" was clearly presented for the first time: that there would be a heavenly destiny for 144,000 and an earthly paradise for restored mankind.'—*The Watch Tower*, July 15, 1909, p. 216.

Who wrote this important and enlightening book of Hebrews? There are many reasons to believe that it was the apostle Paul. For one thing, the arguments in the book are logically developed after Paul's manner. Its author obviously had a great familiarity with the Hebrew Scriptures, such as Paul certainly had. The wording, figures of speech and allusions also may be said to point to Paul. So do the facts that the writer was intimately acquainted with Timothy and hoped to travel with him, and that he wrote from Italy.

Furthermore, the Greek and Asiatic Christians from earliest times held that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. Perhaps among the most conclusive evidences is the Chester Beatty Papyrus No. 2 (P^{46}), discovered in 1931. It is part of a codex and consists of eighty-six leaves, beginning with Romans, followed by Hebrews and then seven more of Paul's letters. It makes clear that around the year 200 C.E. the book of Hebrews was recognized as one of Paul's letters.

True, ever so many Bible scholars from post-apostolic times to our day do not agree with this, but there is not an argument they present that cannot be successfully refuted. Much is made of the fact that some of the vocabulary used in Hebrews is not typically Pauline. But when we understand his purpose of writing and his possible wish to remain unknown, we can see ample reason for his using a somewhat different vocabulary. This would also account for his using a more elegant Greek than he used in his other letters. He really was composing a treatise rather than a letter, as we see from its start.

The objection is also raised that in Paul's thirteen other letters he repeatedly gives his name, yet not once does he do this in the book of Hebrews. Why would he want to remain anonymous? No doubt because of the prejudice of the Jews against him personally, and because of his being known as the apostle to the nations or Gentiles. And although Paul was sent forth as the apostle to the Gentiles, Ananias was told that Paul would also preach to "the sons of Israel."—Acts 9:15.

That Paul would write such a letter is in keeping with his deep concern for his Jewish countrymen. He suffered great anguish because of their unbelief. (Rom. 9:1-5; 10:1-4) And he labored in behalf of relief for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. (2 Cor. chaps. 8 and 9) So it would be just like Paul, noting the persecution and religious pressure that these Christianized Jews had to contend with, to write them such a letter, filled as it is with exhortation, admonition, illuminating exposition, encouragement and stern warnings.

While it cannot be stated dogmatically that the *title* of this treatise or letter "To the Hebrews" was penned by Paul himself, it certainly is most fitting. Particularly those Christians who had once been Jews could fully appreciate the arguments Paul adduces to show the superiority of the new Christian system of things over the old. But to which Hebrews did Paul write? To those scattered throughout the Roman Empire? It is true that all such could benefit from it, but from some of its closing words the letter appears to have been directed to Hebrew Christians at a certain place. Thus Paul speaks of his 'being restored to *you* sooner,' and says that "Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes quite soon, I shall see *you*." (Heb. 13:19, 23) Most likely that place was Jerusalem.

When did Paul write this letter? From the letter itself it is clear that temple worship was still being carried on, so it must have been written before 70 C.E., when the temple was destroyed. And since Paul is either expecting his release from prison or had just been released, the year 61 C.E. is the most likely date. From where did he write this letter? In that he sends greetings from those with him in Italy, he must have written it while still in that land, apparently at Rome.

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM

According to rabbinical teaching, the promised Messiah would be superior to Abraham, superior to Moses and superior even to angels. Paul, in showing the superiority of the Christian system, certainly establishes that to be the case. He begins his letter by showing that while Jehovah in times past had spoken to his people by means of the prophets, he was speaking now through a far superior spokesman, his Son, by whom God created all things. Why, he is superior even to angels, for he has a more excellent name than they have! His is more highly exalted. They are commanded to do obeisance to him. And he is the Son, whereas they are but servants.—Heb. 1:1-14.

The Christian new system of worship also has a superior high priest. High priests under the Law had to offer sacrifices for themselves as well as for their people, and that day after day, year after year. Jesus, as high priest, being "guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners," did not need to offer sacrifices for himself, but only for the rest of humankind. And due to his being a perfect sacrifice, he needed to be offered only once. High priests under the Law entered with the blood of bulls and of goats into a holy

place made with hands. However, Jesus entered, with his own blood, into heaven itself to make atonement for all mankind. —Heb. 4:14, 15; 5:5, 10; 7:26-28; 8:1-3; 9:7-12, 25-28.

Moreover, the high priests under the Law died and had successors. Jesus, however, was given immortality upon his resurrection, and so dies no more and needs no successors. Also, he is not only a high priest but a king-priest, after the manner of Melchizedek. The superiority of the Melchizedekian priesthood over the Aaronic is seen in that Abraham offered tithes to Melchizedek, and so did Aaron, in the sense that he was still in the loins of Abraham. In spite of his superiority, this high priest was put to the test so that he is now able to aid his followers when they are put to a similar test.—Heb. 7:1-24; 2:17, 18.

Consistently, the Christian system of things also has superior sacrifices, for the blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sins, which the blood of Christ can and does do. It also has a better mediator, even as the perfect Son of God is superior to the imperfect servant Moses. Jesus is mediator of a better covenant, which accomplishes its purpose of producing a "kingdom of priests," something the old covenant failed to do. (Ex. 19:5, 6) The laws of the Christian system are not written on stone tablets but on fleshly, human hearts. The old system had various sabbaths, but under it the Israelites failed to enter into God's rest. The new system, though, provides a sabbath that all Christians can enter by faith and obedience. Truly, the Christian system of things is far superior to the old.—Heb. 10:1-20; 4:1-11.

ENCOURAGEMENT, EXHORTATIONS, WARNINGS

In Paul's letter to the Hebrews we also find much encouragement and exhortation, as well as stern warnings against apostatizing. By means of this treatise, all Christians today, like the Hebrew Christians of Paul's day, may be truly strengthened in faith and better equipped to deal with opposers. Those fine words of Paul also motivate us to serve Jehovah aright and to endure opposition and persecution. Thus, his first chapter concludes with the encouraging thought that God uses angels to minister to Christ's footstep followers.

Next, Paul exhorts us to pay more than the usual attention to the things we have heard so that we may never drift away. He warns of dire punishment should we grow careless and neglect God's provision for salvation. (Heb. 2:1-4) Continuing, Paul assures Christians that they will be of Christ's "house" if they make fast their hold on their freeness of speech and hope down to the end. So he warns: "Beware, brothers, for fear there should ever develop in any one of you a wicked heart lacking faith by drawing away from the living God; but keep on exhorting one another each day, as long as it may be called 'Today,' for fear any one of you should become hardened by the deceptive power of sin." What timely warning! The fact that every year some are excommunicated or disfellowshiped from the Christian congregation for immoral conduct underscores how necessary that warning is!—Heb. 3:6, 12, 13.

In chapter four Paul exhorts us to do our utmost to enter into God's rest, for fear that any should fall into the same pattern of disobedience as manifested by the Israelites over the centuries. And how can we enter into God's rest? By doing what the Israelites failed to do: Exercise faith and be obedient. We may never forget that "the word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword . . . and is able to discern

thoughts and intentions of the heart." Yes, "there is not a creation that is not manifest to [God's] sight, but all things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes of him with whom we have an accounting." Again a stern warning!—Heb. 4:11-13.

Next, Paul takes to task those Hebrew Christians who have grown dull of hearing (spiritually), and who should by now be teachers but instead have need again to be taught the elementary truths of Christianity. They, in fact, need spiritual milk instead of solid food, which belongs to mature people. What does it mean to be mature? It means to be able to distinguish between right and wrong.—Heb. 5:11–6:3.

Right after that, Paul issues another stern warning of the fate that awaits those who, once having been enlightened, fall away. However, he is convinced of better things from those to whom he is writing. They can be assured that God will reward them for the good deeds they do to their fellow Christians. He then urges them, and so also us, to have the full assurance of the hope down to the end. And what solid grounds we have for strong hope, for God not only gave us his *word* but also stepped in with an *oath!* By reason of these two immutable things we can have a hope that is like an anchor, both sure and steadfast. In chapter seven Paul encourages us by pointing out that our Melchizedekian High Priest, Jesus Christ, continues alive and so he is always able "to save completely those who are approaching God through him."—Heb. 7:15-28.

In next telling of the superiority of the new covenant over the old, Paul comforts us with the thought that according to that new covenant God will be merciful and will never call to mind our forgiven sins. (Heb. 8:7-12) Because of our having a superior high priest and superior sacrifices, we are able to have our consciences cleansed from dead works so as to render sacred service to the living God. (Heb. 9:11-14) And because of our having this favored position, Paul admonishes us: "Let us hold fast the public declaration of our hope without wavering, for he is faithful that promised. And let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near." Certainly that "day" is drawing near!—Heb. 10:22-25.

The apostle next warns of the consequences of apostasy, showing that it is even more serious to fall away from Christian worship than from the Law arrangement, because it involves disregarding the perfect sacrifice of Christ, which is truly able to take away sin. Yes, may we never forget that vengeance belongs to Jehovah, and that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."—Heb. 10:26-31.

Paul then urges the Hebrews to call to mind their former days when they suffered much persecution. Again he counsels them not to throw away their great freeness of speech and stresses their need of endurance, so that they may receive the reward. The righteous will live by faith but God has no pleasure in those that shrink back.—Heb. 10:32-39.

Logically, Paul follows this with his remarkable discussion of faith, chapter 11. In it he defines faith, tells how important it is to our pleasing God, and illustrates his theme by numerous notable examples of faith. Having such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, we should lay aside every weight and the sin of lack, or loss, of faith and go on enduring. To that end we should look to the example set by

Jesus, "the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith."—Heb. 12:1-3.

Thereupon Paul gives us fine counsel to accept discipline from Jehovah, neither belittling it nor becoming a dropout because of it—for whom God loves he disciplines. By accepting discipline and profiting from it we will produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness. And after counseling us to aid those needing help, and to be careful not to stumble others, Paul further warns against being callous over sacred things, citing Esau as a warning example.—Heb. 12:4-17.

In the final chapter the inspired apostle warns also against sexual uncleanness, against the love of money and against being carried away by strange teachings. Christians should "always offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name." Three times he refers to those who are "taking the lead among you," to whom Christians are to be submissive and obedient for their own good. He concludes with the prayer that God may equip us with every good thing to do his will, performing in us what is "well-pleasing in his sight."—Heb. 13:4-24.

Truly the book of Hebrews is filled with most important and useful information as well as with earnest exhortation, fine encouragement and stern warnings lest we fall away from the faith. The better we become acquainted with this Bible book, the more we stand to profit from it.

COUNSEL —WILL YOU PROFIT FROM IT?

"WE ALL stumble many times." (Jas. 3:2) Likely you will agree with that Scriptural truth. All humans are in need of corrective counsel. But how do most people respond to counsel? Do they profit from it? Do you?

Perhaps you have noticed the inclination of many to shift blame for mistakes onto others. This is nothing new, as can be seen from the way the first human pair, Adam and Eve, responded when God inquired about their disobediently eating certain fruit. We read:

"The man went on to say: 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree and so I ate.' With that Jehovah God said to the woman: 'What is this you have done?' To this the woman replied: 'The serpent—it deceived me and so I ate.' "—Gen. 3:12, 13.

Adam, by imputing his error to "the woman whom *you* gave to be with me," even implied that God was at fault. These efforts at self-justification brought no benefits, though, for God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and eventually they died in fulfillment of God's sentence. (Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:23, 24; 5:5) Later Jehovah stated: "I shall not declare the wicked one righteous." (Ex. 23:7) Try-

ing to make a wrong course appear right avails nothing with God.

"THE FIRST PRELIMINARY TO FORGIVENESS"

On the other hand, great benefits come from willingness to heed good counsel and rectify a wrong course. Consider the case of David, who became involved in serious violations of God's law. David not only committed adultery with Bath-sheba, another man's wife, but sought to cover up his immorality by arranging for Bath-sheba's husband to die in battle. (2 Sam. 11:1-27) For this, God, through the prophet Nathan, sternly rebuked David, foretelling calamity for his house. But the Bible goes on to relate: "David now said to Nathan: 'I have sinned against Jehovah.' At this Nathan said to David: 'Jehovah, in turn, does let your sin pass by. You will not die.' "—2 Sam. 12:1-13.

Concerning this experience, David later wrote: "My sin I finally confessed to you, and my error I did not cover. I said: 'I shall make confession over my transgressions to Jehovah.' And you yourself pardoned the error of my sins." (Ps. 32:5) In *The Soncino Books of the Bible* these comments are made: "He was not giving information to God Who knew what he had done; by acknowledging it to Him he acknowledged it to himself. That is the purpose of confession and the first preliminary to forgiveness. . . . The sinner having done his part, God was ready to do His as Pardoner." How greatly David profited from heeding reproof! Do you also profit from reproof?

WHEN NO LAW IS BROKEN

What if you receive counsel about an action that violates no law? Should you view the matter as 'nobody's business but your own'? With regard to just such a case, the apostle Paul wrote the following:

> "Everything that is sold in a meat market keep eating, making no inquiry on account of your conscience. . . . If anyone of the [pagan] unbelievers invites you [to a meal] and you wish to go, proceed to eat everything that is set before you, making no inquiry on account of your conscience.
>
> "But if anyone should say to you: 'This is something offered in sacrifice,' do not eat on account of the one that disclosed it and on account of conscience. 'Conscience,' I say, not your own, but that of the other person." —1 Cor. 10:25-29.

Did you grasp the basic principle involved in that counsel? Each Christian must respect the consciences of others. The work *Word Pictures in the New Testament* contains the following observations:

> "Paul deftly puts himself in the place of the strong brother at such a banquet who is expected to conform his conscience to that of the weak brother who makes the point about a particular piece of meat. It is an abridgement of one's personal liberty in the interest of the weak brother. Two individualities clash. The only reason is love which builds up ([1 Cor.] 8:2 and all of chapter 13)."

Would you profit from similar counsel today? True, food may not involve questions of conscience in your locality. But other things may. For example: Grooming; styles of clothing; types of entertainment. If someone pointed out to you that your choice of such things troubled the conscience of a fellow Christian, would you profit from that counsel and out of love accept 'an abridgement of your personal liberty'?

A BARRIER TO PROFITING FROM COUNSEL

How do you respond when someone points out mistakes you have made or suggests that you improve a certain aspect of your life? What if the person offering the counsel is younger or less experienced than you, or a subordinate at your place of employment? Do you experience sudden

feelings of resentment that hinder your profiting from good advice? What causes these?

It is a tendency of human nature that comes up for discussion at Romans 12:3: "I tell everyone there among you not to think more of himself than it is necessary to think." The culprit is *pride,* which is an inordinate self-esteem or an unreasonable feeling of superiority over others. How can you cope with the barrier of pride?

Basic is acceptance of the truth set forth at Romans 3:23: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Do you believe that? You may quickly answer Yes, but does your life course show that you really mean it? Not if you give the impression that you are "always right" by spurning good counsel.

And think of the tragic consequences of proud rejection of corrective advice! For one thing, there is loneliness, for who desires the association of a person who cannot admit his mistakes? Worse than that, the Creator declares: "Self-exaltation and pride . . . I have hated." (Prov. 8:13) A haughty spirit injures one's relationship with Jehovah. It can, therefore, result in nothing good. "Pride is before a crash, and a haughty spirit before stumbling." —Prov. 16:18.

On the other hand, "the reproofs of discipline are the way of life." (Prov. 6:23) An individual who responds to counsel retains pleasant relationships with others, most importantly with the Creator. Such a person is not hemmed in by shortsightedness. He not only gains personal advantages from the thoughts of others, but, in turn, radiates to his fellowman benefits of an expanded viewpoint. Counsel indeed is profitable. The question is: Will *you* profit from it?

● First Corinthians 7:14 states that children of a believing parent "are holy." Is baptism involved in such a child's 'holiness' in God's sight? What if the child is retarded?

The apostle Paul is here discussing problems in a divided family. He encouraged the believing mate not to leave the unbeliever and, as a strong reason for keeping the marriage intact, *said this:* "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in relation to his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in relation to the brother; otherwise, your children would really be unclean, but now they are holy." (1 Cor. 7:14) This shows that God views such children according to the principle of family merit. By family merit is meant the holiness that God credits, or imputes, to minor children who are obedient, to the extent that the child is unaccountable. This comes about due to the valuable record of holiness and good deeds that "parents in union with the Lord" have in God's sight. (Eph. 6:1) This family merit applies even when only one of the parents is a believer, as Paul's above-quoted words indicate.

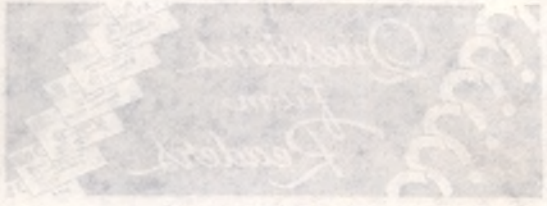
What, then, of baptism? A young child who is faithfully taught God's Word will no doubt progress in knowledge and understanding, and in time reach the point where God's spirit motivates him to make his own dedication to Jehovah and to request baptism. (1 Pet. 3:21) To be prepared for baptism, he must appreciate his need to repent, be converted and come into a proper relationship with God. (Acts 3:19; 8:34-36) After baptism, he would no longer be under family merit, but would be viewed as "holy" on his own account, being responsible before God to pursue a life of dedication. —1 Pet. 1:14-16; Col. 1:21-23.

Should parents of retarded children feel that baptism is in all cases a requirement for children to be viewed by God as worthy of his protection in times of judgment, as in the foretold "great tribulation"? The degree of retardation is clearly a determining factor, since some of such children remain with the mentality of a four- or five-year-old even when fully grown. The child may be able to grasp certain basic teachings of God's Word and repeat these when asked. He (or she) may be obedient to the parents and abstain from doing certain things that have been pointed out as wrong and contrary to God's will. But is the child able to make personal decisions, able to decide from his own mind and heart (not that of the parents) the course in life he wishes to take? Is he capable of comprehending and seeking a *personal* relationship with God, one that is not dependent upon his parents? Is he able to stand before a judicial body, accountable for any wrongdoing he may commit? If not, then such child is evidently not in position to be baptized but would continue under family merit in God's eyes, counted by him as "holy" in that sense.

Hence, the matter should not be viewed emotionally but on the basis of Scriptural teachings. If the retar*dation is not* great and the child is indeed capable of becoming a disciple of God's Son, serving God with his own 'heart, soul, mind and strength,' then he could be aided to reach the point of baptism. (Mark 12:30) He then should be able to "carry his own load" of spiritual responsibility. (Gal. 6:5) The parents could seek the counsel of the elders if they are in doubt.

How faith-strengthening and comforting to know that young children, as well as mentally retarded older ones, may be regarded as "holy" due to family merit!

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

October 17: The Tested Quality of Faith Works Out Endurance. Page 556. Songs to Be Used: 35, 89.

October 24: "Let Endurance Have Its Work Complete." Page 561. Songs to Be Used: 39, 68.