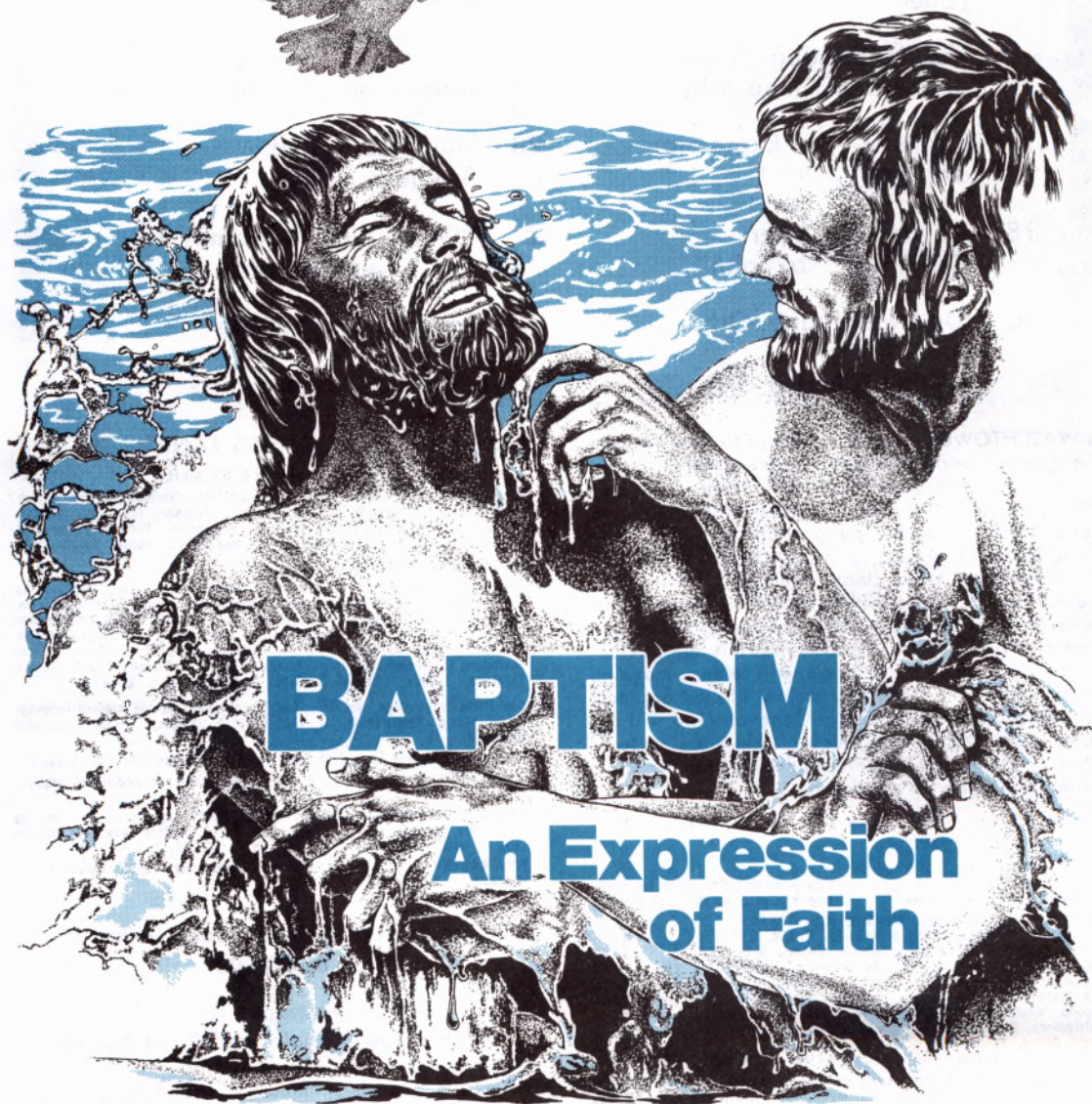


MAY 1, 1980

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



BAPTISM

An Expression
of Faith

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‘WHAT is in it for me?’ How often have you heard someone ask that question before undertaking a task? Likely you have noticed that people seldom expend effort without the assurance of some reward. Children frequently manifest this attitude to a high degree. Often they refuse to behave properly unless “bribed” with some reward.

The Bible points to the root cause of this problem, saying: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23) Due to inheriting sin, humans have a natural inclination toward wrongdoing. It requires considerable effort to do what is right.

Can this attitude affect worship of God? Yes. The Creator desires his servants to do what is right. The standard for right conduct is set forth in the Holy Bible. From that source we also learn that God “becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.” (Heb. 11:6) If they are not careful, however, people can easily fall into the error of viewing acts of worship and devotion to God as a means of *earning* his favor.

This actually happened to the ancient Jews. They

Why Do What Is Right?

came to view obedience to the Mosaic law as a means of gaining “merit” with God that would assure future blessings. The Mishnah quotes one rabbi as saying: “The Holy One, blessed is he, was minded to grant merit to Israel; therefore hath he multiplied for them the Law and commandments.” According to this viewpoint, the fact that the commandments of God’s law were numerous gave Israel all the more opportunities to earn merit by obeying them. This helps us better to understand a question put to Jesus by a certain wealthy young man: “Good Teacher, *by doing what* shall I inherit everlasting life?” (Luke 18:18) The man believed that everlasting life could be *earned* by doing good deeds.

Unlike the ancient Jews, Christians are not subject to the Mosaic law. Nevertheless, the Bible encourages Christians to busy themselves with “holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion.” (2 Pet. 3:11) These include a person’s taking time out to share Bible truths with his neighbors, conforming his way of life to Scriptural guidelines, and regularly getting together with fellow Christians for Bible discussion.—Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20; Col. 3:5-10; Heb. 10:23-25.

But what should motivate such godly conduct? It should especially be firm faith—faith that motivates the Christian to ‘reach out toward the goal’ of everlasting life. (Phil. 3:13, 14; 2 Tim. 4:7, 8) Such faith is reflected in wholehearted service to our God, not in a mere token service or in observing rules and regulations, as in the case of the Jews. Paul wrote: “Knowing as we do that a man is declared righteous, not due to works of law, but only through faith toward Christ Jesus, even we have put our faith in Christ Jesus, that we may be declared righteous due to faith toward Christ, and not due to works of law, because due to works of law no flesh will be declared righteous.” (Gal. 2:16) Hence, no one can earn God’s favor and blessing by formal acts of worship or charitable deeds, regardless of their nature and the

extent to which they are performed. A righteous standing with God comes "only through faith toward Christ Jesus."

The Son of God himself gave fine admonition regarding Christian conduct. For example, he said: "Give to the one asking you, and do not turn away from one that wants to borrow from you without interest. You heard that it was said, 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' However, I say to you: Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you."—Matt. 5:42-44.

But what did Jesus give as the correct motive for people to exert themselves in that way? Jesus added: "That you may prove yourselves sons of your Father who is in the heavens, since he makes his sun rise upon wicked people and good and makes it rain upon righteous people and unrighteous." (Matt. 5:45) Though we may 'look intently toward the reward,' the greater force behind Christian service and conduct should be the desire to imitate God as the Benefactor of all mankind.—Heb. 11:26; 1 Cor. 11:1, 3.

A fine incentive for this comes from meditating upon what God has already done in behalf of the human family. Among the best-known verses in the entire Bible are the following: "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." "He that exercises faith in the Son has everlasting life; he that disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him." (John 3:16, 36) God sent forth his Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the costly ransom price for redeeming man from sin and death. (Matt. 20:28) Jesus accomplished this by dying sacrificially on an execution stake. The apostle Peter writes: "He himself bore our sins in his own body upon the stake, in order that we might be done with sins and live to righteous-

ness." (1 Pet. 2:24) This opened up opportunities for people to gain "everlasting life"—but not as a reward *earned* by fine conduct. The Bible describes eternal life as "the gift God gives."—Rom. 6:23.

Nevertheless, if a person has real faith in that wonderful gift, his faith will manifest itself both in his making public declaration to others concerning his hope and in his fine Christian conduct. (Rom. 10:8-10) It cannot be otherwise. This is made clear by Bible writer James, who states: "Of what benefit is it, my brothers, if a certain one says he has faith but he does not have works? . . . faith, if it does not have works, is dead in itself. Indeed, as the body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."—Jas. 2:14-17, 26.

What does James mean by "works"? They are not deeds done to obtain something in the future. Instead, they are deeds performed as an evidence of faith and out of appreciation for something already in possession, namely, a fine standing with God as a result of faith in Jesus Christ.

In view of this, why should persons who love God serve him, doing what is right? The motive should not selfishly be that there is 'something in it for them.' Christians serve God because they recognize the interest that God has shown toward mankind and his generous offer of eternal life as a free gift. This expression of love by God prompts his worshipers to imitate him. It is as stated by the apostle John: "By this the love of God was made manifest in our case, because God sent forth his only-begotten Son into the world that we might gain life through him. The love is in this respect, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent forth his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. Beloved ones, if this is how God loved us, then we are ourselves under obligation to love one another."—1 John 4:9-11.

THROUGHOUT history there have been numerous attempts to influence people toward a more righteous way of life. One such experiment was made by the Pharisees, a group that receives considerable attention in the inspired Christian Greek Scriptures. Their experiment failed.

The term "Pharisee" comes from a root word meaning "separated," "distinguished." The group first appears in historical writings that deal with events of the second century B.C.E. While living in the same locations as other Jews, the Pharisees separated or distinguished themselves by extraordinary efforts to observe the Mosaic law fully.

The Pharisees became known especially for paying tithes and observing rules of ceremonial cleanness. God's law through Moses required the Israelites to give a tenth of the produce from their land, herds and flocks. That tithe went for support of the Levitical priesthood and other necessary things connected with God's worship. (Deut. 14: 22, 23) The Pharisees went to the point of tithing even

Learning from an Experiment That Failed



the tiniest of things, such as pod fruits (beans, peas and other legumes), leaves and herbs. They gave a tenth, not only of produce of their own fields, but also of items acquired through purchase, trade or other business. (Luke 11:42; 18:11, 12) This was done for fear that the items had not been tithed properly by their original owners.

Under the Mosaic law, ritual washings for ceremonial cleansing were necessary on occasion. This was true notably for priests, who had to be physically and ceremonially clean when serving at Jehovah's sanctuary. (Ex. 30:17-21; Lev. 21:1-7; 22:2-8) Before partaking of their portion of sacrificial meals, priests had to wash their hands and feet in water.

Most of the Pharisees were not priests. Nevertheless, they voluntarily obligated themselves to observe priestly laws of ceremonial cleanness even in everyday matters that had no direct connection with worship. They practiced ritual hand washing before and after every meal. If the meal consisted of several courses, the washing was done also between the courses. Gospel writer Mark points out: "The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands up to the elbow, holding fast the tradition of the men of former times, and, when back from market, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves by sprinkling; and there are many other traditions that they have received to hold fast, baptisms of cups

and pitchers and copper vessels.”—Mark 7:3, 4.

While such extensive efforts to observe tithing and ceremonial cleanness did not violate the written law of God, they went beyond what that law demanded. Interestingly, a rabbinical legend represents the congregation of Israel as saying: “Lord of the universe, I have imposed upon myself more restrictions than Thou hast imposed upon me, and I have observed them.”

“A Fence” to Prevent Wrongdoing

Determination to avoid transgressing God’s law, even in minute details, caused the Pharisees to go yet farther. Jewish historian Flavius Josephus writes: “The Pharisees had passed on to the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded in the Laws of Moses.” Those regulations included a vast number of precepts for proper observance of the Sabbath. Concerning such non-Biblical “regulations,” the Jewish code of traditional laws known as The Mishnah states: “The rules about the Sabbath, Festal-offerings, and Sacrilege are as mountains hanging by a hair, for [teaching of] Scripture [thereon] is scanty and the rules many.”

What was the purpose of so many rules of conduct? Some insight on this matter can be gained from a statement uttered by Jewish religious leaders before the Common Era: “Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and *make a fence around the Law.*”^{*} The “fence” means traditions that supposedly would restrain persons from transgressing the written law of God. According to theory, if a person did not cross the fence, he would never be guilty of violating an actual Biblical decree.

^{*} Italics added.

Did that experiment succeed? Did the massive body of oral traditions make better people out of the Israelites and the Pharisees in particular?

Seeking God’s Favor Through Deeds

Excessive attention to minute regulations had a harmful effect. It led to the belief that becoming righteous in God’s eyes was merely a matter of carrying out prescribed religious and charitable deeds. Each good deed was believed to earn “merit” with God, whereas every bad act would incur “debt.” Supposedly, God would one day make a tally of the record of merits and debts to determine whether a person was righteous or wicked.

Showing the extent to which this idea became entrenched, rabbinical writings speak of the “calculating Pharisee, i.e., he performs a good deed and then a bad deed, setting one off against the other.” Also mentioned is “the Pharisee [who constantly exclaims] ‘What is my duty that I may perform it?’” But is that not a virtue? The rabbinical account answers: “Nay, what he says is, ‘What further duty is for me that I may perform it?’” Such individuals in their self-confidence believed that they had done everything required for God’s favor. A wealthy young man displayed that attitude when asking Jesus: “What good must I do in order to get everlasting life?” After Jesus stressed to him the importance of obeying commandments of God’s written law, the man replied: “*I have kept all these; what yet am I lacking?*”—Matt. 19:16-20.

The teaching about earning merit and favor with God by good deeds caused many Pharisees to become self-righteous and condemnatory of others. A parable of Jesus with reference to “some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and who considered the rest as nothing”

states: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and began to pray these things to himself, 'O God, I thank you I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give the tenth of all things I acquire.'" (Luke 18:9-12) An example of the extremes to which such an attitude can lead is evident in this excerpt from ancient Jewish writings:

"R[abbi] Hezekiah said in R[abbi] Jeremiah's name: Thus did R[abbi] Simeon b[en] Yohai say: The world possesses not less than thirty men as righteous as Abraham. If there are thirty, my son and I are two of them; if ten, my son and I are two of them; if five, my son and I are two of them; if two, they are my son and I; if there is but one, it is I."

Since Pharisees considered the common people ritually unclean, they avoided close contact with them. In *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim points out that a Pharisee "undertook not to sell to [a commoner] any fluid or dry substance (nutriment or fruit), not to buy from him any such fluid, not to be a guest with him, nor to entertain him as a guest in his own clothes (on account of their possible impurity)." That is why the Pharisees objected to Jesus' "eating with the sinners and tax collectors." (Mark 2: 16) They believed that one who associated with persons ritually unclean would contract that uncleanness.

Jesus and the Pharisees

By the time the Son of God began his earthly ministry, the Pharisees had been around for about two centuries. That was plenty of time to see whether their experiment at promoting righteousness through good works would succeed. It did not. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared: "If your righteousness does not abound



'If There Is but One Righteous, It Is I'

more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens."—Matt. 5:20.

In his dealings with the Pharisees and comments about them, the Son of God made clear what was wrong with their theory. Note his remarks with regard to their scrupulous efforts to pay tithes: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you give the tenth of the mint and the dill and the cummin, but you have disregarded the weightier matters of the Law, namely, justice and mercy and faithfulness." (Matt. 23:23) Rabbinical writings speak of "light" commandments (which demand little personal sacrifice) and "heavy" commandments (which call for considerable effort). Jesus showed that the "weightier" requirements of God involve displaying genuine concern for one's fellowman, treating him with justice, mercy and faithfulness.

With reference to ritual hand washings and other features of ceremonial clean-

ness, Jesus said: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of plunder and immoderateness. Blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside of it also may become clean." (Matt. 23:25, 26) The Pharisees had gotten misled into thinking that uncleanness was acquired by contact with an *external source* of defilement. Jesus declared that the real source of uncleanness is *internal*. On another occasion he drove that point home, saying:

"Are you not aware that nothing from outside that passes into a man can defile him, since it passes, not into his heart, but into his intestines, and it passes out into the sewer? . . . Further, he said: 'That which issues forth out of a man is what defiles a man; for from inside, out of the heart of men, injurious reasonings issue forth: fornications, thieveries, murders, adulteries, covetings, acts of wickedness, deceit, loose conduct, an envious eye, blasphemy, haughtiness, unreasonableness. All these wicked things issue forth from within and defile a man.'"—Mark 7:18-23.

The real source of uncleanness in God's eyes is man's inherited sinfulness. (Job 14:4; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12) No amount of ritual washings or other pious deeds can cleanse away defilement due to sin. Only repentance and the putting of faith in God's arrangement for canceling sins through Jesus Christ can achieve forgiveness and salvation. (Acts 4:12) That is why Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, prophesied that God was about to "give knowledge of salvation to his people," not by freeing them from an enemy nation but "*by forgiveness of their sins.*"—Luke 1:77.

The Pharisees did not like that message, since they 'trusted in themselves that they were righteous and considered the rest as nothing.' (Luke 18:9, 10) But theirs was merely an external, superficial piety. It

did not root out inward *filthiness* manifested by vices such as "covetings," "an envious eye" and "haughtiness." (Mark 7:22) Jewish writings testify to this. For instance, we read of "the *shikmi* Pharisee," who "carries his religious duties upon his shoulder (*shekem*), i.e. ostentatiously." Also, there is mention of "the *nikpi* Pharisee—he is one who knocks his feet together" because of walking with exaggerated humility. Also, there is "the *kizai* Pharisee" who by purposely bumping against a wall to his injury "makes his blood to flow against walls" in efforts to avoid looking upon a woman. With full justification Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees:

"All the works they do they do to be viewed by men; for they broaden the scripture-containing cases that they wear as safeguards, and enlarge the fringes of their garments. They like the most prominent place at evening meals and the front seats in the synagogues, and the greetings in the marketplaces and to be called Rabbi by men."—Matt. 23:5-7.

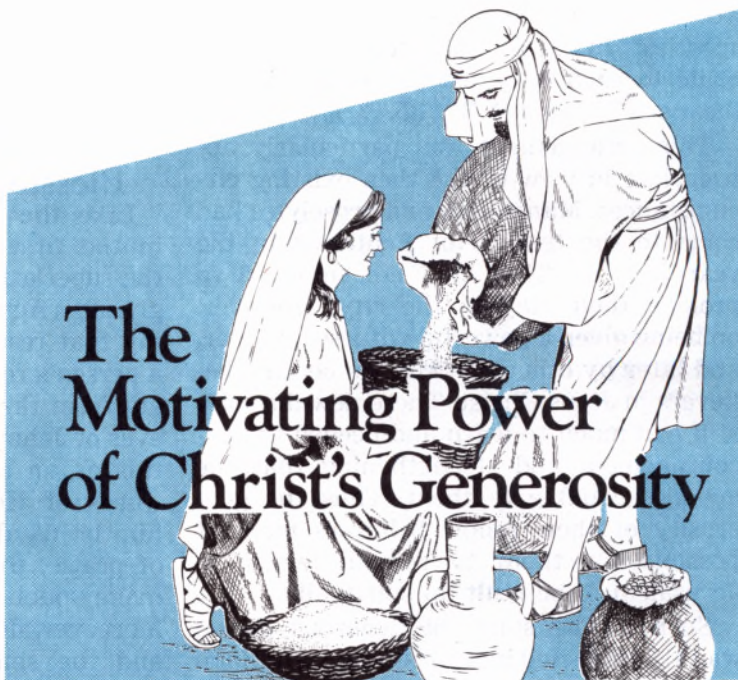
Historical facts are plentiful to show that the Pharisees' experiment to promote righteousness by their way of observing religious precepts and performing charitable deeds was a failure. It neither influenced the majority toward godliness nor helped the Pharisees themselves to become better people. Instead, it influenced them to commit the worst crime in all history, the murder of the Son of God.

However, the experiment was not altogether without usefulness. It set the stage for Jesus before his death to give the powerful message concerning human sinfulness and the need to seek salvation, not through works but as a free gift on the basis of repentance and faith in the sin-atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. (Isa. 53:5, 10-12; Matt. 20:28; Rom. 10:5-9) That is a lesson that must be learned also by all alive today!

OFTEN if people see others respond to the needs of fellow humans, they are encouraged to display like generosity. In the first century, when Christians in Macedonia heard about the zealous efforts of fellow believers in Achaia to aid poor Christians in Jerusalem, they were stirred to share in the relief effort.—2 Cor. 9:1, 2.

However, for Christians, the generosity of their Master, Jesus Christ, has had even greater motivating power. The apostle Paul pointed to this when he wrote to the Corinthians, saying: “You know the undeserved kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich he became poor for your sakes, that you might become rich through his poverty.” (2 Cor. 8:9) Having worked with his Father in the creation of the entire universe, Jesus in his prehuman existence shared the ownership of all things, visible and invisible. He also possessed the glory of an only-begotten son. Among all of God’s angelic sons, he was the preeminent one.—John 1:14; Col. 1:15-18.

The Son willingly gave up all of this to become a



The Motivating Power of Christ’s Generosity

man. (Phil. 2:5-8) His first bed was just a feeding trough. His mother, Mary, and his foster father, Joseph, were poor. Throughout his life on earth he had little materially. He once told a man who was seeking to be a disciple: “Foxes have dens and birds of heaven have roosts, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay down his head.” (Luke 9:57, 58) Nevertheless, Jesus personally took an interest in those who were in dire material need. He and his apostles had a common fund for helping poor Israelites.—Matt. 26:9-11; Mark 14:5-7; John 12:5-8; 13:29.

What Jesus Christ did in coming to earth made it possible for his disciples to come into possession of great riches. They became sons of God, heirs of a heavenly kingdom and recipients of divine blessings during the time of their life on earth and for all eternity upon being raised from the dead. (Rom. 8:17) If it had not been for the generosity of Jesus Christ, we today would still be under the condemnation of sin and death, with no prospect of life.—Rom. 6:23.

Appreciation for Jesus Christ’s generosity promoted a fine spirit of giving among the early Christians. Shortly after the Christian congregation was founded, we are told: “There was not one in need among them; for all those who were possessors of fields or houses would sell them and bring the values of the things sold and they

would deposit them at the feet of the apostles. In turn distribution would be made to each one, just as he would have the need.”—Acts 4:34, 35.

This arrangement was particularly appropriate in view of the then existing circumstances. Many Jews and proselytes had come to the festival of Pentecost in the year 33 C.E. They had not intended to prolong their stay in the city. However, on being given a powerful witness by Peter, and later by others, thousands became believers in Jesus Christ. These new disciples still had much to learn and needed the encouragement and strengthening that the apostles could give them. Thus the generosity of their fellow believers made it possible for them to remain longer in Jerusalem to be built up spiritually.

Such a fine spirit of generous giving was also reflected by Christians at Philippi. When Lydia became a disciple of Jesus Christ, she said to Paul and his companions: “If you men have judged me to be faithful to Jehovah, enter into my house and stay.” Paul’s traveling companion Luke adds: “She just made us come.”—Acts 16:15.

Later, as Paul labored elsewhere, Christians at Philippi sent him contributions to assist him in advancing the “good news.” In his letter to the Philippians, we read: “When I departed from Macedonia, not a congregation took a share with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone; because, even in Thessalonica, you sent something to me both once and a second time for my need.” (Phil. 4:15, 16) When writing these words, Paul was in confinement at Rome. Again the Philippians had come to his aid. Not only had they sent a contribution but they also commissioned a faithful brother, Epaphroditus, to minister to the apostle. This meant that Epaphroditus had to undertake a trip by sea and land that amounted to well over 1,000 miles (1,600

km). So self-sacrificing was he in expending himself in behalf of his beloved brother Paul that he became seriously ill. Happily, though, he recovered.—Phil. 2:25-27; 4:18.

Blessings from Generosity

Like the Philippians, other Christians in the first century came to experience the superlative happiness that comes from giving. (Acts 20:35) They had the inner joy that results from aiding others. Also, a person’s rendering spiritual and material aid from the heart has great value in the eyes of Jehovah God. The Most High views this as an acceptable sacrifice. Note the words of Hebrews 13:15, 16: “Through him let us always offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name. Moreover, do not forget the doing of good and the sharing of things with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

Jesus Christ gave the assurance that generosity would not be overlooked by his heavenly Father. He said: “When making gifts of mercy, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, that your gifts of mercy may be in secret; then your Father who is looking on in secret will repay you.” (Matt. 6:3, 4) The Son of God was rewarded richly for divesting himself of all his riches and becoming poor for the sake of humankind. Accordingly, the apostle Paul wrote: “God exalted him to a superior position and kindly gave him the name that is above every other name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend . . . and every tongue should openly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:9-11) God’s Son did not lose as a result of his superlative generosity. Neither will any of his disciples. Even now, many thousands can testify to the fact that their giving has been greatly blessed.

Christian Generosity Today

Among Jehovah's servants today can be seen a sincere desire to imitate the generosity of Jesus Christ. Many unselfishly devote their time, energies and assets in calling on people at their homes to bring them the comforting "good news" set forth in the Scriptures. Expenses incurred in the maintenance and upkeep of their meeting places are cared for through their voluntary contributions. On a personal and a congregational level, they respond generously in providing aid to persons in material need. (Jas. 1:27) During times of general calamity, observers have been amazed to see how quickly Jehovah's Witnesses organize relief measures.

Often persons ask how they could contribute toward the furtherance of the work that is being done by Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the earth. Besides assisting the local congregation in its efforts to spread the "good news," individuals may make contributions directly to the Watch Tower Society at 124 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York 11201, or to any of its branches.

In a number of countries, at present there is another avenue open for 'honoring Jehovah with a person's valuable things,' and this to the spiritual benefit of the giver. (Prov. 3:9, 10) Throughout the earth, the Watch Tower Society is endeavoring to update its facilities and equipment for printing and publishing the "good news" by means of Bibles and Bible literature, including magazines. Already, there has been some progress in this regard, as our readers have no doubt noted. However, modern printing presses, as, for example, for offset printing, are quite expensive, and the extent to which we are able to improve our facilities will depend upon the funds available during the next year or two.

To this end, in those countries where

new factory projects are under way, a special loan arrangement has been set up. By this means those who are interested may deposit any funds they have available with the Watch Tower Society, so that the Society may put such funds to work in taking care of this expansion program. After several years, the Society will repay the loan in its entirety. In the event such a factory project is under way in your country, you may obtain the complete details from the local branch of the Watch Tower Society. Giving wholehearted support to such building projects has always resulted in great joy to God's people, both in Bible times and today.—Ex. 36:4, 5, 7; 1 Chron. 29:9.

Truly, as in the past, so today the example of Christ's generosity has motivating power. Because hundreds of thousands deeply appreciate what Almighty God has done for them by means of his Son, they continue zealously to spread the "good news" far and wide. Are you personally experiencing the joy that sharing in this vital activity brings? May you find the apostle Paul's words to the Philippians fulfilled in your case: "God will fully supply all your need to the extent of his riches in glory by means of Christ Jesus." —Phil. 4:19.

In Coming Issues

- **Fulfilling My Purpose to Raise a Christian Family**
- **'Use Every Form of Prayer and Supplication'**
- **Abigail—An Outstandingly Discreet Woman**



Baptism - An Expression of Faith



IT WAS the Lord Jesus Christ who set the pattern for us in getting baptized. All who want to be his disciples must likewise be immersed. This is clear from the command that the Son of God gave to his followers after his being raised from the dead. We read: "Make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit."—Matt. 28:19.

² Just what does water baptism signify?

1. According to Matthew 28:19, how does a person show that he has become a disciple of Jesus Christ?

2. (a) What is the significance of water baptism?

(b) For baptism to have real meaning, what is required of the individual?

"With the heart one exercises faith for righteousness, but with the mouth one makes public declaration for salvation."

—Rom. 10:10.

It means that a person is going on public record that he has disowned himself to become fully dedicated to Jehovah God as a disciple of Jesus Christ. To have real value in the eyes of our heavenly Father, this step must be undertaken voluntarily and without reservations. Not just the act of getting baptized, but everything associated with the baptismal arrangement is essential for salvation. The individual must repent of his sins, be converted, or completely turn around from a wrong course, disclaim all ownership of himself in full dedication to Jehovah God, becoming a servant of the Most High and of his Son. (Matt. 16:24; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 1 Thess. 1:9, 10) In harmony with Romans 10:9, the baptismal candidate, before submitting to water immersion, would be expected to make public acknowledgment of his having a proper understanding of these important matters. That passage of Scripture reads: "For if you publicly declare that 'word in your own mouth,' that Jesus is Lord, and exercise faith in your heart that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved."

³ The words of 1 Peter 3:21 confirm that the entire baptismal arrangement, including this public expression of faith,

3. What do the words of 1 Peter 3:21 confirm in connection with baptism?

is essential for salvation. The apostle wrote: "That which corresponds to this is also now saving you, namely, baptism, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the request made to God for a good conscience,) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

⁴ Clearly, the mere act of getting immersed is not what saves. While water can wash away filth or dirt, salvation does not result from a "putting away of the filth of the flesh" by a solemn external washing. Peter showed that salvation is "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." This means that the one getting baptized must have faith that salvation is only possible because the Son of God died a sacrificial death and was then resurrected on the third day. It is also essential that he accept Jesus as his Lord or Master with full authority to judge the living and the dead, for Peter continued: "He is at God's right hand, for he went his way to heaven; and angels and authorities and powers were made subject to him."—1 Pet. 3:22.

⁵ Then, too, it is with baptism that Peter associated "the request made to God for a good conscience." To come into possession of a good conscience, all who get immersed must repent of their sins, turn around from a wrong course and dedicate themselves fully to God through Christ. Baptism is the public symbol of the heartfelt dedication now made by the individual and the expression of faith that he has made with his mouth. After following through on what Jehovah God requires, the baptized disciple comes into possession of a good conscience. As long as he maintains that good conscience he is in a saved condition. Divine condemnatory judgment will not be expressed against him.

⁶ But what did the apostle mean when

4. Of what significance is the expression "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"?

5. How does a person come to have a "good conscience"?

6. (a) To what does the baptismal arrangement correspond? (b) How is faith involved?

he said, "that which corresponds to this"? According to the previous verse, the eight human souls, including Noah, were 'carried safely through the flood waters.' (1 Pet. 3:20) The very waters that destroyed those outside the ark saved or delivered Noah and seven members of his family from a wicked generation. Without faith, however, Noah would not have experienced this grand deliverance. Hebrews 11:7 tells us: "By faith Noah, after being given divine warning of things not yet beheld [that is, there were no visible indications respecting the coming of a global deluge and the destruction of human and animal life], showed godly fear and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; and through this faith he condemned the world, and he became an heir of the righteousness that is according to faith." Just as Noah needed faith to build the ark, all who become baptized disciples of Jesus Christ must have faith to withstand the pressures that will be brought against them by a faithless world and its god.—John 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4.

Why Faith Is Needed

⁷ All who become dedicated, baptized disciples of Jesus Christ can expect difficulties. That is why the Son of God gave the following counsel:

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own soul, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever is not carrying his torture stake and coming after me cannot be my disciple. For example, who of you that wants to build a tower does not first sit down and calculate the expense, to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, he might lay its foundation but not be able to finish it, and all the onlookers might start to ridicule him, saying, 'This man started to build but was not able to finish.' Or what king, marching to meet another king in war

7. At Luke 14:26-33, what counsel did Jesus Christ give, and why?

does not first sit down and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand troops to cope with the one that comes against him with twenty thousand? If, in fact, he cannot do so, then while that one is yet far away he sends out a body of ambassadors and sues for peace. Thus, you may be sure, none of you that does not say good-bye to all his belongings can be my disciple."—Luke 14:26-33.

In harmony with these words, all who get baptized need to give sober consideration beforehand to what is involved.

⁸ Of course, Jesus was not saying that his disciples were to loathe their relatives. Why, in the Sermon on the Mount, he admonished that we 'love even our enemies and pray for those persecuting us.' (Matt. 5:44) In actuality, then, we should be showing greater love for our unbelieving relatives, being eager and willing to do whatever is possible in helping them to gain everlasting life. (Compare Romans 9:1-3.) However, a person who becomes a baptized disciple must "hate" them in the sense of loving them less than he does Jesus Christ. Why is this essential? His relatives may not be pleased with his course. They may indicate to him that if he does get baptized, they will disown him. So it does take faith to believe that his making a dedication of himself to Jehovah and getting baptized will not result in loss but in gain.

⁹ How does a person gain by being a dedicated, baptized disciple of Jesus Christ? There is the satisfaction of knowing that we are doing what is approved by Jehovah God and his Son. Having their favor is worth more than anything else. Neither our friends nor our relatives can give us unfailing help, flawless guidance and everlasting life. But Jehovah God makes these things available to us through his Son. We also gain brothers, sisters,

mothers and children in a spiritual sense. Jesus Christ gave this assurance: "Truly I say to you men, No one has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the good news who will not get a hundredfold now in this period of time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, with persecutions, and in the coming system of things everlasting life." (Mark 10:29, 30) Compared with what we gain, what we may lose in the eyes of worldlings is mere refuse.—Phil. 3:8.

¹⁰ Why did the Son of God also point out that we must love him more than our own souls? This is because of what we must expect from unbelievers. Second Timothy 3:12 says: "All those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted." If we loved ourselves more than we did God's Son, we would not be willing to suffer verbal and physical abuse or, if necessary, to die for being his disciples. It certainly takes faith to go ahead with the step of baptism, recognizing that it could at some future time cost us our very lives. This faith includes unshakable confidence in the resurrection hope. (Acts 24:15) Yes, humans may kill us, but they cannot take away our right to be living souls. Only Jehovah God can do that, everlastingly destroying our title to life. For this reason, Jesus gave the following encouragement: "Do not become fearful of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; but rather be in fear of him that can *destroy* both soul and body in Gehenna."—Matt. 10:28.

¹¹ When we do not hold our lives too dear, we can also stand firm in the face of economic hardships. In modern times,

8. What is to be our attitude toward unbelieving relatives, and why?

9. What gain do dedicated, baptized disciples of Jesus Christ enjoy?

10. In order to be his faithful disciples, why is it essential to love Jesus Christ more than our own souls, and why does this call for faith?

11. Why is faith needed when we face economic hardships because of being disciples of Jesus Christ?

some of God's servants have lost their employment on account of sticking loyally to divine requirements. Especially when faced with problems in making a living, we need faith to believe that our heavenly Father will answer the petition: "Give us today our bread for this day." (Matt. 6:11) All who get baptized need to be confident that Jehovah God can and will sustain his people in time of need.

A Life Course Requiring Faith

¹² While faith is required to become a dedicated, baptized disciple of Jesus Christ, this is just the beginning of a person's life as a Christian. After getting baptized, we will want to continue growing in faith and making advancement in displaying the other fruits of God's spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, mildness and self-control. We will want to be zealous in expressing our faith to others. (Gal. 5:22, 23; 2 Pet. 1:5-8) New disciples need to keep in mind that they are still spiritual babes and should take to heart the apostle Peter's counsel: "As newborn infants, form a longing for the unadulterated milk belonging to the word, that through it you may grow to salvation, provided you have tasted that the Lord is kind."—1 Pet. 2:2, 3.

¹³ To cultivate a real craving for spiritual nourishment, a person must take time to think appreciatively on what Jehovah God and Jesus Christ have done in his behalf and then allow his heart to stir him to feed on the Scriptures regularly. More is involved than simply reading the Bible. One must reflect prayerfully on what is stated therein and make personal application of the inspired counsel. A study of the Scriptures with the help of one or two basic Bible study aids is not enough for a person

to know God's Word fully. The Scriptures present much, much more for our spiritual uplift and strengthening.

¹⁴ Good associations in the Christian congregation are also important for us to make spiritual advancement. The most desirable companions are spiritually minded fellow believers, persons who enjoy discussing God's Word and have an intense interest in helping fellow humans. It was to Timothy, an elder in the Christian congregation, that the apostle Paul wrote: "Now in a large house there are vessels not only of gold and silver but also of wood and earthenware, and some for an honorable purpose but others for a purpose lacking honor. If, therefore, anyone keeps clear of the latter ones, he will be a vessel for an honorable purpose, sanctified, useful to his owner, prepared for every good work. So, flee from the desires incidental to youth, but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, along with those who call upon the Lord out of a clean heart." (2 Tim. 2:20-22) Thus the apostle compared the congregation as it had developed in his day to a house containing vessels of all kinds. If it was necessary for an elder to keep clear of 'dishonorable vessels,' not making them his intimate associates, this is certainly of even greater importance for spiritual babes whose 'perceptive powers are not yet trained through use to distinguish both right and wrong.' (Heb. 5:14) They are far more susceptible to coming under corrupting influences.—Compare 2 Peter 2:18.

¹⁵ This does not mean that we have to look with suspicion at members of the congregation. It is not difficult to identify good companions. Jesus Christ said: 'Out of the heart's abundance the mouth speaks.' (Luke 6:45) Clearly, those whose

12. What advancement should a person strive to make after getting baptized?

13. How might a person develop a craving for spiritual nourishment?

14. With whom should new believers seek to associate, and why?

15. How can good companions be identified?



expressions truly incite us "to love and fine works" are loyal friends. (Heb. 10:24) Association with them can contribute toward a person's growing to Christian maturity.

¹⁶ Since the start of our life course as Christians is an expression of faith, our entire way of life really should be one that reflects unshakable faith in Jehovah God and in his Son. That faith is demonstrated by works that are consistent with it. The disciple James wrote: "Become doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves with false reasoning." (Jas. 1:22) More is required of us than listening respectfully at congregation meetings and making appreciative comments about the things heard. We need to apply

16. How do we demonstrate Christian faith?

all the counsel of God, and this calls for works, activity, a willingness to respond to the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of others. It calls for us to share also in the great preaching work that must be accomplished before the "end" comes. —Jas. 1:27; 1 John 3:16, 17; Matt. 24:14, 21, 22.

¹⁷ In harmony with Jesus' illustration of the sower, we baptized disciples of Jesus Christ would want to prove ourselves to be "fine soil." The "word of the kingdom" that was sown in our hearts should be bringing forth fruitage. Do we seize every opportunity to give a witness, thus bearing fruitage in the form of expressions about God's kingdom? (Matt. 13:3-9, 18—

17. In view of Jesus' illustration about the sower, what questions might we ask ourselves?



23) In harmony with Revelation 22:1, 2, where part of Jehovah's life-giving provision is compared to trees yielding their *fruits* each month, are we making a determined effort not to let a month slip by without our having a share in telling others about our faith? Important, too, is our striving to reach the hearts of unbelieving relatives and acquaintances through witnessing that is backed by a fine example in Christian living. While not compromising on what we know to be right, would it not be good to avoid making big issues unnecessarily over birthdays, holidays and the like with them? Is it not far better to concentrate on sharing with them positive, *upbuilding thoughts* from the Scriptures as *circumstances lend themselves* to do this? Our kindness, genuine concern and

helpfulness can often provide a more powerful witness than many words.—Compare Romans 12:17-21.

¹⁸ Christian discipleship is indeed accompanied by serious responsibilities. But how rewarding our life is! Even now we experience peace of mind and heart in knowing that we have the approval of our heavenly Father and his Son. Our life is purposely directed in efforts to promote the eternal welfare of our fellow humans. With confidence, we look forward to the 'life to come,' an eternity of happy living in God's righteous new order. (1 Tim. 4:8) Our faith, which is so essential in becoming a dedicated, baptized disciple of Jesus Christ, can lead to our gaining that grand future.

18. Why is Christian discipleship rewarding?

Advancing + After + Obtaining “a Faith”

A VALUABLE treasure that remains buried in the ground serves no useful purpose. It differs little from a rock hidden by a layer of soil. But the treasure does have the potential for benefiting its possessor and even others. It could be used to help the sick and the needy, or it might be wisely invested. If a large sum of money is involved, it could create job openings and thus enable many persons to make a living. Truly, when a treasure is used in a productive way, it becomes more valuable.

² The spiritual treasure in the possession of God's servants has even greater potential for the accomplishment of good. In his second letter to Christians, the apostle Peter speaks of this precious treasure, beginning with these words: “Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith, held in equal privilege with ours, by the righteousness of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Pet. 1:1) “Faith,” that is, the faith essential for everlasting life, was the

“Supply to your faith virtue, to your virtue knowledge, to your knowledge self-control, to your self-control endurance, to your endurance godly devotion, to your godly devotion brotherly affection, to your brotherly affection love.”—2 Pet. 1:5-7.

priceless treasure that had come to belong to those whom the apostle addressed.

Faith—A Treasure

³ This faith was not the exclusive possession of Peter and the other apostles or of all who, like him, were Christianized Jews. It was shared in common with the entire body of believers, both Jews and non-Jews. The Most High God had made it possible for them to obtain this faith. By means of the message of the “good news” that was preached, he drew persons to himself through his Son. (John 6:44) He opened up the hearts of individuals, making them responsive to his “word,” or message.—Acts 16:14; Rom. 10:8.

⁴ As the apostle Peter noted, this faith was obtained “by the righteousness of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ.” The Almighty made it possible for men of all tribes, peoples, nations and races to receive this priceless possession. In thus showing no preference for any individuals when forgiving sins on the basis of his Son's

1. What really makes a treasure valuable, and how might this be illustrated?

2. According to 2 Peter 1:1, what precious possession have Christians obtained?

3. Why could Peter describe the faith of those to whom he wrote as being “held in equal privilege with ours”?

4. How is faith obtained “by the righteousness of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ”?

sacrifice and accepting repentant ones as his people, Jehovah God displayed his righteousness, his fairness, his impartiality. This is the very point that Peter made at the time he brought the “good news” to the Italian centurion Cornelius and his relatives and close friends. “For a certainty,” the apostle said, “I perceive that God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:34, 35) Our Savior Jesus Christ reflects that same impartial spirit. He surrendered his life for persons everywhere. —1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

Advancing in Knowledge of God and Christ

⁵ After having “obtained a faith,” disciples of Jesus Christ come under personal responsibility to conform ever closer to God’s will for them. Accurate knowledge will help us to do this. The apostle Peter stressed the importance of accurate, full or complete knowledge, saying: “May undeserved kindness and peace be increased to you by an accurate knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”—2 Pet. 1:2.

⁶ Our having an “accurate knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” means knowing them as persons—their qualities, ways and dealings—and imitating their flawless example. (Compare Jeremiah 22:15, 16; Matthew 7:21-23; 1 John 2:3-6; 3:5, 6.) By our advancement in learning and in applying the principles of God’s Word, we come to know the Father and his Son better and better. This results in our enjoying undeserved kindness and peace to an ever greater degree.

⁷ It is only by doing what is pleasing to

5. After obtaining a faith, what responsibility do we have, and what is essential in fulfilling it?

6. (a) What is meant by having an “accurate knowledge of God and of Jesus”? (b) How do we come to have such knowledge?

7. How is “undeserved kindness” increased “by an accurate knowledge of God and of Jesus”?



“Supply to your faith virtue, to your virtue knowledge”

Jehovah God and Jesus Christ that we continue to receive divine help and guidance. Because we are sinful humans, we have no merit on our own. So whatever our Maker does for us is an expression of his undeserved kindness. Nevertheless, our being recipients of divine undeserved kindness depends on our striving to be like our heavenly Father and his Son. When this is true in our case, we can approach Jehovah God with full confidence that he will answer our petitions. The Christian apostle John stated:

“Whatever we ask we receive from him, because we are observing his commandments and are doing the things that are pleasing in his eyes. Indeed, this is his commandment, that we have faith in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and be loving one another, just as he gave us commandment. Moreover, he who observes his commandments remains in union with him, and he in union with such one; and by this we gain the knowledge that he is remaining in union with us, owing to the spirit which he gave us.”—1 John 3:22-24.

⁸ When we possess, not just knowledge, but full, rounded-out knowledge of our heavenly Father and his Son, we see clearly what is pleasing in their sight. We remain in union and at peace with them, enjoying an intimacy with them as their friends. Consequently, our progress in coming to know Jehovah God and his Son more fully leads to the enjoyment of increased peace. This is so because of our avoiding to an ever greater degree attitudes, speech and action that are contrary to the example of our God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹ On the other hand, by sinning, we would be disrupting our peace with the Most High, as we would be acting against his will. Only God's forgiveness, based on our sincere repentance and faith in the atoning benefits of Christ's sacrifice, can bring a restoration of peace.—1 John 2: 1, 2.

Let "Divine Power" Move You to Action

¹⁰ Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, of course, want us to enjoy undeserved kindness and peace in increased measure. Therefore, we should cooperate with them by making a determined effort to come to know them better. One way in which we can do this is by reflecting appreciatively on what Jehovah God, by means of his Son, has done in our behalf. The apostle Peter wrote: "His divine power has given us freely all the things that concern life and godly devotion, through the accurate knowledge of the one who called us through glory and virtue. Through these things he has freely given us the precious and very grand promises, that through these you may become sharers in divine nature, having escaped from the corrup-

8. How is "peace" increased "by an accurate knowledge of God and of Jesus"?

9. What effect does sinning have on our peace with God?

10. What can help us to enjoy undeserved kindness and peace in increased measure?

tion that is in the world through lust."
—2 Pet. 1:3, 4.

¹¹ Note that Peter associated "divine power" with "accurate knowledge." This is most appropriate, for God's word, or message, regarding his Son, the "good news," can have a powerful impact on the lives of people. This is well illustrated in what the apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "The good news we preach did not turn up among you with speech alone but also with power." (1 Thess. 1:5) The preaching of the "good news" at Thessalonica brought results. It was not a matter of persons' hearing words and not acting on them, that is, it was not a matter of "speech alone." The Thessalonians who embraced Christianity were moved to act, indicating that the "good news" had exerted power. These Christians became an example to other believers in faithfully enduring persecution for the sake of righteousness and in continuing to bear witness to everyone about the "good news."

¹² Because Thessalonica was a seaport, believers there were brought in touch with seamen, merchants and others from distant places. The Thessalonian Christians made good use of their opportunities to share the "good news" with others. As a result, their faith came to be talked about far and wide. When Paul and his companions declared and taught the truth publicly in other cities, they were told about the Christians in Thessalonica. Commenting on this, the apostle wrote:

"From Thessalonica the word of the Lord rang out; and not in Macedonia and Achaia alone, but everywhere your faith in God has reached men's ears. No words of ours are needed, for they themselves spread the news of our visit to you and its effect: how you turned from idols, to be servants of the living and true God, and to wait expectantly for the appearance from heaven of his Son Jesus,

11, 12. (a) Why is "divine power" associated with "accurate knowledge"? (b) How is this illustrated in the case of Christians at Thessalonica?

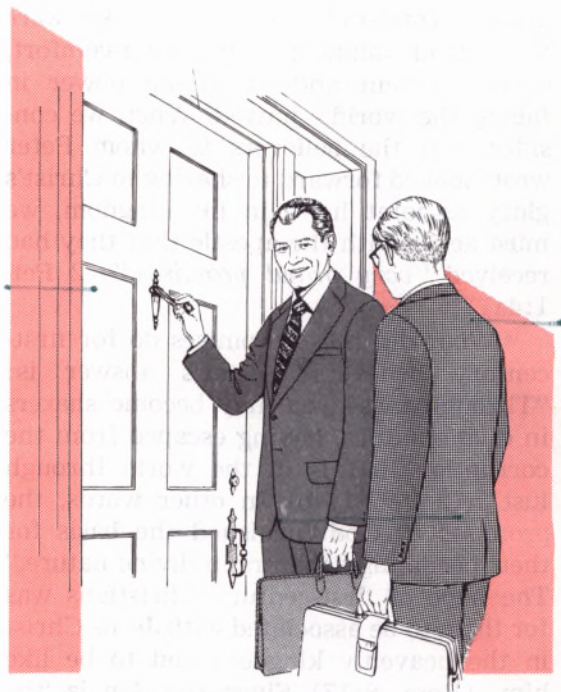
whom he raised from the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the terrors of judgment to come."—1 Thess. 1:8-10, "The New English Bible."

¹³ Similarly, we believers today have felt the "divine power" at work in us because of our accepting the "good news," God's word, or message. That "good news" has caused us to make changes in our lives, to conform ourselves to the divine will. We have also been moved to declare the "good news" to others. The divine power that is exerted through "accurate knowledge" contained in the "good news" has given us everything that we need for "life and godly devotion." Thus, on account of the divine power, we can live an upright life, with eternity in view. And we should continue letting the divine power help us to become more Christlike in conduct and activity.

¹⁴ The manner in which Jehovah God calls or draws individuals to himself should serve as a strong encouragement to make progress in Christian living. The apostle Peter referred to "the accurate knowledge of the one who called us through glory and virtue." Jehovah God does the 'calling' or 'drawing' through his Son. It is particularly in Jesus Christ that "glory and virtue" are manifest to humans. The Christian apostle John wrote respecting the Son: "The Word became flesh and resided among us, and we had a view of his glory, a glory such as belongs to an only-begotten son from a father; and he was full of undeserved kindness and truth." (John 1: 14) In the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, John and the other apostles saw a glory, a splendor, a magnificence that could only be displayed by someone who perfectly reflected the image of the heavenly Father. Moreover, the apostle John, along with

13. How have we personally experienced the effect of "divine power" in us, and so what should we continue to do?

14. How does Jehovah God do the calling "through glory and virtue"?



'Supply to your endurance godly devotion'

James and Peter, witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. At that time "his face shone as the sun, and his outer garments became brilliant as the light." (Matt. 17:2) Just as glory is linked with the Son of God, so is virtue. Jesus Christ was outstandingly virtuous, a man of moral excellence. Even the traitorous Judas Iscariot acknowledged: "I sinned when I betrayed righteous blood." (Matt. 27:4) So it has been through the "glory and virtue" reflected in the Son that Jehovah has done the calling.

God's Promises—An Incentive for Making Advancement

¹⁵ God's marvelous arrangement for salvation as revealed in the "good news" gave first-century Christians "precious and very

15. Why are the God-given promises "precious and very grand"?

grand promises." These promises were precious or valuable in providing comfort, encouragement and sustaining power in facing the world's hatred. When we consider that the believers to whom Peter wrote looked forward to sharing in Christ's glory as joint heirs in his kingdom, we must agree with the apostle that they had received "*very grand promises.*"—2 Pet. 1:4a.

¹⁶ What did these promises do for first-century believers? Peter's answer is: "Through these you may become sharers in divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Pet. 1:4b) In other words, the promises of God furnished the basis for their becoming "sharers in divine nature." The hope of first-century Christians was for them to be associated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly kingdom and to be like him. (Rom. 8:17) Since the Son is 'the reflection of God's glory and the exact representation of his very being,' all who come to be like Jesus Christ are also like the Father. (Heb. 1:3) The apostle John wrote: "Beloved ones, now we are children of God, but as yet it has not been made manifest what we shall be. We do know that whenever he is made manifest we shall be like him, because we shall see him just as he is. And everyone who has this hope set upon him purifies himself just as that one is pure."—1 John 3:2, 3.

¹⁷ Thus, by sharing in the glory of the Son of God, spirit-begotten Christians become partakers of "divine nature." This grand hope based on God's sure promises provided strong incentive for them to do their utmost to purify themselves of all worldly defilement. The apostle Peter made the same point about being clean, for he showed that "sharers in divine nature" had "escaped from the corruption that is in the world through lust." "Lust," a pas-

sion for that to which a person is not entitled, is the source of the world's corruption or defilement. It is from this defilement that believers had escaped when they availed themselves of God's means of salvation and then applied themselves in conforming to the divine standard of holiness, cleanness or purity. As was true of first-century believers, the promises contained in the Scriptures can move us to continue purifying ourselves.

More than Faith Is Needed

¹⁸ All true servants of God today have benefited from the divine power exerted through the "good news" and from the wonderful promises associated with it. That is why we have good reason to prove ourselves to be persons who reflect a Christian personality and are active in helping others, especially spiritually. The apostle Peter urged: "Yes, for this very reason, by your contributing in response all earnest effort, supply to your faith virtue, to your virtue knowledge, to your knowledge self-control, to your self-control endurance, to your endurance godly devotion, to your godly devotion brotherly affection, to your brotherly affection love."—2 Pet. 1:5-7.

¹⁹ We are not to be satisfied with having mere faith or belief. Rather, in response to or as a consequence of our having received the capacity for faith from our heavenly Father, we should want to develop other fine qualities that give evidence of our having faith. The apostle Peter urged that we 'contribute all earnest effort,' exert ourselves diligently with all the strength that we have, to become more like the Son of God.

²⁰ Our adding virtue to faith would mean that we would strive to be persons of moral excellence in imitation of our Exemplar, Christ. Such virtue, or moral ex-

16, 17. What effect do the divine promises have on believers?

18, 19. After obtaining a faith, what should we be doing in harmony with 2 Peter 1:5-7, and why?

20. What is meant by adding virtue to our faith?

cellence, is a positive quality. Its possessor not only refrains from doing injury to his fellowman but also seeks to do good, responding to the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of others. Virtue is really active goodness. Thus the life of a virtuous person is not merely distinguished by negative things, as by his shunning sexual immorality, uncleanness, dishonesty and other practices that are divinely disapproved. In the first century C.E., the Pharisees prided themselves in not being "as the rest of men, extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers." (Luke 18:11) But they were not virtuous, for they despised the common people and showed no mercy, pity or compassion.—Mark 3:1-6; John 7:47-49.

²¹ Apart from knowledge, virtue as exemplified in Jesus Christ cannot exist. Knowledge is needed to distinguish right from wrong. (Heb. 5:14) It is also essential for evaluating just how *positive good* is to be expressed in a given situation. (Phil. 1:9, 10) Unlike credulity, solidly based faith is not shaken by knowledge. Hence, our being diligent in applying the Holy Scriptures will strengthen our faith as we continue to grow in knowledge of Jehovah God and his Son.

²² This knowledge serves to restrain us from giving in to sinful passions, becoming immoderate and unbridled in conduct or in other ways becoming guilty of a serious failure to reflect the divine image in attitude, word and action. Yes, knowledge contributes to our having self-control, the capacity to control or bridle one's person, action or speech. By continuing to exercise self-control, we will have the essential quality of endurance. When subjected to pressures from the world in the form of daily cares, persecution or the allurements of pleasures or material possessions, we will not indulge our desires for



'Supply to your godly devotion brotherly affection'

a change from our position as slaves of God and Christ but will exercise self-control.

²³ The inner strength that endurance produces can also help us to resist giving in to sinful passions, compromising when suffering persecution, or becoming preoccupied with daily cares, pleasures or material possessions. This endurance stems from relying on the Most High for strength and guidance. (Compare Philippians 4:12, 13; James 1:2-8.) Godly devotion, or reverentialness, should be added to endurance. Such reverentialness distinguishes the entire life course of a genuine Christian. It manifests itself in a wholesome regard for the Creator and due respect and concern for humans made in God's image.—1 Tim. 5:4.

²⁴ Apart from brotherly affection, there can be no godliness, or reverentialness. The apostle John stated: "If anyone makes

21. Why is it important to grow in knowledge?

22. (a) Why is knowledge essential in cultivating self-control? (b) What is the relationship between self-control and endurance?

23. (a) How does endurance come about? (b) What is godly devotion, and how does it manifest itself?

24. Why can there be no reverentialness apart from brotherly affection?

the statement: 'I love God,' and yet is hating his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot be loving God, whom he has not seen." (1 John 4:20) Consequently, we need to exert ourselves in developing deep affection for fellow believers, thus 'supplying brotherly affection to our godly devotion.'

²⁵ Love is the outstanding quality that should be especially evident in our lives. This kind of love is not to be limited to our Christian brothers. While we have affection for our spiritual brothers, love is to be shown to all mankind. This love is not dependent on the moral standing of the individual. Like God's love for mankind, it is shown even toward enemies. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ said:

"You heard that it was said, 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' However, I say to you: Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you; that you may prove yourselves sons of your Father who is in the heavens, since he makes his sun rise upon wicked people and good and makes it rain upon righteous people and unrighteous. For if you love those loving you, what reward do you have? Are not also the tax collectors doing the same thing? And if you greet your brothers only, what extraordinary thing are you doing? Are not also the people of the nations doing the same thing? You must accordingly be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."—Matt. 5:43-48.

²⁶ What results when virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godly devotion, brotherly affection and love are added to faith? The apostle Peter answers: "If these things exist in you and overflow, they will prevent you from being either inactive or unfruitful regarding the accurate knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."—2 Pet. 1:8.

²⁷ Yes, the result is activity and fruit-

25. To whom should love be shown, and why?

26, 27. What will happen when we supply to our faith the essentials that Peter enumerated?

fulness. When we supply to our faith the essentials that the apostle enumerated and make them a part of us to the point of overflowing, we will not be standing still, inactive, dead spiritually. Our spiritual advancement will continue. We will be manifesting the fruitage of a Christlike personality and making expressions about the "good news" to others. With godly qualities lodging in our hearts, being truly a part of us, we will be motivated to think, speak and act in a divinely approved way.—Compare Luke 6:43-45.

The Importance of Making Progress

²⁸ If a person were to fail in making advancement as a Christian, he would come into a position of grave spiritual danger. The apostle Peter said of such a one: "If these things [previously named] are not present in anyone, he is blind, shutting his eyes to the light, and has become forgetful of his cleansing from his sins of long ago."—2 Pet. 1:9.

²⁹ The individual who fails to make spiritual progress, whose profession of faith lacks the fruitage of a Christlike personality, is spiritually blind. He does not see what it means to be a Christian. This blindness is deliberate, for his acceptance of the "good news" required that he continue to work in becoming more like his Master, Christ.

³⁰ Such a person would also have lost sight of the fact that he was cleansed from his sins on the basis of Jesus' shed blood. In harmony with the cleansing received at the time of his becoming a baptized Christian, he should have continued working hard in remaining clean, in fact, in conforming to a greater degree to the

28. What is the situation of a professed Christian who fails to make spiritual progress?

29. Why is a person who lacks the fruitage of a Christlike personality blind by choice?

30. What should 'a cleansing from sin' move a Christian to do?

divine standard of holiness. His failure in this respect could easily lead to apostasy, to his rejecting completely the sacrifice of the Son of God.

³¹ Because there exists some spiritual danger from failing to make progress as Christians, we do well to exert ourselves in making improvement in reflecting the divine image. Commenting on this, Peter said: "For this reason, brothers, all the more do your utmost to make the calling and choosing of you sure for yourselves; for if you keep on doing these things you will by no means ever fail. In fact, thus there will be richly supplied to you the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."—2 Pet. 1:10, 11.

³² Surely, all who have been 'called and chosen' by God to be his people should make a determined effort to remain such. Peter's inspired writings showed that, by continuing to add to their faith Christlike qualities, they would not fail in reaching the goal of their faith—salvation. Nothing would debar them from gaining entrance into the "everlasting kingdom" of Jesus Christ. Entrance into the kingdom would be "richly supplied."

³³ It would be a glorious entrance, with their Christlike qualities reflecting radiantly. However, the expression "richly supplied" may also point to a superlative degree of blessedness to be enjoyed by those who have truly exerted themselves in the race for life.—Phil. 3:14.

³⁴ The difference between life and life accompanied by special blessings might be illustrated by two ship captains. One may



'If these things exist in you, they will prevent you from being inactive or unfruitful'

skillfully maneuver the ship through a storm, bringing the vessel safely to shore. But the other captain may experience shipwreck during the same storm, saving only his life. While both captains escaped with their lives, the one whose ship remained intact would certainly enjoy greater happiness and honor.—Compare 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

³⁵ While life is a free gift from God, we are called upon to show our sincere desire for that gift by doing our utmost to please our heavenly Father. It is a gift, for we sinful humans could never attain it on our own merit. But we could fail to receive it if our life course gave no evidence of our really appreciating and wanting this gift. May we, therefore, be diligent in being truly Christlike in attitude, speech

31, 32. In view of the grave danger resulting from a failure to advance as Christians, what counsel of Peter should be heeded?

33. What may be involved in a Christian's having his entrance into the kingdom "richly supplied"?

34. How might a superlative degree of blessedness be illustrated?

35. Even though everlasting life is a gift from God, why is personal effort required in gaining it?

and action. Then, with divine help, we can be certain of success, not losing out on life nor on any additional blessings that our heavenly Father may bestow on us for being fruitful.

³⁶ Therefore, we do well to remind ourselves of the importance of faithfulness. This is what the apostle Peter wanted the readers of his second letter to do. He wrote:

"For this reason I shall be disposed always to remind you of these things, although you know them and are firmly set in the truth that is present in you. But I consider it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to rouse you up by way of reminding you, knowing as I do that the putting off of my tabernacle is soon to be, just as also our Lord Jesus Christ signified to me. So I will do my utmost also at every time that, after my departure, you may be able to make mention of these things for yourselves." (2 Pet. 1:12-15)

Like those to whom Peter directed his words in the first century, we may know the importance of preaching the "good news" and making improvement in displaying a Christlike personality. We may be firmly established in Christian truth to

36. As shown by Peter, what factors do not rule out our need for reminders?

the extent that we have come to know it. Yet, especially when faced with trials or perhaps the clever arguments of false teachers, we do need the reminders that Peter set forth.

³⁷ It is good for us to keep in mind why he wrote these reminders. The apostle knew that he was going to die soon, for Jesus Christ had personally told him that he would experience a martyr's death. (John 21:18, 19) This prospect did not cast a pall of gloom on Peter. But he determined to use the time remaining for strengthening his brothers, encouraging them to be active and fruitful. Thus, even after his departure in death, they could draw encouragement from his reminders and use them in building one another up.

³⁸ May we likewise find encouragement in Peter's letters and strengthen others by calling attention to his reminders. Then, as we look with confidence to the fulfillment of Jehovah's marvelous promises, may we continue to proclaim the "good news" and make advancement in being more like our heavenly Father and his Son.

37. How was Peter a fine example in giving reminders?

38. What should we be doing with the reminders set forth in Peter's letters?

'Do Not Judge Others'

Imperfect humans are prone to compare themselves with others and to draw conclusions about the worth of their fellowmen. Often these conclusions are based on personal preference and taste or are influenced by differing backgrounds or training.

True Christians, however, must guard against coming to view others in the wrong light. The Christian apostle Paul, when discussing the eating of food, set forth a principle that can help us to maintain balance in this important area of life. He wrote: "Let the one eating not look down on the one not eating, and let the one not eating not judge the one eating, for God has welcomed that one."—Rom. 14:3.

Jehovah God welcomes all who seek to do his will. Why, then, should any human look

down upon or judge others on the basis of what they do in a personal way? In the case under consideration, the one eating meat in good conscience may have tended to look down upon the one not eating, considering him to be overly scrupulous, an extremist. On the other hand, the one not eating might wrongly judge the one eating meat as a violator of law, a sinner. The Christian who is balanced in such areas of life—whether it pertains to food and drink, entertainment, clothing or the like—realizes that he is a mere servant or slave of God and as such has no right to evaluate others on the basis of his private opinions. So when it comes to things involving personal choice or preference, he does not look down on fellow believers nor does he judge them as wrongdoers.

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

- Under the terms of "the Vatican's 1933 concordat with Hitler," according to the "National Catholic Reporter," the prominent Roman Catholic theologian Hans Küng was barred from teaching theology at the Federal Republic of Germany's Tübingen University. Among the reasons for

Church Titans Grapple

Pope John Paul II's action against Küng were writings that appear to question the very foundations of Catholic doctrine—the Trinity and papal infallibility. Küng has maintained that his ideas are not heresy, but, rather, "if the Catholic Church is not grounded in scripture, it is not the Church of Jesus."

To back his Scriptural position on the matter of papal infallibility, in an interview with Stuttgart's "Sonntag Aktuell," Küng declared that "there is a clear precedence in Scripture and in Catholic tradition for confronting the pope. St. Paul opposed St. Peter in the presence of the whole community (Galatians 2: 11-14)." In the text cited by Küng, the apostle Paul says of Peter: "I opposed him to his face, since he was manifestly in the wrong."—Catholic "Jerusalem Bible."

- A Brazilian chain store recently placed an advertisement in Rio de Janeiro's main newspaper. It contained a picture of numerous plastic war toys with a white flag waving over them. "The War Is Over!" was its caption. The store was letting it be known

"The War Is Over"

that it would no longer sell toys that suggest violence. "Whoever wants to do so, let him follow our example," said the director.

The reaction of one psychologist reflects the sad state of modern war-oriented society: "The child, while handling these toys, develops in his fantasy the aggressiveness needed in his socialization process. If we take away the toy arms, the violent films and the battles of the child's universe, we are doing nothing more than alienating him from the reality of hunger, social injustice and of economic insecurity, the chief causes of violence." But is not such "aggressiveness" in youth's "socialization process" itself a chief cause of violence? A Brazilian educational director argued:

"In handling arms, a child becomes accustomed to the idea of killing, becoming indifferent to the sufferings of others."

On the other hand, thousands of children and adults in many nations are a living fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: "Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore." Rather than taking up toy or real arms, Jehovah's Witnesses world wide cultivate a love that surmounts militaristic nationalism.—Isa. 2:4; John 13:35.

- Ezra Taft Benson, former U.S. secretary of agriculture, recently spoke to the International Freedoms Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He lectured about what he considers to be the failure of "Western civilization" to stem the tide of Communist

"Only Hope of Mankind"?

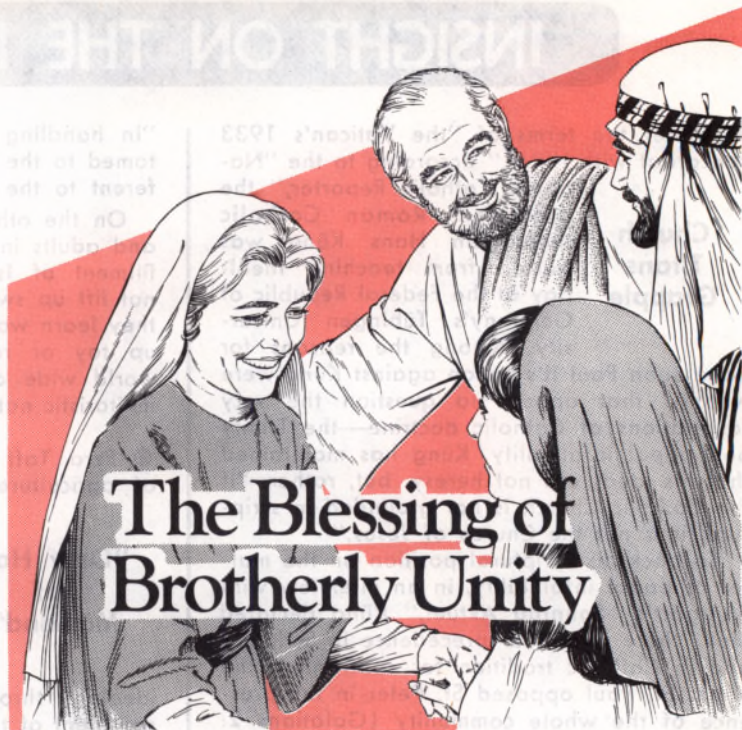
ideology throughout the world. Speaking as president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Benson declared: "Today we are in a worldwide battle for the bodies and souls of men." This churchman apparently believes that the most important battle for "the bodies and souls of men" is between human political blocs.

"I fully believe that we can turn things around," he said, "if enough men and women in the Free World will have the determination, the morality, and the faith to do so." The Mormon leader climaxed his speech with the assertion: "Here in the West we hold in our hands the only hope of mankind; and it will be to our shame and disgrace before God and man if we allow that hope to wither and die."

Will it? Does the West truly hold "the only hope of mankind"? The Bible shows that there is another available choice—one that a Christian should espouse. Since the whole world, with its governments of both East and West, is "lying in the power of the wicked one," it is the "kingdom of God" alone that true followers of Christ hope in and declare to others. They do not desperately try to shore up sick governmental systems already condemned to destruction by God.—1 John 5:19; Luke 4:43; Matt. 24:14; Dan. 2:44.

UNITY is certainly a blessing. Through the united effort of many, much more can be accomplished than by just one person alone. When people are getting along well with one another, they find great joy in working together.

David wrote under inspiration about the blessing of brotherly unity. Since all the Israelites were descendants of the one man Jacob, David's words at Psalm 133 really applied to the whole nation. Today devoted Christians are members of a worldwide brotherhood and so should strive to maintain the delightful unity described by the psalmist. "Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the good oil upon the head, that is running down upon the beard, Aaron's beard, that is running down to the collar of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon that is descending upon the mountains of Zion. For there Jehovah commanded the blessing to be, even life to time indefinite."—Ps. 133: 1-3.



When all the tribes of Israel would come to Jerusalem for the three annual festivals, they had the opportunity to dwell together in unity. Though coming from various tribes, they were but one family of brothers. Their being together had a pleasing and wholesome influence. The effect of this dwelling together in unity was like good anointing oil—a refreshing substance with a lingering and pleasing aroma. The oil poured upon Aaron's head flowed down his long beard and ran down to the collar of his garment. Likewise, the wholesome effect of the Israelites' being together had a permeating influence, working its way through the assembled people. This resulted in clearing up misunderstandings and in removing prejudices. It was as if the good oil had pervaded everything. The credit for this, of course, would go to Jehovah God from whom all blessings flow.

Similarly, when such brotherly unity as the psalmist describes exists among Christians, there is no quarreling, faultfinding or constant complaining. But their associating together is good, wholesome and beneficial. United in the bond of love, they are actively concerned about one another and enjoy being together. Their unity brings them delight or pleasure because of the mu-

tual encouragement and upbuilding that results. Any misunderstandings or difficulties can be removed as all unitedly approach Jehovah God in humility, desiring his guidance, help and forgiveness for their transgressions.

Israel's dwelling together in unity was also like the dew of Mount Hermon. That mountain, having an elevation of over 9,000 feet (2,700 m) above sea level, is snowcapped nearly the year around. Hermon's snowy top serves to condense the night vapors and in this way produces the abundant dew that preserves vegetation during the long dry season. Cold air currents from the Hermon range can also carry the vapors as far south as Mount Zion, there to condense as dew. So the psalmist correctly spoke of the 'dew of Hermon as descending upon Mount Zion.' The picture is of a descending influence, a refreshing influence, that contributes toward the preservation of vegetation.

The unity of Christian brothers is just as delightful. It, too, has life-preserving potential. This is so because, when observing the love existing among God's true servants today, many persons begin to

wonder about the source of this unity. Their investigation then gets them started on the way leading to life.

Before the establishment of the Christian congregation, Zion, or Jerusalem, was the center of true worship. So, since this was the place that Jehovah God had chosen, it was there that the Most High commanded the blessing to be. He, the Source of all blessings, resided representatively at the sanctuary in Jerusalem; so blessings could be spoken of as coming from there. In this sense, the whole life of the nation of Israel was linked with Jerusalem, or Zion.

Because true worship is no longer dependent upon any geographical location, the love among God's servants should be in evidence everywhere. (John 4:21, 23, 24) This love is what really distinguishes the genuine disciples of Jesus Christ. The Son of God said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:35) Surely we should work hard to display this love so that our unity with fellow believers can be likened to fragrant anointing oil and the refreshing dew of Mount Hermon.

"Good News" Comes to the Virgin Islands

THE Virgin Islands are a group of numerous islands—some large, others tiny—lying at the northeastern edge of the Caribbean Sea just east of Puerto Rico. The ideal climate and the beautiful scenery—mountains dropping down into the sea, hundreds of picturesque bays and sandy beaches—attract many tourists. By plane and by cruise ship, thousands of

vacationers arrive daily, especially in the winter months. No wonder the Virgin Islands are called the "Vacationland of America."

"Good News" Comes to St. Thomas

How did the "good news" proclaimed by Jehovah's Witnesses reach this area? In January 1947, two missionaries from the first class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead, T. E. Klein and his wife, were assigned to proclaim the "good news" on St. Thomas. They really exerted themselves in preaching on the streets and from house to house. In the Virgin Islands, the individual approaching the door usually calls out, "Inside!" The householder answers, "Outside!" and comes to the door.

Working from early morning till after sundown, going through narrow streets and alleys, and climbing steep hills and stairways, the missionaries brought the Kingdom message to all kinds of people. The response was amazing. In just four months, the Kleins obtained 750 new subscriptions for the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines. As a result, the post office had to initiate rural delivery service. Soon a number of interested persons joined the missionaries in calling on others from house to house.

The "Good News" Reaches Other Islands

Another area of the Virgin Islands was reached when Edmead George returned to his native St. John after studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses in New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.A., and in Puerto Rico. He began to tell his relatives and neighbors about the things that he had learned. His wife, mother and aunt responded favorably. So did his neighbor Amos Sullivan, a wiry seaman. When Edmead and his family found it necessary

to move to St. Thomas for economic reasons, Amos kept right on declaring the "good news." Not only did Amos regularly witness to his neighbors, tramping over the hills and mountains, but he would also row some two miles (3 km) in his small rowboat to reach people living on the other side of the bay. Today there is a congregation in Cruz Bay, where a son of Amos settled after he became a Witness.

In 1948, Jehovah's Witnesses began to declare the "good news" to the inhabitants of St. Croix. When T. E. Klein and his wife arrived there in 1951, they found a small congregation at Christiansted. Toward the end of 1951, Klein made a number of calls on a native islander. Because the calls mostly ended in arguments, Klein finally told the man: "Now if you want to study the Bible, young man, I came to study the Bible and I didn't come to argue with you." This man, Leroy Boyce, then said: "The only way we can have this thing settled is if you meet with my minister and discuss the matter. Then I can decide which of the two I am to believe." What was the result? During the discussion that followed with T. E. Klein, the minister became angry and left in a flurry. Today Leroy Boyce serves as an elder in the congregation at Christiansted.

It was in 1949 that the "good news" reached the inhabitants of the British Virgin Islands. In July of that year the missionary boat, the *Sibia*, pulled into Road Town Harbour in Tortola. The four missionaries immediately began to go from house to house, sharing the "good news" with the people. During the day they would scatter along the coast and over the mountains, preaching to the people and conducting Bible studies. In the evenings the missionaries would bring their gas lantern ashore to provide illumination for a Bible discourse under a convenient tree. Seeing the gas lantern, the islanders would light up their torches, consisting of rags

put in little bottles of kerosene, and would make their way down the mountainside to come to hear the talk. The torches looked like many moving stars on the mountainside. It was a thrilling sight.

The *Sibia* visited Tortola a number of times. Gradually a small group of interested persons formed. The missionaries were able to hold meetings regularly while they were there. When they left, the group continued to meet together. In 1955, Lionel Sullivan, another son of Amos Sullivan, came to Tortola, and the Road Town congregation was formed.

Finding Suitable Kingdom Halls

To accommodate the meetings of the growing congregations, small halls were rented. But these halls soon became too crowded. On St. Thomas it seemed impossible to find a suitable meeting place. Property was very expensive, and places for rent were scarce and also very costly. However, one morning the presiding minister of the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, Walter Georges, was informed that a woman wanted to talk to him. This conversation paved the way for the building of a meeting place, a Kingdom Hall.

The government had made it mandatory for all residents to have flush toilets. This woman was willing to donate land, provided the Witnesses helped her to satisfy the new governmental regulation. In view of the poor condition of her dwelling, the Witnesses offered to build a two-bedroom house for her. The woman was pleased with the arrangement. After the Witnesses obtained the deed to the donated land, they were ready to build a new hall.

But who would build it? The Witnesses there had very little knowledge about construction. A Witness living in Florida, U.S.A., but who was a native of St. Thomas, volunteered to draw up the plans. But

how could they make sure that they were reading the plans correctly? Every evening Walter Georges would call Leroy Boyce, a fellow Witness and a contractor on St. Croix, and read the plans to him. Leroy would tell Walter what to do the next day. In this way, the Witnesses were able to build a Kingdom Hall and a house for the woman who donated the property.

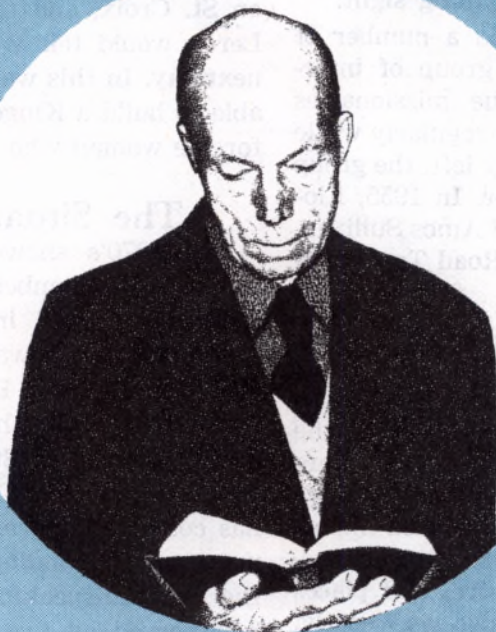
The Situation Today

The 1970's showed a tremendous increase in the number of those proclaiming the "good news" in the Virgin Islands. There are now upward of 570 doing so in the American and British Virgin Islands. District assemblies held each year, usually on St. Thomas or St. Croix, are attended by close to 1,000. Certainly "good news" has come to America's Vacationland, and many are responding favorably, including the Spanish-speaking population that is now served by two congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

- June 1: Baptism—An Expression of Faith.
Page 12. Songs to Be Used: 71, 109.
June 8: Advancing After Obtaining "a Faith,"
¶1-17. Page 18. Songs to Be Used: 38, 18.
June 15: Advancing After Obtaining "a Faith,"
¶18-38. Page 22. Songs to Be Used: 81, 24.

Saved From Suicide



Some witnesses of Jehovah were just concluding their preaching activity in a small German village when an elderly man walked past them with a Bible in hand. They endeavored to share the "good news" with him, but his repeated response was, 'I want to be alone.' As matters turned out, however, he accepted an invitation to have dinner with one of the Witnesses. The next day, another Witness called to discuss the Scriptures with this man at his place of residence, a home for the aged.

During that visit, the gentleman told the caller: "You saved my life. Yesterday I was on my way to my wife's grave. . . while there I was going to take my life. Before I met you yesterday, I had walked aimlessly for four hours in the forest. I looked for comfort in my hymnbook but did not find it there. You came just at the right time and I am so very thankful to God for that."

In time, it was discovered that wicked spirit forces had been driving this elderly man to suicide. But knowledge of the Scriptures enabled him to break free from such influence. (Eph. 6:11-18) Also, much to his comfort, he learned that "there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) Before long, he made a dedication to Jehovah God, symbolizing this by undergoing water baptism at the age of 81. Kind words and deeds, along with "comfort from the Scriptures," had saved this elderly man from suicide and had led to the heartening prospect of eternal life.—Rom. 6:23; 15:4.