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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

WHY DO GOOD PEOPLE SUFFER?

THE WATCHTOWER®
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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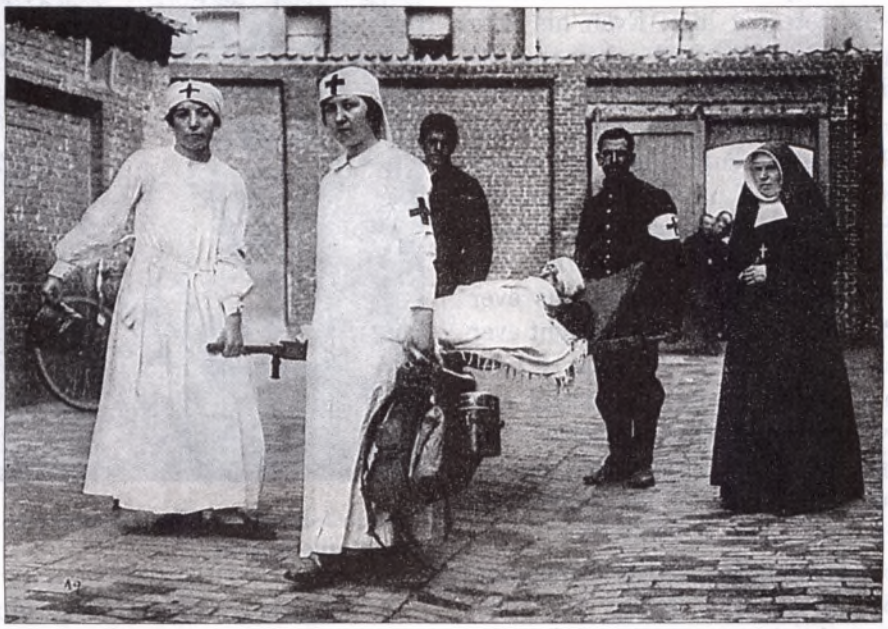
WHY DO GOOD PEOPLE SUFFER?



Collier's Photographic History of the European War

THE year was 1914, and the world had gone to war. Suddenly, typhus broke out in a prisoner-of-war camp in Serbia. But that was just the beginning. The dreaded disease spread to civilians and caused the death of 150,000 in only six months. Amid wartime conditions and the revolution that followed in Russia, three million died of typhus. You may well conclude that many good people and their bereaved family members were among the victims.

This is just one example of human tragedy. You yourself may have experienced the suffering that results when loved ones fall victim to diseases, accidents, and calamities of one sort or another. Likely, you are distressed when an upright individual is wracked with the pain of an incurable disease. You are probably saddened greatly when a good person—perhaps a hardworking family man—is killed in an accident. The grief of the bereaved may make your heart ache for them.

Many feel that a person who does good should be rewarded with freedom from suffering. Some even consider suffering to be proof that the victim is a wrongdoer. This was the argument of three men who lived some 3,600 years ago. They were contemporaries of a good man named Job. Let us return to their day as we begin seeking an answer to the question, Why do good people suffer?

Job's Sufferings

When Job's three supposed friends visited him, he was suffering indescribably from pain and disease. He had been bereaved of his ten children and had lost all his material possessions. People who had held Job in high esteem detested him. Even his wife turned away from him and urged that he curse God and die.—Job 1:1-2:13; 19:13-19.

For seven days and nights, Job's visitors silently observed his suffering. Then one of them accused him of unrighteous conduct for which he was supposedly being punished. "Remember, please," said the man Eliphaz: "Who that is innocent has ever perished? And where have the upright ever been effaced? According to what I have seen, those devising what is hurtful and those sowing trouble will themselves reap it. Through the breath of God they perish, and through the spirit of his anger they come to an end."—Job 4:7-9.

So Eliphaz contended that God was punishing Job for his sins. Today, too, some argue that calamities are acts of God designed to punish people for wrongdoing. But Jehovah was not punishing Job for committing unrighteous acts. We know this because God later told Eliphaz: "My anger has grown hot against you and your two companions, for you men have not spoken concerning me what is truthful as has my servant Job."—Job 42:7.

God Not at Fault

Today, millions—surely including many good people—are poverty-stricken and on the verge of starvation. Some individuals become embittered and blame God for their suffering. But he is not to blame for famine. In fact, he is the One who provides food for mankind.—Psalm 65:9.

Though Job suffered, he pursued a course acceptable to God

Selfishness, greed, and other human factors may prevent the delivery of food to the hungry. Warfare is among the causes of famine. For example, *The World Book Encyclopedia* says: "War may result in a famine if many farmers leave their fields and join the armed forces. In some cases, an army has deliberately created a famine to starve an enemy into surrendering. The army destroys stored food and growing crops and sets up a blockade to cut off the enemy's food supply. Blockades prevented shipments of food from reaching the region of Biafra during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70). A famine resulted, and more than a million Biafrans probably starved."

Especially did some wrongly blame God during World War II, when many good people suffered and died. Yet, humans break

God's laws by hating and warring against one another. When Jesus Christ was asked which commandment was "first of all," he answered: "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah, and you must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind and with your whole strength.' The second is this, 'You must love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."—Mark 12:28-31.

When humans break God's laws by engaging in mass slaughter, can anyone properly blame him if suffering is the result? If a parent tells his children not to fight among themselves and they disregard his good counsel, is he responsible if they suffer injuries? The parent is no more responsible than God is for human suffering when people disregard divine laws.

Though suffering may result when Jehovah's laws are ignored, the Bible does not indicate that disasters in general are acts of God designed to punish the wicked. When the first human pair sinned, they forfeited his special blessing and protection. Except for cases of divine intervention to accomplish Jehovah's purposes, what has happened to mankind from day to day has been governed by this Scriptural principle: "The swift do not have the race, nor the mighty ones the battle, nor do the wise also have the food, nor do the understanding ones also have the riches, nor do even those having knowledge have the favor; because time and unforeseen occurrence befall them all." —Ecclesiastes 9:11.

Both Good and Bad Suffer

Actually, both good and bad humans suffer because of inherited sin and imperfection. (Romans 5:12) For example, righteous and wicked people alike experience painful diseases. The faithful Christian Timothy suffered from "frequent cases of sickness." (1 Timothy 5:23) When the apostle Paul mentioned his own "thorn in the flesh," he may have been alluding to some physical affliction. (2 Corinthians 12:7-9) Even for his loyal servants, God does not now remove inherited weaknesses or susceptibilities to disease.

Godly people may also suffer because of using poor judgment or failing to apply Scriptural counsel at times. To illustrate: One who disobeys God and marries an unbeliever may suffer marital troubles he could have avoided. (Deuteronomy 7:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 7:39) If a Christian does not eat properly and does not get sufficient rest, he may suffer because of ruining his health.

Emotional suffering may result if we succumb to weakness and engage in wrong conduct. King David's adultery with Bath-sheba brought him great suffering. (Psalm 51) While trying to conceal wrongdoing, he suffered intense distress. "When I kept silent," said he, "my bones wore out through my groaning all day long. . . . My life's moisture has been changed as in the dry heat of summer." (Psalm 32:3, 4) Anguish over his guilt reduced David's vigor as a tree might lose life-giving moisture during a drought or in summer's dry heat. He apparently suffered both mentally and physically. But Psalm 32 shows that such suffering can be relieved by a person's repentantly confessing sin and receiving God's pardon.—Proverbs 28:13.

Bad people often suffer for pursuing a licentious course, not as divine punishment. Herod the Great was disease-ridden because of evil habits. In his final days, Herod "suffered horrible torments," said the Jewish historian Josephus. "He had a terrible

craving to scratch himself, his bowels were ulcerated, and his privates gangrenous and wormy. He tried in vain to relieve his gasping and convulsions in the warm springs at Callirrhoe. . . . Herod was now suffering such terrible agony that he tried to stab himself, but was prevented by his cousin." —*Josephus: The Essential Writings,* translated and edited by Paul L. Maier.

Adhering to God's law provides some protection against such things as sexually transmitted disease. Yet, why do good people seeking his favor seem to have more than their share of suffering?

Why Godly People Suffer

A primary reason why godly people suffer is that they are righteous. This is illustrated in the case of the patriarch Jacob's son Joseph. Though Potiphar's wife continually urged Joseph to have sexual relations with her, he asked: "How could I commit this great badness and actually sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9) This led to unjust imprisonment, and Joseph suffered because he was upright.

But why does God allow his faithful servants to suffer? The answer lies in an issue raised by the rebellious angel Satan the Devil. This issue involves integrity to God. How do we know? Because this was shown in the case of the righteous man Job, mentioned earlier.

At a meeting of God's angelic sons in heaven, Jehovah asked Satan: "Have you set your heart upon my servant Job, that there is no one like him in the earth, a man blameless and upright, fearing God and turning aside from bad?" The Devil's reply proves that there was a contention about whether humans would maintain integrity to Jehovah under test. Satan asserted that Job served God because of the material blessings enjoyed and not out of love. Satan then said: "For a change, thrust out your hand, please, and touch everything [Job] has and see whether he will not curse you to your very face." Jehovah replied: "Look! Everything that he has is in your hand. Only against him himself do not thrust out your hand!"—Job 1:6-12.

Despite everything Satan could do, Job maintained a righteous course and proved that he served Jehovah out of love. Indeed, Job told his accusers: "It is unthinkable on my part that I should declare you men righteous! Until I expire I shall not take away my integrity from myself!" (Job 27:5) Yes, such integrity keepers have always been willing to suffer for righteousness' sake. (1 Peter 4:14-16) The Bible tells of many who have had unfailing love for God and have lived righteous lives to honor him and prove false Satan's claim that he could turn all humans away from Jehovah. Every individual who suffers because of maintaining integrity to God can be happy that he is proving the Devil a liar and is making Jehovah's heart rejoice.—Proverbs 27:11.

God is not unconcerned about the suffering of his faithful servants. The psalmist David said: "Jehovah is giving support to all who are falling, and is raising up all who are bowed down." (Psalm 145:14) Those dedicated to Jehovah may lack sufficient personal strength to bear life's sufferings and the persecution they experience as his people. But God strengthens and sustains them and grants them the wisdom needed to endure all their trials. (Psalm 121:1-3; James 1:5, 6) If persecutors should kill some of Jehovah's loyal servants, they have the God-given hope of a resurrection. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) Even to that extent, God can reverse the effects of any suffering experienced by those who love him. He brought

You can live in a world free of all suffering

Job's suffering to an end and abundantly blessed that upright man. And we can be confident that Jehovah will not forsake his people in our day. —Job 42:12-16; Psalm 94:14.

Soon—No More Suffering!

So, then, everyone experiences suffering because of inherited imperfection and life amid this wicked system of things. Godly individuals can also expect to suffer because of maintaining integrity to Jehovah. (2 Timothy 3:12) But they can rejoice, for God will soon bring an end to tears, death, mourning, outcry, and pain. In this regard, the apostle John wrote:

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea is no more. I saw also the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: 'Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.' And the One seated on the throne said: 'Look! I am making all things new.' Also, he says: 'Write, because these words are faithful and true.' "—Revelation 21:1-5.

Similarly, the apostle Peter declared: "There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his [Jehovah God's] promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:13) What grand prospects lay just ahead! Life on a paradise earth can be your joyous privilege. (Luke 23:43) Therefore, do not let present-day suffering embitter you. Instead, look to the future with optimism. Place your hope and confidence in God's new world so near at hand. Pursue a course acceptable to Jehovah God, and you can live forever in a world free of all suffering.

JEHOVAH FORGIVES IN A LARGE WAY

"Let the wicked man leave his way, and the harmful man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah, . . . for he will forgive in a large way."—ISAIAH 55:7.

JEHOVAH forgives repentant wrongdoers and now enables them to enjoy peace of mind in a spiritual paradise. This is so because they meet these requirements: "Search for Jehovah, you people, while he may be found. Call to him while he proves to be near. Let the wicked man leave his way, and the harmful man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will forgive in a large way."—Isaiah 55: 6, 7.

[2] To "search for Jehovah" and call to him with acceptance, a wicked person has to abandon his wrong way and any thought of doing harm to others. The need to "return to Jehovah" indicates that the wrongdoer left God, with whom he once had an intimate relationship. That was the case with Judah's inhabitants, whose unfaithfulness to God eventually led to exile in Babylon. The Jewish exiles needed to return to Jehovah by repenting of misdeeds that had resulted in their Babylonian captivity and the foretold 70-year desolation of their homeland. In 537 B.C.E., that land was reoccupied by a God-fearing remnant of Jews released from Babylon by governmental decree. (Ezra 1:1-8; Daniel 9:1-4) So grand were the effects of that restoration that the land of Judah was compared with the Edenic Paradise.—Ezekiel 36:33-36.

[3] Spiritual Israelites have had an experience like that of the God-fearing Jews who returned to Judah after Babylonian exile. (Galatians 6:16) The remnant of spiritual Israel did some changing of their way and their thoughts right after World War I. The year 1919 marked the end of their exile from God's full favor in the realm of Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. Because they repented of sins involving fear of man and inactivity in Jehovah's service, he freed them from Babylon the Great, brought them back to their rightful spiritual estate, and resumed using them to preach the Kingdom message. A spiritual paradise has flourished among God's people since then, to the honor of his holy name. (Isaiah 55:8-13) In the ancient prototype and the modern antitype, then, we have clear evidence that blessings follow divine forgiveness and that Jehovah does indeed forgive repentant ones in a large way.

[4] Jehovah's present-day servants can therefore trust in his forgiveness. Yet, some of

1. With what are recipients of Jehovah's forgiveness now blessed?
2. (a) What is meant by 'searching for Jehovah' and 'returning to him,' as mentioned at Isaiah 55: 6, 7? (b) Why did Jewish exiles in Babylon need to return to Jehovah, and what happened to some of them?
3. How has the remnant of spiritual Israel had an experience like that of the God-fearing exiles who returned to Judah?
4. What fear do some servants of Jehovah have?

them are despondent over past errors, and feelings of guilt nearly overwhelm them. They do not consider themselves worthy of residing in the spiritual paradise. In fact, some fear that they have committed the unforgivable sin and will never receive Jehovah's forgiveness. Is that likely?

Some Sins Unforgivable

[5] Some sins are unforgivable. Jesus Christ said: "Every sort of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven." (Matthew 12:31) So, then, blasphemy against God's holy spirit, or active force, will not be forgiven. The apostle Paul alluded to such sin when he wrote: "It is impossible as regards those who have once for all been enlightened, . . . but who have fallen away, to revive them again to repentance, because they impale the Son of God afresh for themselves and expose him to public shame."—Hebrews 6:4-6.

[6] Only God knows if a person has committed the unforgivable sin. However, Paul shed light on this matter when he wrote: "If we practice sin willfully after having received the accurate knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins left, but there is a certain fearful expectation of judgment." (Hebrews 10:26, 27) A willful person acts deliberately, or is "obstinately and often perversely self-willed." (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*) Anyone willfully and obstinately continuing to practice sin after he knows the truth is not forgiven. Hence, it is not so much the sin itself as it is the heart condition, the degree of willfulness involved, that affects whether the sin is forgivable or not. On the other hand, what is likely the case when an erring Christian is deeply disturbed about his wrongdoing? His great concern probably indicates that he has not, in fact, committed an unforgivable sin.

5. Why can it be said that some sins are unforgivable?
6. What determines whether a sin is forgivable or not?

Their Sins Were Unforgivable

[7] Certain Jewish religious leaders who opposed Jesus did commit willful, and thus unforgivable, sin. Though they saw God's holy spirit at work through Jesus as he did good and performed miracles, those clerics ascribed his power to Beelzebub, or Satan the Devil. They sinned with their eyes wide open to the undeniable operation of God's spirit. Thus, they committed unforgivable sin, for Jesus said: "Whoever speaks against the holy spirit, it will not be forgiven him, no, not in this system of things nor in that to come."—Matthew 12:22-32.

[8] The sin of Judas Iscariot also was unforgivable. His betrayal of Jesus was the willful, deliberate culmination of a course of hypocrisy and dishonesty. For instance, when Judas saw Mary anoint Jesus with costly oil, he asked: "Why was it this perfumed oil was not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor people?" The apostle John added: "[Judas] said this, though, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief and had the money box and used to carry off the monies put in it." Soon thereafter, Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. (John 12:1-6; Matthew 26:6-16) True, Judas felt remorse and committed suicide. (Matthew 27:1-5) But he was not forgiven, since his deliberate, persistently selfish course and his treacherous act reflected his sin against the holy spirit. How appropriate that Jesus

7. Why can we say that some of Jesus' religious opposers committed unforgivable sin?
8. Why was the sin of Judas Iscariot unforgivable?

Do you know why David and Peter were forgiven but Judas Iscariot was not?

should call Judas "the son of destruction"! —John 17:12; Mark 3:29; 14:21.

Their Sins Were Forgiven

[9] Willful sins stand in sharp contrast with the errors of those forgiven by God. Take King David of Israel as an example. He committed adultery with Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah, and later had Joab maneuver Uriah's death in battle. (2 Samuel 11:1-27) Why did God show David mercy? Principally because of the Kingdom covenant but also because of David's own mercifulness and his genuine repentance.—1 Samuel 24: 4-7; 2 Samuel 7:12; 12:13.

[10] Consider, too, the apostle Peter. He sinned seriously by repeatedly denying Jesus. Why did God forgive Peter? Unlike Judas Iscariot, Peter had been honest in the service of God and Christ. This apostle's sin was due to fleshly weakness, and he was truly repentant and "wept bitterly."—Matthew 26:69-75.

[11] The foregoing examples show that even a person who sins grievously can obtain Jehovah God's forgiveness. But what attitude is required in order to be forgiven? True repentance is vital if an erring Christian is to be forgiven by God. To repent means "to turn from sin out of penitence for past wrongdoings" or "feel regret or contrition for what one has done or omitted to do." (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*) A truly repentant person would show remorse over any reproach, sorrow, or problems his sin had brought on Jehovah's name and organization. The repentant wrongdoer would also produce corresponding fruit, performing works that befit repentance. (Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20) For example, if he had defrauded someone, he would take reasonable steps to compensate for the loss. (Luke 19:8) Such a repentant Christian has sound Scriptural reasons to be confident that Jehovah will forgive in a large way. What are these?

Reasons for Confidence in God's Forgiveness

[12] *A repentant wrongdoer can confidently pray for forgiveness on the basis of Jehovah's name.* David begged: "For your name's sake,

9. Why did God forgive David's sins in connection with Bath-sheba?
10. Though Peter sinned seriously, why did God forgive him?
11. How would you define "repentance," and what should a person do if he is truly repentant?
12. On the basis of what does Psalm 25:11 indicate that a repentant person can pray for forgiveness?

O Jehovah, you must even forgive my error, for it is considerable." (Psalm 25:11) Such prayer, coupled with repentance for any reproach the wrongdoer has brought upon God's name, should also act as a deterrent to gross sin in the future.

[13] *Jehovah God answers the heartfelt prayers of his erring but repentant servants.* For example, Jehovah did not turn a deaf ear to David, who prayed from the heart after realizing the enormity of his sins in connection with Bath-sheba. In fact, David's words in Psalm 51 express many a suppliant's sentiments. He begged: "Show me favor, O God, according to your loving-kindness. According to the abundance of your mercies wipe out my transgressions. Thoroughly wash me from my error, and cleanse me even from my sin. The sacrifices to God are a broken spirit; a heart broken and crushed, O God, you will not despise." —Psalm 51:1, 2, 17.

[14] *God forgives those exercising faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice.* Wrote Paul: "By means of him we have the release by ransom through the blood of that one, yes, the forgiveness of our trespasses." (Ephesians 1:7) With similar import, the apostle John wrote: "My little children, I am writing you these things that you may not commit a sin. And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one. And he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, yet not for ours only but also for the whole world's."—1 John 2: 1, 2.

[15] *Jehovah's mercy gives a repentant wrongdoer a basis for confidence that he can be forgiven.* Nehemiah said: "You are a God of acts of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness." (Nehemiah 9:17; compare Exodus 34:6, 7.) Of course, to continue enjoying divine mercy, the sinner must strive to keep God's law. As the psalmist said, "let your mercies come to me, that I may keep living; for your law is what I am fond of. Many are your mercies, O Jehovah. According to your judicial decisions, O preserve me alive." —Psalm 119:77, 156.

[16] *The fact that Jehovah takes our sinful state into account also gives a repentant wrongdoer comfort and reason to pray with confidence that God will forgive him.* (Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12) The psalmist David gave comforting reassurance when he declared: "He [Jehovah God] has not done to us even according to our sins; nor according to our errors has he brought upon us what we deserve. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, his loving-kindness is superior toward those fearing him. As far off as the sunrise is from the sunset, so far off from us he has put our transgressions. As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him. For he himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust." (Psalm 103: 10-14) Yes, our heavenly Father is even more merciful and compassionate than a human parent.

[17] *A repentant sinner can pray for forgiveness with confidence that Jehovah will not ignore his past record of faithful service.* Nehemiah was not pleading for forgiveness for his sin, but he did say: "Do remember me, O my God, for good." (Nehemiah 13:31) A

13. What role does prayer play in divine forgiveness?
14. How do the Scriptures provide reassurance that God forgives those exercising faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice?
15. To continue enjoying God's mercy, what must a repentant sinner do?
16. What comfort is there in the fact that Jehovah takes our sinful state into account?
17. What bearing does one's past record of faithful service to God have on forgiveness?

Assistance by congregation elders can do much to help a Christian spiritually

repentant Christian can find comfort in the words: "God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name."—Hebrews 6:10.

Help From Older Men

[18] What if a Christian feels unfit to remain in the spiritual paradise or is unable to pray because his sin has made him spiritually sick? "Let him call the older men of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, greasing him with oil in the name of Jehovah," wrote the disciple James. "And the prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well, and Jehovah will raise him up. Also, if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him." Yes, congregation elders can effectively pray with and for a repentant fellow believer in hopes of restoring him to good spiritual health.—James 5:14-16.

[19] Even if a judicial committee disfellowships an unrepentant sinner, he has not necessarily committed the unforgivable sin. To be forgiven and reinstated, however, he must humbly obey God's laws, produce fruits befitting repentance, and apply to the elders for reinstatement. After a fornicator was disfellowshipped from the congregation in ancient Corinth, Paul wrote: "This rebuke given by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary now, you should kindly forgive and comfort him, that somehow such a man may not be swallowed up by his being overly sad. Therefore I exhort you to confirm your love for him." —2 Corinthians 2:6-8; 1 Corinthians 5: 1-13.

18. What should be done if a Christian's sin has made him spiritually sick?
19. If a person has been disfellowshipped, what must he do to be forgiven and reinstated?

God Gives Strength

[20] If such factors as poor health or stress are causing anxiety about having committed unforgivable sin, getting adequate rest and sleep may be helpful. Especially, however, should you remember Peter's words: "Throw all your anxiety upon [God], because he cares for you." And never let Satan discourage you, for Peter added: "Keep your senses, be watchful. Your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone. But take your stand against him, solid in the faith, knowing that the same things in the way of sufferings are being accomplished in the entire association of your brothers in the world. But, after you have suffered a little while, the God of all undeserved kindness . . . will himself finish your training, he will make you firm, he will make you strong."—1 Peter 5:6-10.

20, 21. What may help a person experiencing anxiety about having possibly committed unforgivable sin?

[21] So if you are contrite but have been fearful that you are guilty of unforgivable sin, remember that God's ways are wise, just, and loving. Therefore, pray to him in faith. Keep taking in the spiritual food that he provides through "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47) Associate with fellow believers and share in the Christian ministry regularly. This will strengthen your faith and free you from any fear that God may not have forgiven your sin.

[22] Residents of the spiritual paradise can take comfort in the knowledge that Jehovah forgives in a large way. Yet, their life is not without trials today. Perhaps they are depressed because a loved one has died or a dear friend is gravely ill. As we shall see, in these and other circumstances, Jehovah helps and leads his people by means of his holy spirit.

22. What will we next consider?

What Are Your Answers?

- ☐ What proof is there that Jehovah 'forgives in a large way'?
- ☐ For what sin is there no forgiveness?
- ☐ Under what circumstances are one's sins forgiven?
- ☐ Why can repentant wrongdoers be confident in God's forgiveness?
- ☐ What help is available to repentant wrongdoers?

JEHOVAH'S SPIRIT LEADS HIS PEOPLE

"Your spirit is good; may it lead me in the land of uprightness."—PSALM 143:10.

'I FEEL so depressed! Where can I find some comfort? Has God abandoned me?' Do you ever feel that way? If you do, you are not alone. Although Jehovah's loyal servants reside in the flourishing spiritual paradise, they sometimes face distressing problems, trials, and temptations common to mankind.—1 Corinthians 10:13.

[2] Perhaps you are beset by some long-lasting trial or cause of great stress. You may be grieving over the death of a loved one and may feel so alone. Or your heart may be troubled by the illness of a dear friend. Such circumstances may be robbing you of joy and peace and may even be threatening your faith. What should you do?

1, 2. What may cause distress for Jehovah's loyal servants?

Ask God for His Spirit

[3] If something is robbing you of peace, joy, or some other godly quality, it would be wise to pray for God's holy spirit, or active force.

3. If something is robbing you of such qualities as peace and joy, what would it be wise to do?

Why? Because Jehovah's spirit produces good fruitage that helps a Christian to face problems, trials, and temptations. After warning against "the works of the flesh," the apostle Paul wrote: "On the other hand, the fruitage of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control. Against such things there is no law."—Galatians 5:19-23.

[4] Because of the kind of trial you are facing, you may realize that you are in danger of losing your mildness, or mild temper. Then be specific by praying to Jehovah God for the spirit's fruit of mildness. If you are faced with some temptation, you especially need the fruit of self-control. Of course, it would also be appropriate to pray for divine help in resisting the temptation, for deliverance from Satan, and for the wisdom needed to endure the trial.—Matthew 6:13; James 1:5, 6.

[5] At times, however, circumstances may be so distressing or confusing that you do not know which fruit of the spirit you need. In fact, joy, peace, mildness, and other godly qualities may all be imperiled. What then? Why not ask God for the holy spirit itself and let it cause the needed fruits to flourish in your case? The necessary fruits may be love or joy or peace or a combination of the spirit's fruits. Also pray that God help you to yield to the direction of his spirit, for he uses it to lead his people.

Jehovah Is Willing to Help

[6] When disciples of Jesus Christ sought instruction on prayer, in part he urged them to pray for God's spirit. Jesus first used an illustration designed to move them to pray without ceasing. He said: "Who of you will have a friend and will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, loan me three loaves, because a friend of mine has just come to me on a journey and I have nothing to set before him'? And that one from inside says in reply, 'Quit making me trouble. The door is already locked, and my young children are with me in bed; I cannot rise up and give you anything.' I tell you, Although he will not rise up and give him anything because of being his friend, certainly because of his bold persistence he will get up and give him what things he needs."—Luke 11:5-8.

[7] Jehovah is willing to help every one of his faithful dedicated servants, and he listens to their requests. But if such a person 'keeps on asking,' as Jesus urged, this indicates heartfelt desire and is a display of faith. (Luke 11:9, 10) Christ added: "Indeed, which father is there among you who, if his son asks for a fish, will perhaps hand him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he also asks for an egg, will hand him a scorpion? Therefore, if you, although being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will the Father in heaven give holy spirit to those asking him!" (Luke 11:11-13) If an earthly parent, though being more or less wicked because of inherited sinfulness, gives good things to his child, surely our heavenly Father will continue to give his holy spirit to any one of his loyal servants who humbly asks for it.

4. When confronted by some trial or temptation, why might it be appropriate to be specific in one's prayers?
5. If circumstances are so distressing that you do not know which fruit of the spirit to pray for, what can be done?
6. How did Jesus impress his followers with the need to pray without ceasing?
7. What is the essence of Jesus' words at Luke 11:11-13, and what assurance do they give us regarding God and his spirit?

As a loving father gives good things to his son, so Jehovah gives holy spirit to his servants who pray for it

[8] To benefit from God's spirit, we must be as willing to follow its lead as David was. He prayed: "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Your spirit is good; may it lead me in the land of uprightness." (Psalm 143:10) David, who had been outlawed by Israelite king Saul, wanted God's spirit to lead him so that he would be sure his course was upright. In time Abiathar came with a priest's ephod used in ascertaining God's will. As God's priestly representative, Abiathar instructed David as to the way to go in order to please Jehovah. (1 Samuel 22:17–23:12; 30:6-8) Like David, Jesus was led by Jehovah's spirit, and this has also been true of Christ's anointed followers as a class. In 1918-19, they were in an alienated position before human society, and their religious enemies thought they could destroy them. The anointed prayed for a way out of their inactive state, and in 1919, God answered their prayers, delivered them, and reactivated them in his service. (Psalm 143:7-9) Surely, Jehovah's spirit was then helping and leading his people, as it does to this very day.

8. How does Psalm 143:10 apply to David, Jesus, and God's modern-day servants?

How the Spirit Helps

[9] Jesus Christ called the holy spirit a "helper." For instance, he told his followers: "I will request the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, the spirit of the truth, which the world cannot receive, because it neither beholds it nor knows it. You know it, because it remains with you and is in you." Among other things, that "helper" would be a teacher, for Christ promised: "The helper, the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name, that one will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you." The spirit would also bear witness about Christ, and he assured his disciples: "It is for your benefit I am going away. For if I do not go away, the helper will by no means come to you; but if I do go my way, I will send

9. (a) How does the holy spirit serve as a "helper"? (b) How do we know that the holy spirit is not a person? (See footnote.)

him to you."—John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:7.*

[10] From heaven, Jesus poured out the promised holy spirit upon his followers on the day of Pentecost in 33 C.E. (Acts 1:4, 5; 2:1-11) As a helper, the spirit gave them increased understanding of God's will and purpose and opened up his prophetic Word to them. (1 Corinthians 2:10-16; Colossians 1:9, 10; Hebrews 9:8-10) That helper also empowered Jesus' disciples to be witnesses in all the earth. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 3:5, 6) Today, the holy spirit can help a dedicated Christian to grow in knowledge if he avails himself of the spiritual provisions made by God through "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47) God's spirit can provide help by supplying the courage and strength needed to bear witness as one of Jehovah's servants. (Matthew 10:19, 20; Acts 4:29-31) However, the holy spirit also helps God's people in other ways.

"With Groanings Unuttered"

[11] If a Christian is beset by a trial that seems overwhelming, what should he do? Why, pray for holy spirit, and let it do its work! "The spirit also joins in with help for our weakness," said Paul, "for the problem of what we should pray for as we need to we do not know, but the spirit itself pleads for us with groanings unuttered. Yet he who searches the hearts knows what the meaning of the spirit is, because it is pleading in accord with God for holy ones."—Romans 8:26, 27.

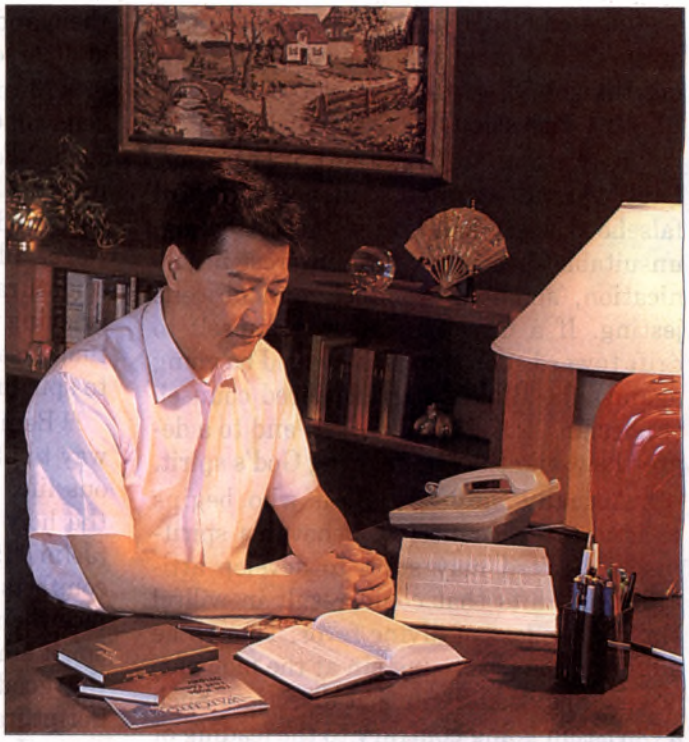
[12] Those holy ones for whom God's spirit pleads are Jesus' anointed followers, with a heavenly hope. But whether you have a heavenly calling or an earthly hope, as a Christian you can have the help of God's holy spirit. Jehovah sometimes gives a direct answer to a specific prayer. At times, however, you may be so distressed that you are unable to put your feelings into words and may only be able to beseech Jehovah with unspoken groanings. In fact, you may not know what is best for you and might even ask for the wrong thing unless you pray for holy spirit. God knows that you want his will to be done, and he is aware of what you really need. Moreover, by means of his holy spirit, he caused many prayers to be recorded in his Word, and these deal with trying situations. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:21) Hence, Jehovah can look upon certain sentiments expressed in such inspired prayers as being expressions you would like to make as one of his servants, and he can answer them in your behalf.

[13] Paul and his associates may not have known what to pray for when experiencing tribulation in the district of Asia. Being 'under extreme pressure beyond their strength, they felt within themselves that they had received the sentence of death.' But they sought the supplications of others and trusted in God, who can raise the dead, and he did rescue them. (2 Corinthians 1:8-11) How comforting it is that Jehovah God hears and acts on the prayers of his faithful servants!

* Though personified as a "helper," the holy spirit is not a person, for a Greek neuter pronoun (rendered "it") is applied to the spirit. Hebrew feminine pronouns are similarly applied to wisdom personified. (Proverbs 1:20-33; 8:1-36) Moreover, the holy spirit was "poured out," which cannot be done with a person.—Acts 2:33.

10. In what ways has the holy spirit proved to be a helper?
11. If a trial seems overwhelming, what should a Christian do?
12, 13. (a) How does Romans 8:26, 27 apply to prayers offered in especially trying situations? (b) What did Paul and his associates do when they were under extreme pressure in the district of Asia?

Do you know how God's spirit pleads for prayerful Christians?



[14] God's people are often beset by trials as an organization. As noted earlier, they were persecuted during World War I. Though they did not then have a clear understanding of their position and therefore did not know exactly what to pray for, Jehovah's Word contained prophetic prayers that he answered in their behalf. (Psalms 69, 102, 126; Isaiah, chapter 12) But what if Jehovah permits a trial to continue for some time? This may result in a witness, may move some to embrace the truth, and affords Christians opportunity to show brotherly love by praying for or otherwise helping suffering fellow believers. (John 13:34, 35; 2 Corinthians 1:11) Remember that Jehovah leads his people by means of his holy spirit, does what is best for them, and always works matters out in a way that will honor and sanctify his holy name.—Exodus 9:16; Matthew 6:9.

Never Grieve the Spirit

[15] If you are a servant of Jehovah, therefore, pray for holy spirit during trials and at other times. Then be sure to follow its guidance, for Paul wrote: "Do not be grieving God's holy spirit, with which you have been sealed for a day of releasing by ransom." (Ephesians 4:30) God's spirit was and is a seal, or a 'token of what was to come,' for faithful anointed Christians—that is, immortal heavenly life. (2 Corinthians 1:22; Romans 8:15; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57; Revelation 2:10) Both anointed Christians and those with an earthly hope can rely on Jehovah's spirit to do much in their behalf. It can direct them in a life of faithfulness and help them to avoid sinful works that lead to God's disapproval, loss of his holy spirit, and failure to gain eternal life.—Galatians 5:19-21.

[16] How might a Christian, either knowingly or unknowingly, grieve the spirit? Well, Jehovah uses his spirit to promote unity and to appoint responsible men in the congregation. Therefore, if a member of the congregation were to murmur against the appointed elders, spread slanderous gossip, and so forth, he would not be following the

14. What good may result if Jehovah permits a trial to continue for some time?
15. Christians can rely on Jehovah's spirit to do what in their behalf?

16, 17. How might a Christian grieve the spirit?

leadings of God's spirit toward peace and unity. In a general way, he would be grieving the spirit.—1 Corinthians 1:10; 3:1-4, 16, 17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13; Jude 16.

[17] In writing to Christians in Ephesus, Paul warned against tendencies toward falsehood, sustained wrathfulness, stealing, unsuitable speech, prurient interest in fornication, shameful conduct, and obscene jesting. If a Christian allowed himself to drift toward such things, he would be going against the Bible's spirit-inspired counsel. (Ephesians 4:17-29; 5:1-5) Yes, and to a degree he would thus be grieving God's spirit.

[18] Actually, any Christian who begins to ignore the counsel of Jehovah's spirit-inspired Word may start to develop attitudes or traits that could result in willful sin and the loss of divine favor. Though he might not be practicing sin at the moment, he could be heading in that direction. Such a Christian going contrary to the leading of the spirit would be grieving it. He would thus also be resisting and grieving Jehovah, the Source of holy spirit. Never would a lover of God want to do that!

Keep On Praying for Holy Spirit

[19] If you are a servant of Jehovah, continue to pray for his holy spirit. Especially in these "last days," with their critical times so hard to deal with, do Christians need the help of God's spirit. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) The Devil and his demons, ousted from heaven and now in the vicinity of the earth, are on a rampage against Jehovah's organization. Hence, now more than ever before, God's people need his holy spirit to lead, or guide, them and enable them to endure hardships and persecution.—Revelation 12:7-12.

[20] Always show appreciation for the help Jehovah God provides by means of his holy spirit. Follow the direction of his spirit-inspired Word, the Bible. Cooperate fully with God's spirit-led earthly organization. Never allow yourself to veer off on an unscriptural course that would amount to grieving the holy spirit, for this might eventually lead to the withdrawal of it and thus to spiritual disaster.—Psalm 51:11.

[21] Being led by Jehovah's spirit is the only way to please him and have a peaceful, joyous life. Remember, too, that Jesus called the holy spirit a "helper," or "comforter." (John 14:16, footnote) By means of it, God comforts Christians and fortifies them to face their trials. (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) The spirit empowers Jehovah's people to preach the good news and helps them to recall Scriptural points needed to give a fine witness. (Luke 12:11, 12; John 14:25, 26; Acts 1:4-8; 5:32) Through prayer and the spirit's guidance, Christians can meet tests of faith with heavenly wisdom. In all of life's circumstances, therefore, they keep on praying for God's holy spirit. As a result, Jehovah's spirit leads his people.

18. What can happen to any Christian who begins to ignore the counsel of God's spirit-inspired Word?
19. Why do Jehovah's people especially need his spirit today?

20, 21. Why follow the direction of Jehovah's Word, spirit, and organization?

What Are Your Answers?

- ☐ Why pray for Jehovah's holy spirit?
- ☐ How is the holy spirit a helper?
- ☐ What does it mean to grieve the spirit, and how can we avoid doing so?
- ☐ Why keep on praying for holy spirit and following its lead?

JEHOVAH'S USE OF "FOOLISHNESS" TO SAVE THOSE BELIEVING

"Since, in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not get to know God, God saw good through the foolishness of what is preached to save those believing."—1 CORINTHIANS 1:21.

WHAT? Would Jehovah use foolishness? Not really! But he can and does use what *appears* foolish to the world. He does so in order to save people who know and love him. Through its wisdom, the world cannot get to know God. Jesus Christ made this clear when he said in prayer: "Righteous Father, the world has, indeed, not come to know you."—John 17:25.

[2] Jesus' words indicate that Jehovah's ways differ from those of the world. On the surface it may appear that God's purpose and that of this world are running parallel to each other. It may seem that the aims of this world have God's blessing. For instance, the Bible says that God would set up a righteous government that will bring life in peace, happiness, and prosperity to mankind on earth. (Isaiah 9:6, 7; Matthew 6:10) Likewise, the world trumpets its purpose to give people peace, prosperity, and good government by means of a so-called new world order. But God's purposes and those of the world are not the same. Jehovah's purpose is to vindicate himself as the Supreme Sovereign of the universe. This he will do by means of a heavenly government that will obliterate all earthly governments. (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 4:11; 12:10) So God has nothing in common with this world. (John 18:36; 1 John 2:15-17) That is why the Bible speaks of two kinds of wisdom—"the wisdom of God" and "the wisdom of the world." —1 Corinthians 1:20, 21.

1. In what sense would Jehovah use "foolishness," and how do we know that the world in its wisdom did not get to know God?
2. How may it seem that Jehovah's ways and the world's ways are running parallel to each other, but what are the facts?

The Basic Flaw of Worldly Wisdom

[3] To those not guided by the wisdom of God, the wisdom of the world seems impressive. There are lofty-sounding worldly philosophies that captivate the mind. Thousands of institutions of higher learning impart information from what many consider the greatest minds of mankind. Extensive libraries are replete with the accumulated knowledge of centuries of human experience. Despite this, however, the new world order that worldly rulers propose could only be a rule by imperfect, sin-stained, dying men. Hence, that order would be imperfect, repeating many past

3. Though the wisdom of the world may seem impressive, why would man's promised new world order never be satisfying?

blunders and never satisfying all of mankind's needs.—Romans 3:10-12; 5:12.

[4] Man's proposed new world order is subject not only to human frailty but also to the influence of wicked spirit creatures—yes, Satan the Devil and his demons. Satan has blinded the minds of the people so that they do not believe "the glorious good news about the Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4; Ephesians 6:12) Consequently, the world suffers one disorder after another. It fights and bleeds in its disastrous attempt to govern itself without God's help and without regard for the divine will. (Jeremiah 10:23; James 3:15, 16) Thus, as the apostle Paul said, "the world through its wisdom did not get to know God."—1 Corinthians 1:21.

[5] What, then, is the basic flaw of this world's wisdom, including its plans for a new world order? It is that the world ignores what can never successfully be ignored—the supreme sovereignty of Jehovah God. It arrogantly refuses to recognize divine sovereignty. The world purposely leaves Jehovah out of all its calculations and relies upon its own ability and schemes. (Compare Daniel 4:31-34; John 18:37.) The Bible makes it clear that "the fear of Jehovah is the start of wisdom." (Proverbs 9:10; Psalm 111:10) Yet, the world has not even learned this basic requirement of wisdom. Without divine backing, therefore, how can it succeed?—Psalm 127:1.

Kingdom Preaching —Foolish or Practical?

[6] On the other hand, those who know God display the wisdom of God and choose to be guided by it. As Jesus foretold, they are preaching "this good news of the kingdom . . . in all the inhabited earth." (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) Is such preaching practical *now,* when our earth is filled with strife, pollution, poverty, and human suffering? To worldly-wise ones such preaching about God's Kingdom seems to be sheer foolishness, lacking practicality. They view the preachers of God's Kingdom as barnacles that weigh down the ship of State and slow its progress toward ideal political government. In this they are backed by Christendom's clergy, who preach according to this world's wisdom and do not tell the people what they need to know about God's new world and its Kingdom government, even though this was Christ's principal teaching. —Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14, 15.

[7] Historian H. G. Wells called attention to this failure of Christendom's clergy. He wrote: "Remarkable is the enormous prominence given by Jesus to the teaching of what he called the Kingdom of Heaven, and its comparative insignificance in the procedure and teaching of most of the Christian churches." Yet, if people of this generation are to gain life, they must first hear about God's established Kingdom, and to that end someone must preach the good news about it.—Romans 10:14, 15.

[8] Preaching God's good news, then, is the most practical thing to do today. This is so because the Kingdom message provides a genuine hope that fills human hearts with rejoicing during these last days when 'critical times hard to deal with are here.' (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Romans 12:12; Titus 2:13)

4. What is the proposed new world order subject to, and with what result?
5. What is the basic flaw of this world's wisdom?
6, 7. (a) Those guided by God's wisdom are preaching what, but how does the world view them? (b) According to whose wisdom do Christendom's clergy preach, and with what result?
8. Why is preaching God's good news the most practical thing to do today, but what course of action would be without lasting benefit?

Whereas life in this world is uncertain and short, life in God's new world will be everlasting, amid joy, plenty, and peace right here on earth. (Psalm 37:3, 4, 11) As Jesus Christ said, "what benefit will it be to a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul? or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" If a person loses the right to life in God's new world, of what benefit is this world that is passing away? Such an individual's present enjoyment of material things has been futile, vain, and fleeting. —Matthew 16:26; Ecclesiastes 1:14; Mark 10:29, 30.

[9] One man whom Jesus invited to be his follower said: "Permit me first to leave and bury my father." What did Jesus advise him to do? Knowing that the man would be postponing a most vital work simply to wait until his parents lived out the rest of their natural lives, Jesus replied: "Let the dead bury their dead, but you go away and declare abroad the kingdom of God." (Luke 9: 59, 60) Those who show wisdom by obeying Christ cannot turn aside from fulfilling their commission to preach the Kingdom message. Divine wisdom makes them aware that this world and its rulers are doomed. (1 Corinthians 2:6; 1 John 2:17) Supporters of God's sovereignty know that the only true hope for mankind lies in divine intervention and rulership. (Zechariah 9:10) So while those possessing the wisdom of this world do not believe in God's Kingdom and do not want that heavenly government, people led by divine wisdom do what brings real benefit to their fellow humans, preparing them for everlasting life in Jehovah's promised new world.—John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:13.

9. (a) When a man who was invited to be a follower of Jesus asked for a postponement, what did Jesus advise him to do? (b) How should Jesus' answer affect us?

"Foolishness to Those Who Are Perishing"

[10] Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ, took up this life-saving work. Is it reasonable to think that when Jesus Christ converted Saul, He was assigning him to engage in a foolish activity? Paul did not think so. (Philippians 2:16) At that time the Greeks were considered to be the most intellectual people of the world. They boasted of their great philosophers and wise men. Though Paul spoke Greek, he did not follow Grecian philosophy and learning. Why? Because such wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.* Paul sought divine wisdom, which moved him to preach the good news from house to house. The greatest Preacher of all time, Jesus Christ, had set the example and had instructed him to do the same work.—Luke 4:43; Acts 20:20, 21; 26:15-20; 1 Corinthians 9:16.

[11] Paul says this about his commission to preach: "Christ dispatched me . . . to go declaring the good news, not with wisdom of speech, that the torture stake of the Christ should not be made useless. For the speech about the torture stake [Jesus' ransom sacrifice] is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is God's power. For it is written: 'I will

* Despite all the philosophical debates and investigations of the wise men of ancient Greece, their writings show that they found no genuine basis for hope. Professors J. R. S. Sterrett and Samuel Angus point out: "No literature contains more pathetic laments over the sorrows of life, the passing of love, the deceitfulness of hope, and the ruthlessness of death."—*Funk and Wagnalls New "Standard" Bible Dictionary*, 1936, page 313.

10. (a) When Saul of Tarsus was converted, what work did he take up, and how did he view it? (b) For what were the ancient Greeks renowned, but how did God view their wisdom?
11. In essence, what did Paul say about his preaching commission and the world's wisdom?

make the wisdom of the wise men perish, and the intelligence of the intellectual men I will shove aside.' Where is the wise man [such as the philosopher]? Where the scribe? Where the debater of this system of things? Did not God make the wisdom of the world foolish? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not get to know God, God saw good through the foolishness of what is preached to save those believing."—1 Corinthians 1:17-21.

[12] Incredible as it may seem, the very ones the world calls foolish are those whom Jehovah uses as his preachers. Yes, through the foolishness of the ministry of these preachers, God saves those who believe. Jehovah arranges matters so that preachers of this "foolishness" cannot glorify themselves, and other humans cannot rightly glorify those through whom they have heard the good news. This is so that "no flesh might boast in the sight of God." (1 Corinthians 1:28-31; 3:6, 7) True, the preacher plays an important role, but the message that he has been commissioned to preach is what works toward a person's salvation if he believes it. Those who want "the wisdom from above" will not despise the message of the preacher because he seems to be foolish and lowly, is persecuted, and goes from house to house. Instead, the meek ones will respect a Kingdom proclaimer as a preacher commissioned by Jehovah and coming in God's name. They will attach great importance to the message the preacher brings by word of mouth and by printed page. —James 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

[13] Continuing his discussion of God's ways, Paul says: "Both the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks look for wisdom; but we preach Christ impaled, to the Jews a cause for stumbling but to the nations foolishness; however, to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because a foolish thing of God is wiser than men, and a weak thing of God is stronger than men. For you behold his calling of you, brothers, that not many wise in a fleshly way were called, not many powerful, not many of noble birth; but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put the wise men to shame; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put the strong things to shame."—1 Corinthians 1:22-27; compare Isaiah 55:8, 9.

[14] When Jesus was on the earth, the Jews asked for a sign from heaven. (Matthew 12: 38, 39; 16:1) But Jesus refused to give any sign. Likewise, Jehovah's Witnesses today display no signlike credentials. Rather, they point to their commission to preach the good news, as recorded in such Bible verses as Isaiah 61:1, 2; Mark 13:10; and Revelation 22:17. The Greeks of old looked for wisdom, higher education in the things of this world. While Paul was educated in this world's wisdom, he refused to please the Greeks by any display of it. (Acts 22:3) He spoke and wrote in the conversational Greek of the common people, instead of classical Greek. Paul told the Corinthians: "When I came to you, brothers, [I] did not come with an extravagance of speech or of wisdom declaring the sacred secret of God to you. . . . My speech and what I preached were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of spirit and pow-

12. What is Jehovah accomplishing through "the foolishness of what is preached," and how will those wanting "the wisdom from above" react?

13. (a) How did the Jews and the Greeks view the preaching of Christ impaled? (b) From what groups of people were not many called to be Jesus' followers, and why?

14. (a) If asked about their credentials, to what do Jehovah's Witnesses point? (b) Why did Paul refuse to please the Greeks with any display of the world's wisdom?

The Greeks looked for worldly wisdom and often viewed Paul's preaching as foolishness

er, that your faith might be, not in men's wisdom, but in God's power." —1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

[15] In these last days, ridiculers of the good news of God's incoming new world and the approaching end of this world are reminded by the apostle Peter that the world of Noah's day "suffered destruction when it was deluged with water." (2 Peter 3:3-7) Facing that cataclysmal end, what did Noah do? Many people think of him only as an ark builder. But Peter says that when God brought the Deluge upon the ancient world, He "kept Noah, *a preacher of righteousness,* safe with seven others." (2 Peter 2:5) In their worldly wisdom, those ungodly antediluvians undoubtedly scoffed at what Noah preached and called him foolish, unrealistic, and impractical. Today, true Christians are facing a similar situation, since Jesus compared our generation to that of Noah's day. Despite scoffers, however, the preaching of the Kingdom good news is more than just talk. Like the preaching done by Noah, it means salvation for the preacher and for those who listen to him!—Matthew 24: 37-39; 1 Timothy 4:16.

15. Of what does Peter remind ridiculers of the good news, and how is the present situation similar to that of Noah's day?

'Becoming Fools to Become Wise'

[16] Soon, at Armageddon, Jehovah God will cause all "the wisdom of the wise men" to perish. He will shove aside all "the intelligence of the intellectual men" who made predictions of how their new world order would bring better conditions for mankind. "The war of the great day of God the Almighty" will incinerate all the sophistry, philosophy, and wisdom of this world. (1 Corinthians 1:19; Revelation 16:14-16) The only ones who will survive that war and gain life in God's new world are those who

16. What will happen to this world's wisdom at Armageddon, and who will survive into God's new world?

obey what this world calls foolishness—yes, Jehovah's glorious Kingdom good news.

[17] Jehovah's Witnesses, led by his spirit, are not ashamed to preach what the world calls foolishness. Instead of trying to be worldly-wise, they have become 'fools.' How? By doing the Kingdom-preaching work so that they may be wise, as Paul wrote: "If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this system of things, let him become a fool, that he may become wise." (1 Corinthians 3:18-20) Jehovah's preachers of the good news know the lifesaving value of their message and will keep on preaching it without letup until the end of this world and its wisdom at the war of Armageddon. Soon, Jehovah God will vindicate his universal sovereignty and bring everlasting life to all those now believing and acting on "the foolishness of what is preached."

17. How have Jehovah's Witnesses become 'fools,' and what are God's preachers of the good news determined to do?

What Are Your Answers?

- ☐ What two kinds of wisdom are there?
- ☐ What is the basic flaw of the world's wisdom?
- ☐ Why is preaching the good news the most practical thing to do?
- ☐ What will soon happen to all the world's wisdom?
- ☐ Why are Jehovah's Witnesses not ashamed to preach what the world calls foolishness?

They Are Finding True Happiness in "Paradise"

PARADISE! That word often comes to mind when people think of Hawaii —and for good reasons. In abundant supply here are a temperate climate, blue skies, swaying palm trees, refreshing breezes, and sandy beaches—elements that many might consider paradisaic.

These features have attracted people from far and near. They have come from Asia, the Pacific, the Americas, and even places like the Caribbean islands and Europe. Many have moved here for the year-round mild climate. Others have come seeking economic security—and happiness, of course. The result is a melting pot of nationalities and ethnic groups, with a colorful variety of cultures and religious ideas.

There is, however, another side to the picture. Like so many beautiful places on the earth, Hawaii is plagued with crime, drugs, delinquency, pollution, and the many other problems rushing in on the human family no matter where one may live. Through human negligence and selfishness, the islands of Hawaii are gradually being robbed of their natural beauty. People want a paradise, but not all who live here care enough to make or at least keep these islands a par-

adise. It takes more than beautiful scenery and an agreeable climate to make a paradise.

There is, however, a growing group of people living here who are enjoying true happiness in this paradisaic setting. They are individuals who are embracing Bible truth and are taking to heart God's marvelous promise: "I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart." These people are happily looking to the future with these words of the apostle Peter in mind: "There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell." (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13) Who are these people? How did they come to learn of the wonderful hope presented in the Bible? And what changes have been brought about in their lives?

Fear of Death Overcome

Isabel and her husband, George, are of Filipino extraction. She was brought up to follow her parents' Roman Catholic religion, although she had never looked into the Bible. Isabel had been taught that the human soul is immortal. How did she react to this false doctrine? Well, she dreaded the thought of dying because she had the idea of being forever buried alive in a coffin, her soul supposedly unable to escape. In 1973, though, Isabel began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. When she learned that the human soul is not immortal and that God will undo death by means of the resurrection, she was overjoyed and felt greatly relieved. (Ezekiel 18:4, 20; John 5:28, 29) Bible truth made such an impression on her that she progressed rapidly.

What about George? He too sat in on the Bible discussions but only with the idea of proving the Witnesses wrong. However, he could not find anything amiss in what he and his wife were being taught. In fact, shortly after they started to study, the subject of blood arose. Up to that time, George had been fond of eating foods prepared with blood. But when he saw that the Bible

George, Isabel, and their children find pleasure in reading the Bible

plainly condemns the eating of blood, he quit. (Genesis 9:3, 4; Leviticus 17:10-12; Acts 15:28, 29) He continued to participate in the Bible study and was delighted that he had finally found the truth. Today, George, Isabel, and their four children are enjoying true happiness in living by God's standards.

Attracted by True Christianity

A Japanese man named George and his Portuguese wife, Lillian, are in their 60's. Both of them were born and raised in Hawaii. Since George was not given any religious instruction by his parents, he never took religion seriously. Yet, he has always believed in God. On the other hand, Lillian's parents brought her up in their religion, as a Roman Catholic.

Although George was not an avid Bible reader, he had been reading the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines for some 30 years.

He had thus learned a great deal about the Bible. Being a heavy smoker and drinker, however, he was slow to make changes in his life. As the years passed, George continued to read the magazines and occasionally attended Christian meetings at the Kingdom Hall. Why? Because, as he put it, "the other religions are so hypocritical" in condoning many bad things condemned in the Bible. He could see that Jehovah's Witnesses were different.

What attracted George's devoted wife, Lillian, to the truth of God's Word even though she was deeply influenced by the religion of her parents? Well, her fleshly sister invited her to the meetings at the Kingdom Hall. "I enjoyed the happy family atmosphere and the friendly smiles," Lillian recalled. The genuine love she saw displayed among Jehovah's people convinced her that this is the truth. (John 13:34, 35) She accepted a Bible study, eventually dedicated her life to Jehovah God, and was baptized a few months after her husband was.

George and Lillian find happiness in the Christian ministry

George no longer smokes or gets drunk, and Lillian has thrown away all her religious idols. With hearts full of love, they are sharing what they have learned with others, including their 25 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. Just look at their faces, and see how happy George and Lillian are!

Peace and Happiness Attained

Patrick, a middle-aged Irishman, and his Jewish wife, Nina, both moved to Hawaii from the southwestern United States. Previously, they had led the so-called free lifestyle of drugs, religious experimentation, and loose morals. They also spent many years as members of a cult, striving to attain higher consciousness by means of drugs, meditation, and their private guru. In time Patrick became fed up with the jealousy, contention, and constant bickering among cult members who claimed to have attained a 'higher level of consciousness.' He left the group and returned to Hawaii, where he had once lived, hoping to find peace of mind. Thereafter, Patrick convinced Nina, then his girlfriend, to visit. Eventually, they got married and settled in Hawaii.

Little did Patrick and Nina know that their search for peace and happiness would finally lead to a study of the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. A confirmed atheist all her life, Nina began to find satisfying Bible answers to such puzzling questions as why evil exists and why bad things happen to good people. Patrick's ten-year search for truth likewise had a happy ending. Soon, what he and Nina were learning from the Bible began to change their moral outlook. After a long and hard struggle, Patrick was able to overcome his deeply rooted tobacco addiction. For almost a decade now, he and his wife have lived clean, moral lives according to God's standards. With pure hearts and clean con-

sciences, they are enjoying the peace they have been seeking.

Patrick and Nina are enjoying true peace in Jehovah's service

Sacrifices and Rewards

"Exert yourselves vigorously to get in through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will seek to get in but will not be able." (Luke 13:24) Those words of Jesus Christ show clearly that it is not easy to serve God and live by Scriptural standards. Everyone desiring to do so must not only put forth the needed effort but also make the necessary sacrifices. This has certainly been the case with the individuals mentioned in this account. But how wonderfully they have been rewarded!

For instance, consider Patrick and Nina, just mentioned. They made a drastic change from a life-style wherein they made large sums of money to one of full-time Christian ministry supported by part-time secular employment. Yet, they are convinced that the spiritual gains far outweigh any material sacrifices they have made. And they are truly happy.

Because of their age, changes have not come easy for George and Lillian. Sharing in Christian meetings and the ministry requires time, attention, and physical effort. To their great delight, however, their health has improved, and the life they are leading now can only be described as a vibrant, full, and happy one.

As for George and Isabel, their greatest challenge lies in training their children and helping them onto the road to life. Much time and effort are needed to get four youngsters ready for Christian meetings or to have them go along in the Christian ministry. At one point the constant pressure caused George and Isabel to slack off in their parental responsibilities. But a Bible lecture entitled "Renewing the Spirit of Self-Sacrifice" moved them to redouble their efforts to give their four children all the attention and training needed to 'bring them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah.' Needless to say, such efforts have been richly rewarded.—Ephesians 6:4.

It is not the beautiful scenery, the agreeable climate, or the leisurely pace of life that brings true happiness to these individuals and many others. Rather, it is the knowledge that they are using their life according to the will of God and are living by the standards of his Word, the Bible. (Ecclesiastes 12:13) Moreover, true happiness wells up in their hearts as they contemplate the joyous time when an earthly paradise will be restored earth wide.—Luke 23:43.

In Our Next Issue

The Messiah—A Real Hope?

'Should I Get Baptized?'

Learn Obedience by Accepting Discipline

You Can Cope With Frustration!

CONSIDER the plight of a certain 23-year-old man. He has only a limited education and is working for a minimum wage. Thoughts of marriage and a satisfying life seem out of the question for him. No wonder his mother says: "He is extremely sad and frustrated." This young man's case is typical of that of millions of others. For one reason or another, people in all walks of life are frustrated.

Frustration is "a deep chronic sense or condition of insecurity, discouragement, and dissatisfaction arising from thwarted desires, inner conflicts, or other unresolved problems." (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*) We experience frustration when we try very hard to accomplish something but do not succeed. We feel blocked at every turn, as if we were beating our head against a stone wall, with no chance of success. All of us know the feeling.

Workers on seemingly unrewarding jobs may have feelings of worthlessness. If taken for granted, wives or mothers struggling with daily anxieties and tiring duties may feel unfulfilled, unappreciated. Young people encountering trials at school may feel frustrated in efforts to get an education. Members of minority groups may be torn apart inside, convinced that they are victims of unjust discrimination. Businessmen who honestly try to provide quality products or services may be crushed by unscrupulous and dishonest competitors. These and similar experiences cause frustration and leave many with feelings of hopelessness.

A wise man who lived centuries ago was able to put his frustrations into words that we can understand. Israel's king Solomon said: "I, even I, turned toward all the works of mine that my hands had done and toward the hard work that I had worked hard to accomplish, and, look! everything was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing of advantage under the sun. For what does a man come to have for all his hard work and for the striving of his heart with which he is working hard under the sun? For all his days his occupation means pains and vexation, also during the night his heart just does not lie down. This too is mere vanity." (Ecclesiastes 2:11, 22, 23) Solomon's words express the despair that so many feel in trying to cope with frustrations that rob them of a rewarding life.

Frustrated people may even become desperate. In severe cases some have abandoned the struggle, dropping out of society to live on its fringes. To get what they feel entitled to, some have resorted to crime and violence. Unrelenting pressures have shattered marriages and family ties.

Many of us may have to put forth great effort in searching for ways to cope with frustration. In spite of what we do, things may seem to get worse. Says Proverbs 13:12: "Expectation postponed is making the heart sick." Our physical and spiritual well-being may hang in the balance. Is the situation hopeless? Must we live with constant frustration as a retribution for our inadequacies or mistakes? Can some practical steps be taken to cope with frustration in order to enjoy a more satisfying life? Let us see.

Some Ways to Cope With Frustration

When we have a problem and need advice, we usually go to a knowledgeable, experi-

enced person we can trust. Proverbs 3:5, 6 recommends: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." Practical advice can be found in God's Word, the Bible. Consider some examples of the insight it provides.

Frustration may be related to making a living. For instance, our secular work may be satisfying, but low wages may be a source of depression. We love our families and want the best for them. Still, there seems to be no end to anxiety about meeting our financial obligations. We may work overtime and even take on a second job. After a while life seems to be a tedious cycle of eating, sleeping, and working. Yet, bills pile up, debts increase, and frustration mounts.

The primary purpose of secular work is to provide for our needs. But how much do we need? The apostle Paul wrote: "We have brought nothing into the world, and neither can we carry anything out. So, having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things." Are we trying to acquire more than that and to match what others have or are able to do? If so, we may be reaping consequences in the form of frustration. Paul warned: "Those who are determined to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things, and by reaching out for this love some have been led astray from the faith and have stabbed themselves all over with many pains." (1 Timothy 6:7-10) An honest evaluation of our material pursuits may reveal some nonessentials. A few reasonable adjustments toward thrift and a more modest lifestyle may go a long way toward minimizing our frustration.

Suppressed natural desires have caused much frustration. For example, it is natural for a young woman to have a strong urge to marry and have the security and warm affection that come with family life. She may go to great lengths to make herself more attractive with the latest fashions or beauty aids and may become an avid reader of periodicals offering advice to the lovelorn. The woman may attend an endless round of social gatherings in hopes of meeting someone suitable—all to no avail. Years go by, and the frustration becomes unbearable. In desperation she may be tempted to marry someone unsuitable. Worse yet, to satisfy her craving for affection, she may become involved in immoral conduct.

In such a case, patience and good judgment are essential. Marriage to an unsuitable person—especially one lacking faith in Jehovah—would be a grave mistake. (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15) Immorality inevitably leads to nothing but heartache and despair. (Proverbs 6:32, 33) Honest self-scrutiny, combined with a sensible approach, can help. A "quiet and mild spirit" can attract the right kind of marriage mate far better than stylish clothes or exotic cosmetics can. (1 Peter 3:3, 4) Instead of relying on often shortsighted or frivolous advice of worldly experts, it is vital to go to the Originator of marriage to learn what it takes to be a wife who is loved and cherished. (Proverbs, chapter 31) Unmarried men and women should try to display the qualities they would desire in a mate. How wise it is to seek wholesome association with people who respect Bible principles. If we apply these in life, our

prospects for a happy marriage will be infinitely better. Even if marriage does not materialize right away, acting in harmony with the Scriptures will bring joy and make a life of singleness very rewarding.

A heavy load of obligations may bring us to the point of exasperation. There may be pressure from all sides. We are anxious about the pressing needs of our family, and our employer may never be satisfied. Relatives may expect us to give a helping hand every time there is a crisis. Because of many pressures, a long list of neglected personal matters cries for our attention. It may seem that our time and energies have to be channeled in a dozen different directions all at once. Frustration may turn into exasperation, and we may feel like giving up. So, what should we do?

We would be wise to reevaluate our priorities. Since we can do only so much, it is impossible to accommodate every demand made by others. We need to narrow matters down to "the more important things." (Philippians 1:10) After all, "a live dog is better off than a dead lion." (Ecclesiastes 9:4) Some obligations are critical and cannot be set aside, whereas those less crucial may have to wait. We may have assumed full responsibility for some duties that should be shared by others. Some responsibilities may have to be eliminated entirely if they are not essential. Though this may initially cause inconvenience or may disappoint others, we need to respect our own physical and emotional limitations.

A debilitating disease can bring excruciating frustration, for it may put us in a sickbed for days or weeks at a time. Severe pain can make us miserable. Searching for a cure, we may go from one doctor to another or may take many medicines or vitamins in hopes that they will do some good. Yet, we may continue to suffer and may begin to wonder if life is worth the struggle.

This may be a problem that can be remedied only in God's new world. (2 Peter 3:13; compare Isaiah 33:24.) Since humans are imperfect, doctors and medicines can do only so much. At some point we may have to accept our suffering as a part of life. The apostle Paul had "a thorn in the flesh," perhaps an affliction of his eyes or another part of his body, so troublesome that he repeatedly prayed for relief. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) But God did not heal Paul, and perhaps the apostle had to contend with the affliction until his death. He lived with his suffering, did not ask for pity, and never lost his joy. (2 Corinthians 7:4) Though the upright man Job suffered great affliction, he maintained his faith in Jehovah, and this led to a rich reward. (Job 42:12, 13) If we are servants of God, we can find strength to carry on by reflecting on these examples and praying for Jehovah's help.—Psalm 41:1-3.

Strong Despite Frustrations

Jehovah's people can be spiritually strong despite any frustrations. For instance, though we may have to endure illness, we can remain "healthy in faith" by taking full advantage of God's spiritual provisions. (Titus 2:1, 2) While we may be frustratingly poor materially, we can be wonderfully rich spiritually.

By relying on God for wisdom and strength, we can cope with frustrations that may develop in domestic situations. For example, consider Abigail, the wife of Nabal. He was "harsh and bad in his practices," and his very name means "Senseless; Stupid." How frustrating it must have been to live with such a man! Yet, Abigail remained "good in

discretion" and did not despair. Indeed, so discreet were her words and deeds during one crisis that she convinced David not to repay Nabal's insults and ingratitude by shedding blood and failing to trust in Jehovah.—1 Samuel 25:2-38.

Even if a situation involving someone associated with the Christian congregation is causing us frustration, we can endure in the strength that Jehovah imparts. This is shown by the fact that the potentially frustrating conduct of Diotrephes did not stop the godly man Gaius from doing good and thus reaping happiness and rich spiritual rewards. —Acts 20:35; 3 John 1-10.

God can help you to cope with frustration, even as he helped Job, Moses, Abigail, and Paul

Frustration could result if we desire to serve our fellow believers in the congregation but are passed over when others are appointed as elders or ministerial servants. Rather than allowing disappointment to overwhelm us, however, let us seek to strengthen ourselves spiritually and allow God's spirit to produce its fine fruitage in us to a greater extent. (Galatians 5:22, 23) During the 40 years that Moses spent in Midian, God developed in him to a higher degree the meekness, patience, and other qualities needed to cope with the hardships and frustrations he would encounter as the leader of the Israelites. Similarly, Jehovah may be preparing us for future service privileges that may come our way if we remain spiritually strong and do not succumb to frustration.

Relief From Frustration—Soon!

Whatever their nature, will our frustrations ever end? To us, our situation may look hopeless but not to our Creator, Jehovah God. He is not subject to frustration. Through the prophet Isaiah, God said: "So my word that goes forth from my mouth will prove to be. It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it." (Isaiah 55:11) Since Jehovah has almighty power and authority, nothing is impossible with him. (Mark 10:27) His promises to bring unending blessings to his people are sure to be fulfilled.—Joshua 21:45.

Doubt and uncertainty are major elements in frustration. In contrast, however, "faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for." (Hebrews 11:1) Faith in God provides a guarantee that all our Bible-based hopes will be fully realized. The overall theme of the Bible highlights Jehovah's promise of Kingdom rule, under which the earth will become a perfect paradise wherein righteous people will joyfully live forever. (Psalm 37:11, 29) Everything bad—including frustration—will be gone, for God will 'satisfy the desire of every living thing.'—Psalm 145:16.

Until those blessings become a reality, all of us will have our share of frustration. But Scriptural hope can give us the courage and fortitude to persevere. The sound counsel we find in the Bible can show us how to use good judgment and reasonableness in a way that will bring stability to our lives and peace to our hearts. In spite of our disappointments, we can experience "the peace of God that excels all thought." (Philippians 4:6, 7) So the battle against frustration is not hopeless. With Jehovah's help we can cope with it today and conquer it tomorrow.

They Knew God's Name

THE first piece of literature known to have been written and published in England's American colonies was the Bay Psalm Book. Its original edition was printed by Stephen Daye in the Massachusetts Bay Colony during the year 1640. That early publication contained the Bible book of Psalms, translated from Hebrew into the English language as spoken and written at that time.

A noteworthy feature of the Bay Psalm Book was the use of the divine name in some verses. Hence, anyone reading that publication as far back as some 350 years ago was in a position to know the name of our Creator. In that edition, for instance, Psalm 83:17, 18 reads: "Confounded let them ever be, and terriblie troubled: yea, let them be put unto shame, and bee extinguished. That men may know; that thou whose name IEHOVAH is only, art over all the earth throughout advanced the most high."

Of course, the most high God requires more than our acknowledgment that his name is Jehovah (Iehovah). In the Bay Psalm Book, Psalm 1:1, 2 says that a "blessed man" does not walk in the advice of the wicked, "but in the law of Iehovah, is his longing delight." The revised New England Psalms of 1648 says: "But he upon Jehovah's law doth set his whole delight."

Here the 20th-century *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* reads: "Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked ones, and in the way of sinners has not stood, and in the seat of ridiculers has not sat. But his delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night."

To be truly happy, a person must reject the counsel of wicked ones. He must not follow the example of sinners and cannot join in company with godless ridiculers. Among other things, he needs to avoid the association of those whose advice and conduct could lure him into sexual immorality, drug abuse, and other activities contrary to God's law. Yes, genuine happiness depends on learning about the true God, whose name is Jehovah, and applying his law as revealed in the Bible.