

THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

JULY 15, 1993

Who Is Jehovah?

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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Who Is Jehovah?

“WHO is Jehovah?” That question was posed 3,500 years ago by proud Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Defiance apparently moved him to add: “I do not know Jehovah at all.” Two men then standing before Pharaoh knew who Jehovah was. They were the fleshly brothers Moses and Aaron, of Israel’s tribe of Levi. Jehovah had sent them to demand that Egypt’s ruler send the Israelites into the wilderness to hold a religious festival.—Exodus 5:1, 2.

Pharaoh wanted no answer to his question. Under his authority, priests promoted the worship of hundreds of false deities. Why, Pharaoh himself was considered a god! According to Egyptian mythology, he was the son of the sun-god Ra and an incarnation of the falcon-headed deity Horus. Pharaoh was addressed using such titles as “the mighty god” and “the eternal.” So it was not surprising that he would scornfully ask: “Who is Jehovah, so that I should obey his voice?”

Moses and Aaron did not need to answer that question. Pharaoh knew that Jehovah was the God worshiped by the Israelites, then suffering in Egyptian bondage. But Pharaoh and all Egypt would soon learn that Jehovah is the true God. Similarly today, Jehovah will make his name and Godship known to everyone on the earth. (Ezekiel 36:23) So we can benefit by considering how Jehovah God magnified his name in ancient Egypt.

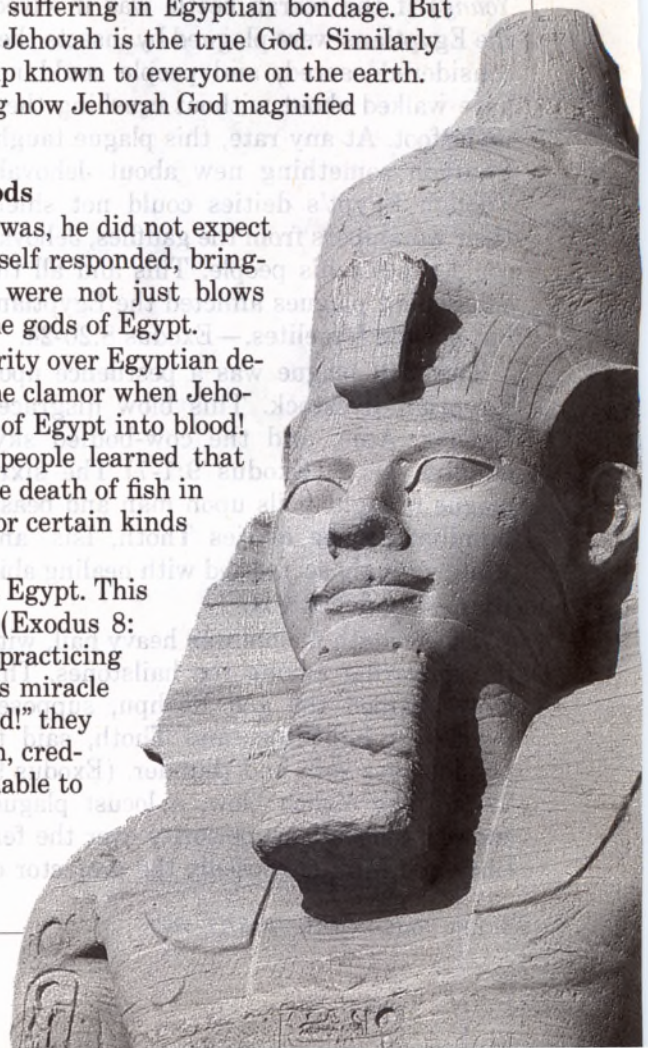
Superior to Egyptian Gods

When Pharaoh defiantly asked who Jehovah was, he did not expect the consequences he experienced. Jehovah himself responded, bringing ten plagues upon Egypt. Those plagues were not just blows against the nation. They were blows against the gods of Egypt.

The plagues demonstrated Jehovah’s superiority over Egyptian deities. (Exodus 12:12; Numbers 33:4) Imagine the clamor when Jehovah changed the Nile River and all the waters of Egypt into blood! By reason of this miracle, Pharaoh and his people learned that Jehovah was superior to the Nile-god, Hapi. The death of fish in the Nile was also a blow to Egyptian religion, for certain kinds of fish were venerated.—Exodus 7:19-21.

Next, Jehovah brought a plague of frogs upon Egypt. This discredited the Egyptian frog-goddess, Heqt. (Exodus 8: 5-14) The third plague confounded the magic-practicing priests, who were unable to duplicate Jehovah’s miracle of turning dust into gnats. “It is the finger of God!” they cried. (Exodus 8:16-19) The Egyptian god Thoth, credited with the invention of magical arts, was unable to help those charlatans.

Pharaoh was learning who Jehovah was. Jehovah was the God who could announce his



purpose through Moses and then accomplish it by bringing miraculous plagues upon the Egyptians. Jehovah could also start and end the blows according to his will. This knowledge, however, did not move Pharaoh to submit to Jehovah. Instead, Egypt's haughty ruler obstinately continued to resist Jehovah.

During the fourth plague, gadflies ruined the land, invaded houses, and probably swarmed through the air, which was itself an object of worship personified in the god Shu or in the goddess Isis, queen of heaven. The Hebrew word for this insect has been rendered "gadfly," "dog fly," and "beetle." (*New World Translation; Septuagint; Young*) If the scarab beetle was involved, the Egyptians were plagued by insects they considered sacred, and people could not have walked about without crushing them underfoot. At any rate, this plague taught Pharaoh something new about Jehovah. Though Egypt's deities could not shield their worshipers from the gadflies, Jehovah could protect his people. This and all the subsequent plagues afflicted the Egyptians but not the Israelites.—Exodus 8:20-24.

The fifth plague was a pestilence upon Egyptian livestock. This blow disgraced Hathor, Apis, and the cow-bodied sky-goddess Nut. (Exodus 9:1-7) The sixth plague brought boils upon man and beast, humiliating the deities Thoth, Isis, and Ptah, wrongly accredited with healing abilities.—Exodus 9:8-11.

The seventh plague was heavy hail, with fire quivering among the hailstones. This blow shamed the god Reshpu, supposed master of lightning, and Thoth, said to preside over rain and thunder. (Exodus 9:22-26) The eighth blow, a locust plague, showed Jehovah's superiority over the fertility god Min, supposedly the protector of

crops. (Exodus 10:12-15) The ninth blow, a three-day darkness over Egypt, poured contempt on such Egyptian deities as the sun-gods Ra and Horus.—Exodus 10:21-23.

In spite of nine devastating plagues, Pharaoh still refused to release the Israelites. His hard-heartedness became very costly to Egypt when God brought about the tenth and final plague—the death of the firstborn of man and beast. Even the firstborn son of Pharaoh perished, though he was viewed as a god. Thus Jehovah 'executed judgments on all the gods of Egypt.'—Exodus 12:12, 29.

Pharaoh now summoned Moses and Aaron and said: "Get up, get out from the midst of my people, both you and the other sons of Israel, and go, serve Jehovah, just as you have stated. Take both your flocks and your herds, just as you have stated, and go. Also, you must bless me besides."—Exodus 12:31, 32.

Preserver of His People

The Israelites departed, but it soon seemed to Pharaoh that they were wandering aimlessly in the wilderness. He and his servants now asked: "What is this that we have done, in that we have sent Israel away from slaving for us?" (Exodus 14:3-5) The loss of this slave nation would be a heavy economic blow to Egypt.

Pharaoh mustered his army and pursued Israel as far as Pihahiroth. (Exodus 14:6-9) Militarily, the situation looked good for the Egyptians because the Israelites were hemmed in between the sea and the mountains. But Jehovah acted to protect the Israelites by placing a cloud between them and the Egyptians. On the Egyptian side, "it proved to be a cloud together with darkness," thus preventing an attack. On the other side, the cloud was bright, "lighting up the night" for Israel.—Exodus 14:10-20.

The Egyptians were bent on plunder and destruction but were hindered by the cloud. (Exodus 15:9) When it lifted, what a wonder! The waters of the Red Sea had been parted, and the Israelites were crossing over to the other side on dry land! Pharaoh and his forces thundered into the seabed, determined to capture and despoil their former slaves. However, Egypt's haughty ruler had not counted on the God of the Hebrews. Jehovah began to throw the Egyptians into confusion, taking the wheels off their chariots.—Exodus 14:21-25a.

"Let us flee from any contact with Israel!" cried Egypt's mighty men, "because Jehovah certainly fights for them against the Egyptians." This realization came too late for Pharaoh and his men. Safe on the other shore, Moses stretched his hand out toward the sea, and the waters returned, killing Pharaoh and his forces.—Exodus 14:25b-28.

Lessons Taught by Experience

So, then, who is Jehovah? Proud Pharaoh got an answer to that question. Events in

Egypt demonstrated that Jehovah is the only true God, totally unlike the "valueless gods" of the nations. (Psalm 96:4, 5) By his awesome power, Jehovah "made the heavens and the earth." He is also the Great Deliverer, the One who 'brought forth his people Israel out of the land of Egypt, with signs, miracles, a strong hand, and great fearsomeness.' (Jeremiah 32:17-21) How well this proved that Jehovah can protect his people!

Pharaoh learned those lessons through bitter experience. In fact, the final lesson cost him his life. (Psalm 136:1, 15) He would have been much wiser if he had shown humility when he asked, "Who is Jehovah?" Then that ruler could have acted in harmony with the answer he received. Happily, many humble people today are learning who Jehovah is. And what kind of personality does He have? What does he ask of us? May the next article enhance your appreciation for the One alone whose name is Jehovah.—Psalm 83:18.

JEHOVAH

The True and Living God

PHARAOH of Egypt spoke with defiance and contempt when he asked: "Who is Jehovah?" (Exodus 5:2) As shown in the preceding article, that attitude brought plagues and death upon the Egyptians, including a watery grave for Pharaoh and his military forces.

In ancient Egypt, Jehovah God proved his

supremacy over false gods. But there is much more to be learned about him. What are some facets of his personality? And what does he require of us?

His Name and Fame

When he made demands upon Egypt's Pharaoh, Moses did not say: 'The Lord says

such and such.' Pharaoh and the other Egyptians thought of their many false gods as lords. No, Moses used the divine name, Jehovah. He himself had heard it spoken from above when he was at the burning bush in the land of Midian. Says the inspired record:

"God went on to speak to Moses and to say to him: 'I am Jehovah. . . I, even I, have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I remember my covenant. Therefore say to the sons of Israel, "I am Jehovah, and I shall certainly bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from their slavery, and I shall indeed reclaim you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. And I shall certainly take you to me as a people, and I shall indeed prove to be God to you; and you will certainly know that I am Jehovah your God who is bringing you out from under the burdens of Egypt. And I shall certainly bring you into the land [of Canaan] that I raised my hand in oath to give to [your forefathers,] Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and I shall indeed give it to you as something to possess. I am Jehovah."'"—Exodus 6:1-8.

That is just what Jehovah did. He freed the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and enabled them to occupy the land of Canaan. As promised, God caused all of this to take place. How fitting! His name, Jehovah, means "He Causes to Become." The Bible refers to Jehovah by such titles as "God," "Sovereign Lord," "Creator," "Father," "the Almighty," and "the Most High." Yet his name Jehovah identifies him as the true God who progressively brings his grand purposes to pass.—Isaiah 42:8.

If we were to read the Bible in its original languages, we would find God's name thousands of times. In Hebrew it is represented

by the four consonants Yod He Waw He (יהוה), called the Tetragrammaton, read from right to left. Those speaking Hebrew supplied the vowel sounds, but people today do not know for certain what those were. While some favor the spelling Yahweh, the form Jehovah is common and suitably identifies our Creator.

Use of the name Jehovah also distinguishes God from the one called "my Lord" at Psalm 110:1, where one rendition is: "The LORD [Hebrew, יהוה] said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (*King James Version*) Acknowledging the occurrence of God's name here in the Hebrew text, the *New World Translation* reads: "The utterance of Jehovah to my Lord is: 'Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.'" Those words of Jehovah God refer prophetically to Jesus Christ, whom the writer called "my Lord."

Jehovah made a name for himself in Pharaoh's day. By means of Moses, God told that hard-hearted ruler: "At this time I am sending all my blows against your heart and upon your servants and your people, to the end that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. For by now I could have thrust my hand out that I might strike you and your people with pestilence and that you might be effaced from the earth. But, in fact, for this cause I have kept you in existence, for the sake of showing you my power and in order to have my name declared in all the earth."—Exodus 9:14-16.

Regarding Israel's exodus from Egypt and the overthrow of certain Canaanite kings, the woman Rahab of Jericho told two Hebrew spies: "I do know that Jehovah will certainly give you [Israelites] the land, and that the fright of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have

become disheartened because of you. For we have heard how Jehovah dried up the waters of the Red Sea from before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, namely, Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. When we got to hear it, then our hearts began to melt, and no spirit has arisen yet in anybody because of you, for Jehovah your God is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath." (Joshua 2:9-11) Yes, Jehovah's fame had spread.

Jehovah and His Qualities

The psalmist expressed this heartfelt wish: "That people may know that you, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth." (Psalm 83:18) Since Jehovah's sovereignty is universal, Jesus' persecuted followers could pray: "Sovereign Lord, you are the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all the things in them." (Acts 4:24) And how comforting it is to know that Jehovah is the "Hearer of prayer!"—Psalm 65:2.

Jehovah's main attribute is love. Indeed, "God is love"—the very epitome of this quality. (1 John 4:8) Moreover, "with him there are wisdom and mightiness." Jehovah is all-wise and all-powerful, but he never abuses his power. (Job 12:13; 37:23) We can also be sure that Jehovah will always deal fairly

with us, for "righteousness and judgment are the established place of his throne." (Psalm 97:2) If we err but are repentant, we can take comfort in the knowledge that Jehovah is "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth." (Exodus 34:6) No wonder we can have joy in serving Jehovah!—Psalm 100:1-5.

The Incomparable Heavenly King

Jehovah's Son, Jesus Christ, said: "God is a Spirit." (John 4:24) Hence, Jehovah is invisible to human eyes. In fact, Jehovah told Moses: "You are not able to see my face, because no man may see me and yet live." (Exodus 33:20) This heavenly King is so glorious that humans would not be able to endure the experience of seeing him.

Though Jehovah is invisible to our eyes, there is plenty of testimony to his existence as Almighty God. Indeed, "his invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship." (Romans 1:20) The earth—with its grass, trees, fruits, vegetables, and flowers—testifies to Jehovah's Godship. Unlike valueless idol-gods, Jehovah gives rain and fruitful seasons. (Acts 14:16, 17) Look at the stars in the night sky. What grand evidence of Jehovah's Godship and organizational ability!

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.



Jehovah has also organized his holy, intelligent spirit creatures in heaven. As a harmonious organization, they carry out God's will, as the psalmist says: "Bless Jehovah, O you angels of his, mighty in power, carrying out his word, by listening to the voice of his word. Bless Jehovah, all you armies of his, you ministers of his, doing his will." (Psalm 103:20, 21) Jehovah has also organized his people on the earth. The nation of Israel was well organized, and so were the early followers of God's Son. Similarly today, Jehovah has a worldwide organization of zealous Witnesses, proclaiming the good news that his Kingdom is at hand.—Matthew 24:14.

Jehovah Is the True and Living God

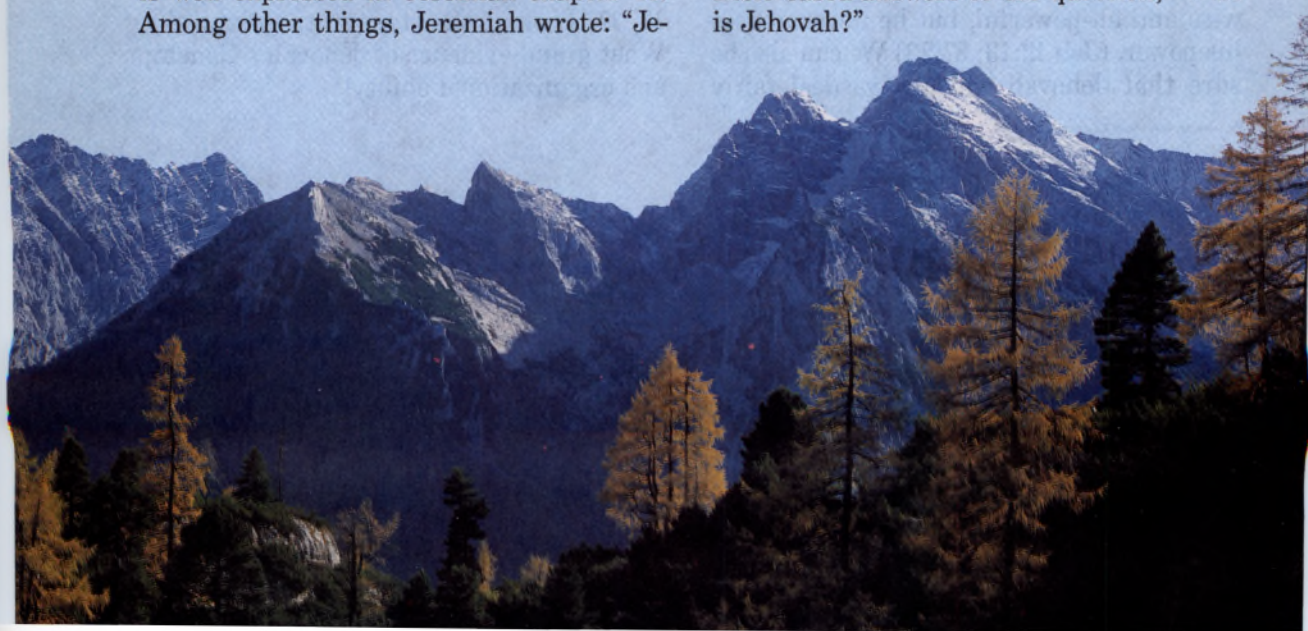
Jehovah's Godship has been demonstrated in so many ways! He humiliated Egypt's false gods and brought the Israelites safely into the Promised Land. Creation gives abundant evidence of Jehovah's Godship. And there is simply no comparison between him and the worthless idol-gods of false religion.

The prophet Jeremiah showed the great contrast between Jehovah, the living God, and lifeless man-made idols. That contrast is well expressed in Jeremiah chapter 10. Among other things, Jeremiah wrote: "Je-

hovah is in truth God. He is the living God and the King to time indefinite." (Jeremiah 10:10) The living and true God, Jehovah, created all things. He delivered the Israelites languishing in Egyptian bondage. Nothing is impossible for him.

Jehovah, "the King of eternity," will answer the prayer: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth." (1 Timothy 1:17; Matthew 6:9, 10) The heavenly Messianic Kingdom, already in the hands of Jesus Christ, will soon take action against the wicked and destroy all of Jehovah's enemies. (Daniel 7:13, 14) That Kingdom will also usher in a new world of endless blessings for obedient mankind.—2 Peter 3:13.

There is much more to learn about Jehovah and his purposes. Why not make it your determination to take in such knowledge and act in harmony with it? If you do this, you will be privileged to enjoy eternal life in an earthly paradise under Kingdom rule. You will live when sorrow, pain, and even death have passed away and the knowledge of Jehovah fills the earth. (Isaiah 11:9; Revelation 21:1-4) That can be your lot if you seek, find, and act in harmony with the Bible-based answers to the question, "Who is Jehovah?"



Jehovah Protects His People in

H · U · N · G · A · R · Y

HUNGARY, located in the center of Europe, has often felt the storms of history. Its people have suffered much, despite their having been offered to the Virgin Mary and forced to become nominal Christians in 1001 by Stephen, their first king.

Through the centuries Hungary was weakened by numerous internal conflicts that allowed other nations to subdue it repeatedly. The populations of entire villages were wiped out during these conflicts, later to be replaced by foreigners. Thus, the populace became a mixture of many nationalities. Religiously speaking, approximately two thirds of the country's population remained Catholic, although the Reformation later spread in some areas.

A Modest Start

It was in 1908 that the seeds of Bible truth were first sown in Hungary. This was done by a woman who had learned the truth from the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known. Because of her preaching, many became interested in the good news. Shortly thereafter two men returning to Hungary from the United States spread the good news full-time as colporteurs. The truth spread slowly but surely, and a printing press was set up at Kolozsvár.

The first reliable report was obtained in 1922, when 67 Bible Students from ten



towns attended the Memorial of Christ's death. Their witnessing work had an immediate impact, resulting in opposition as the clergy influenced the government and the press to hinder the preaching work.

The Attacks Intensify

In 1928, Catholic priest Zoltán Nyisztor issued a pamphlet entitled *Millennialist Bible Students*. In it he asserted regarding the Bible Students: "They are worse than the red bolsheviks that attack with arms, for these mislead the innocent by hiding behind the Bible. The Hungarian Royal State Police is eagerly watching their activity."

During that time a zealous brother named Josef Kiss visited the congregations. The gendarmerie stealthily followed him. In 1931 he was at the home of a brother when the police surprised him and ordered him to leave at once. As Brother Kiss started to pack his belongings, one gendarme hit him with the butt of his rifle and threatened: "Hurry up, or you will be stabbed through!" Brother Kiss smiled and said: "Then I will go home sooner," referring to his heavenly hope as an anointed Christian.

The soldiers followed Brother Kiss to the train. He was expected to arrive at the congregation in Debrecen on June 20, 1931, but

Jehovah's people assembled in Budapest

he never appeared. The brothers concluded that his enemies did away with him, that he indeed did "go home" to his heavenly reward. Although his work was stopped, the authorities were never able to extinguish the light of the truth.

Ingenuity was often used in order to give a witness. For example, in the mid-1930's, a brother died at Tiszakarád. Funerals could then be conducted only with the permission of the officials. The brothers were allowed just one minute of prayer and one minute of song. Members of the gendarmerie, who came to the funeral with rifles and bayonets, were to enforce this. Many townspeople came because they were curious about how the funeral would be conducted.

A brother stood by the coffin and prayed for half an hour but in such a way that the people said they had never heard anything like it. "Even if six priests had conducted the funeral," they said, "it wouldn't have been so moving." A brother with a good voice then started to lead the singing, but a gendarme ordered him to remain silent. The police later confessed that, although they felt uneasy, they could not interrupt the prayer.

As the attacks continued, Lajos Szabó, a priest of the Reformed Church, wrote the following in his 1935 brochure *Antichrist by the River Tisza*: "It was a stroke of genius to feed the people with bolshevism under the sign of religion . . . Marx took on Christ's appearance . . . The Antichrist was here in his red robe with Jehovah's Witnesses."



Years Under Ban

In 1939 the work of Jehovah's Witnesses was banned outright. It was branded an activity "against religion and against society." Adventists, Baptists, Evangelicals, and Presbyterians issued pamphlets against the Witnesses. But Jehovah did not abandon his servants, and they were looked after by the Witnesses in other countries. Additionally, God's people in Hungary had many faith-strengthening experiences.

For example, when a brother brought a backpack full of our magazines from Czechoslovakia, the customs officer asked: "What is in your backpack?" The brother honestly answered: "*Watchtowers*." At that the officer made a sign with his hand as if to indicate that the brother was crazy, and he let him continue on his way. Thus, the spiritual food arrived safely in Hungary.

Yet, the harassment did not stop. More and more brothers were arrested and held captive for varying periods of time. Then a special investigating team was given the assignment of cracking down on Jehovah's

Witnesses. In 1942, men, women, and children were gathered up and put in stables and empty Jewish schools. After two months of torture, they were tried and convicted. Some were sentenced to life imprisonment; others received from 2 to 15 years in the penitentiary. Three brothers—Dénes Faluvégi, András Bartha, and János Konrád—were sentenced to death by hanging, but the sentence was later changed to life imprisonment. Then, 160 brothers were taken to the death camp at Bor. After crossing the border, they were told that they would never return alive. Of the 6,000 deported Jews taken to this camp, only 83 remained alive. Except for four, however, all the Witnesses returned.

Jehovah's Witnesses did have their martyrs. Toward the end of World War II, the Nazis executed a number of brothers. Bertalan Szabó, János Zsondor, and Antal Hónis were shot to death, and Lajos Deli was hanged.—Matthew 24:9.

A Favorable Change Is Only Temporary

After the second world war, things changed once again. A coalition government promised human rights. The brothers returning from the camps immediately began to preach and to organize congregations. They felt that Jehovah had granted them freedom so that they could praise his great name, not in order for them to try to accumulate material possessions. By the end of 1945, there were 590 active Kingdom publishers. In 1947 a villa was purchased to be used as a branch office of the Watch Tower Society, and the first national convention was held, in a sports hall. The attendance was 1,200, and the Hungarian state railway even gave a 50-percent discount to those traveling to the convention.

Freedom did not last long, however. Soon, the Communist Party gained power, and the

government changed. The increase of Jehovah's people caught the attention of the new government, for they had grown from 1,253 publishers in 1947 to 2,307 in 1950. In that year officials started to put obstacles in the way of the preaching work. Permits were required, but the government refused to issue them, and those who applied were beaten by the National Guard. Newspaper articles continuously denounced the Witnesses as 'agents of the imperialists.' Interestingly, before Communism came to power, the Witnesses had been sent to detention camps as 'Communist Jew henchmen.'

The Terror Starts

On November 13, 1950, the branch overseer and the translator (two of those formerly sentenced to death) were arrested, together with the overseer of the first circuit. They were taken to the infamous underground prison at 60 Andrassy Street in Budapest, to be "softened." Their trial took place on February 2 the following year. The branch overseer was sentenced to ten years of detention, the translator to nine years, and the circuit overseer to eight years. All three had their property confiscated. During the trial, four more congregation overseers were given prison sentences ranging from five to six years on charges of trying to overthrow the government.

The brothers were put in a high-security prison, where they could not receive letters, packages, or visitors. Their families heard no news of them. Their names could not even be mentioned by the guards. For identification, each wore a wooden tag hanging from his neck with a number on it. There was even a sign on the wall that read: "Do not simply guard the prisoners; hate them."

The Witnesses went underground, but the preaching work did not stop. Other Witnesses continued in the place of the

imprisoned ones. In time the replacements also were captured. By the year 1953, over 500 of the brothers had been convicted and sentenced to prison, but the good news could not be bound in chains. Only a few of the brothers believed the enticing promises of the guards and compromised.

Bright Prospects

In the fall of 1956, the people began to revolt against the government. The Soviet Army suppressed the revolution, and the Communist Party regained power.

All imprisoned Witnesses had been freed, but then a few well-known brothers were sent back to prison to continue their sentences, though newer ones were not convicted. Finally, in 1964, things began to ease up. The authorities no longer did anything to interrupt funerals and wedding feasts. Circuit assemblies were held in the forests. While some of these were interrupted, no additional Witnesses were sent to prison.

In 1979 brothers in oversight were allowed to attend the convention in Vienna. During that year too, the authorities promised to grant Jehovah's Witnesses legal recognition, but ten more years passed before this actually happened. In 1986 the first district convention was held, at the Youth Park of the Kamara Forest, with the knowledge of the authorities. A sign was even posted, stating that this was the "Divine Peace" District Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses. The following year the "Trust in Jehovah" Convention was held, and in 1988 the brothers enjoyed the "Divine Justice" Convention.

Free at Last!

June 27, 1989, was a wonderful day, for it was then that the brothers received a document granting official recognition to the Religious Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses in Hungary. In July the stately Bu-

dapest Sports Hall accommodated the 9,477 in attendance at the "Godly Devotion" District Convention. The same hall was used for the "Pure Language" District Convention in 1990, and conventions were also held in three other large cities in Hungary.

Now that the ban had been lifted entirely, it was possible to organize the first international convention. In spite of the bad weather, it was held at Népstadion in Budapest, where 40,601 met to enjoy the warmth of brotherly love. Members of the Governing Body attended and strengthened the brothers' faith with their talks, and new books and brochures with full-color illustrations were released at this convention.

What Is Happening Today

The Hungarian editions of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* are now published simultaneously with their English counterparts and in the same beautiful format. In 1992 the *Yearbook* began to be published in Hungarian. The number of publishers of the good news jumped from 6,352 in 1971 to 13,136 in January 1993.

Today, Jehovah's Witnesses in Hungary enjoy freedom of religion and preach freely from house to house. There are 205 congregations, and 27,844 attended the Memorial on April 17, 1992. Until sufficient Kingdom Halls are available, the congregations continue to meet in schools, cultural centers, empty barracks, and even in the vacated offices of the Communist Party. As of 1992, ten congregations had dedicated their own Kingdom Halls, and other halls are under construction.

Throughout all the changes and revolutions, the brothers have faithfully remained on the side of Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ, and have kept on preaching. The storms of the times have not destroyed them, for Jehovah has protected his people in Hungary.—Proverbs 18:10.

RESPOND TO GOD'S PROMISES BY EXERCISING FAITH

"He [Jehovah God] has freely given us the precious and very grand promises."

—2 PETER 1:4.

JEHOVAH wants us to exercise faith in his promises. Yet, "faith is not a possession of all people." (2 Thessalonians 3:2) This quality is a fruit of God's holy spirit, or active force. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Hence, only those led by Jehovah's spirit can exercise faith.

² But what is faith? The apostle Paul calls it "the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld." The evidence of these unseen realities is so strong that faith is equated with it. Faith is also said to be "the assured expectation of things hoped for" because those who possess this quality have a guarantee that everything promised by Jehovah God is so certain that it is as good as fulfilled.—Hebrews 11:1.

Faith and Jehovah's Promises

³ To please Jehovah, we must exercise faith in his promises. The apostle Peter showed this in his second inspired letter, written about 64 C.E. He pointed out that if his fellow anointed Christians exercised faith, they would see the fulfillment of God's "precious and very grand promises." As a result, they would "become sharers in divine nature" as joint heirs with Jesus Christ in the heavenly Kingdom. With faith and Jehovah God's help, they had escaped from being in bondage to this world's cor-

rupt habits and practices. (2 Peter 1:2-4) And just think! Those exercising true faith enjoy the same priceless freedom today.

⁴ Faith in Jehovah's promises and gratitude for our God-given freedom should move us to do our utmost to become exemplary Christians. Said Peter: "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 Peter 1:5-7) Peter thus gives us a list we would do well to commit to memory. Let us take a closer look at these qualities.

Vital Elements of Faith

⁵ Peter said that virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godly devotion, brotherly affection, and love are to be supplied to one another and to our faith. We must work hard to make these qualities vital elements of our faith. For instance, virtue is not a quality that we display apart from faith. Lexicographer W. E. Vine points out that at 2 Peter 1:5, "virtue is enjoined as an essential quality in the exercise of faith." Each one of the other qualities Peter mentioned is also to be an element of our faith.

1. What enables us to exercise true faith?
2. How does the apostle Paul define "faith"?
3. What will anointed Christians experience if they exercise faith?

4. What qualities should we supply to our faith?
- 5, 6. What is virtue, and how can we supply it to our faith?

⁶ First, we must supply *virtue* to our faith. Being virtuous means doing what is good in God's sight. For the Greek word here rendered "virtue," some versions use "goodness." (*New International Version; The Jerusalem Bible; Today's English Version*) Virtue motivates us to avoid doing bad or causing harm to fellow humans. (Psalm 97:10) It also prompts courageous action in doing good for the spiritual, physical, and emotional benefit of others.

⁷ Why does Peter urge us to supply *knowledge* to our faith and virtue? Well, as we face new challenges to our faith, we need knowledge if we are to distinguish right from wrong. (Hebrews 5:14) Through Bible study and experience in applying God's Word and in exercising practical wisdom in daily life, we augment our knowledge. In turn, this enables us to maintain our faith and keep on doing what is virtuous when we are under trial.—Proverbs 2:6-8; James 1:5-8.

⁸ To help us meet trials with faith, we need to supply to our knowledge *self-control*. The Greek word for "self-control" denotes the ability to get a grip on ourselves. This fruit of God's spirit helps us to show restraint in thought, word, and conduct. By persistence in exercising self-control, we supply to it *endurance*. The Greek term for "endurance" signifies courageous steadfastness, not sad-faced resignation to inescapable hardship. It was for the joy set before him that Jesus endured the torture stake. (Hebrews 12:2) God-given strength associated with endurance bolsters our faith and helps us to rejoice in tribulation, resist temptation, and avoid compromise when persecuted.—Philippians 4:13.

7. Why should we supply knowledge to our faith and virtue?

8. What is self-control, and how is it linked to endurance?

⁹ To our endurance we must supply *godly devotion*—reverence, worship, and service to Jehovah. Our faith grows as we practice godly devotion and see how Jehovah deals with his people. Yet, to display godliness, we need *brotherly affection*. After all, "he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot be loving God, whom he has not seen." (1 John 4:20) Our hearts should move us to show true affection for other servants of Jehovah and to seek their welfare at all times. (James 2:14-17) But why are we told to supply *love* to our brotherly affection? Evidently Peter meant that we must show love for all mankind, not just our brothers. This love is shown especially by preaching the good news and helping people spiritual-ly.—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20.

Contrasting Effects

¹⁰ If we supply virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godly devotion, brotherly affection, and love to our faith, we will think, speak, and act in God-approved ways. Conversely, if a professing Christian fails to display these qualities, he becomes blind spiritually. He 'shuts his eyes to the light' from God and forgets that he has been cleansed from past sins. (2 Peter 1:8-10; 2:20-22) Let us never fail in that way and so lose faith in God's promises.

¹¹ Loyal anointed Christians have faith in Jehovah's promises and exert themselves to make his calling and choosing of them sure. Despite any stumbling blocks in their path,

9. (a) What is godly devotion? (b) Why supply brotherly affection to our godly devotion? (c) How can we supply love to our brotherly affection?

10. (a) How will we act if virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godly devotion, brotherly affection, and love are supplied to our faith? (b) What happens if a professing Christian lacks these qualities?

11. What can we rightly expect of loyal anointed ones?



Do you know how Jesus' transfiguration can affect a person's faith?

body—he tried to build faith in fellow believers and rouse them up by reminding them of the things needed for divine favor. After his departure in death, Peter's spiritual brothers and sisters could bolster their faith by recalling his words.—2 Peter 1: 12-15.

Faith in the Prophetic Word

¹³ God himself bore faith-strengthening testimony about the certainty of Jesus' coming "with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30; 2 Peter 1:16-18) Lacking evidence, pagan priests told false tales about their gods, whereas Peter, James, and John were eyewitnesses of

we can expect them to display godly qualities. For faithful anointed ones 'there is richly supplied the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ' through their resurrection to spirit life in heaven.—2 Peter 1:11.

¹² Peter realized that he would soon die, and he expected to receive an eventual resurrection to heavenly life. But as long as he was alive in "this tabernacle"—his human

12. How are we to understand the words of 2 Peter 1:12-15?

Christ's magnificence in the transfiguration. (Matthew 17:1-5) They saw him glorified and heard the sound of God's own voice acknowledging Jesus as His beloved Son. That acknowledgment and the brilliant appearance then granted Christ were a bestowal of honor and glory on him. Because of this divine revelation, Peter called the site, likely on a spur of Hermon, "the holy mountain."—Compare Exodus 3:4, 5.

13. How did God provide faith-strengthening testimony about Christ's coming?

¹⁴ How should Jesus' transfiguration affect our faith? Peter said: "Consequently we have the prophetic word made more sure; and you are doing well in paying attention to it as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and a daystar rises, in your hearts." (2 Peter 1:19) "The prophetic word" apparently included not only Hebrew Scripture prophecies about the Messiah but also Jesus' statement that he would come "with power and great glory." How was the word "made more sure" by the transfiguration? That event verified the prophetic word about Christ's glorious coming in Kingdom power.

¹⁵ To strengthen our faith, we must pay attention to the prophetic word. This involves studying that word, discussing it at Christian meetings, and applying its counsel. (James 1:22-27) We must let it be "a lamp shining in a dark place," illuminating our hearts. (Ephesians 1:18) Only then will it guide us until the "daystar," or, "the bright morning star," Jesus Christ, reveals himself in glory. (Revelation 22:16) That revelation will mean destruction for the faithless and blessings for those exercising faith.—2 Thessalonians 1:6-10.

¹⁶ God's prophets were not merely astute men who made wise predictions, for Peter said: "No prophecy of Scripture springs from any private interpretation. For prophecy was at no time brought by man's will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit." (2 Peter 1:20, 21) For instance, David said: "The spirit of Jehovah it was that spoke by me." (2 Samuel 23:1, 2) And Paul wrote: "All Scripture is inspired of God." (2 Timothy 3:16) Since God's

prophets were inspired by means of his spirit, we can have faith that all promises in his Word will be fulfilled.

They Had Faith in God's Promises

¹⁷ Jehovah's promises were a basis for the faith of the 'great cloud' of his pre-Christian witnesses. (Hebrews 11:1-12:1) For example, Abel had faith in God's promise about a "seed" that would bruise "the serpent" in the head. There was proof of fulfillment of God's sentence on Abel's parents. Outside Eden, Adam and his family ate bread in the sweat of their faces because the cursed ground produced thorns and thistles. Likely Abel noted Eve's craving for her husband and saw that Adam dominated her. Surely she spoke about the pain of her pregnancy. And the entrance to the garden of Eden was guarded by cherubs and the flaming blade of a sword. (Genesis 3:14-19, 24) All of this constituted an "evident demonstration" assuring Abel that deliverance would come through the promised Seed. Acting in faith, Abel offered God a sacrifice that proved to be of greater worth than that of Cain.—Hebrews 11:1, 4.

¹⁸ The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob also had faith in Jehovah's promises. Abraham exercised faith in God's promise that all families of the ground would bless themselves by means of him and that his seed would be given a land. (Genesis 12:1-9; 15:18-21) His son Isaac and grandson Jacob were "heirs with him of the very same promise." By faith Abraham "resided as an alien in the land of the promise" and awaited "the city having real foundations," God's heavenly Kingdom under which he would be resurrected to life on earth. (Hebrews 11:8-10) Do you have similar faith?

17. What promise was the basis for Abel's faith?
18, 19. In what ways did Abraham and Sarah exercise faith?

14. How should our faith be affected by Jesus' transfiguration?

15. What is involved in paying attention to the prophetic word?

16. Why can we have faith that all the prophetic promises in God's Word will be fulfilled?

¹⁹ Abraham's wife, Sarah, was about 90 years old and well past childbearing age when she exercised faith in God's promise and was empowered "to conceive seed" and give birth to Isaac. Thus, from 100-year-old Abraham, "as good as dead" as regards reproduction, eventually "there were born children just as the stars of heaven for multitude."—Hebrews 11:11, 12; Genesis 17:15-17; 18:11; 21:1-7.

²⁰ The faithful patriarchs died without seeing the complete fulfillment of God's promises to them. Yet, "they saw [the promised things] afar off and welcomed them and publicly declared that they were strangers and temporary residents in the land." Generations passed before the Promised Land became the possession of Abraham's offspring. Throughout their lives, however, the God-fearing patriarchs exercised faith in Jehovah's promises. Because they never lost faith, they will soon be resurrected to life in the earthly domain of the "city" God made ready for them, the Messianic Kingdom. (Hebrews 11:13-16) In a similar way, faith can keep us loyal to Jehovah even if we do not see the immediate fulfillment of all his wonderful promises. Our faith will also move us to obey God, even as Abraham did. And as he passed a spiritual heritage on to his offspring, so we can help our children to exercise faith in Jehovah's precious promises.—Hebrews 11:17-21.

Faith Vital for Christians

²¹ There is, of course, more to faith than having confidence in the fulfillment of Jehovah's promises. Throughout human history, it has been necessary to exercise faith in God in various ways if we are to enjoy his

20. Although the patriarchs did not see the complete fulfillment of God's promises to them, what did they do?

21. To be acceptable to God today, what must be included in our exercise of faith?

approval. Paul pointed out that "without faith it is impossible to please [Jehovah God] well, for he that approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Hebrews 11:6) To be acceptable to Jehovah today, a person must exercise faith in Jesus Christ and in the ransom sacrifice God has provided by means of him. (Romans 5:8; Galatians 2:15, 16) It is as Jesus himself said: "God loved the world [of mankind] 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.

²² Jesus plays a vital role in the fulfillment of God's promises about the Kingdom for which Christians pray. (Isaiah 9:6, 7; Daniel 7:13, 14; Matthew 6:9, 10) As Peter showed, the transfiguration verified the prophetic word about Jesus' coming in Kingdom power and glory. The Messianic Kingdom will bring about the fulfillment of another promise of God, for Peter wrote: "There are new heavens and a new earth

22. The Messianic Kingdom will bring about the fulfillment of what promise?

What Are Your Answers?

- ☐ How may "faith" be defined?
- ☐ According to 2 Peter 1:5-7, what qualities are to be supplied to our faith?
- ☐ What effect should Jesus' transfiguration have on our faith?
- ☐ What examples of faith were furnished by Abel, Abraham, Sarah, and others of early times?

that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell.” (2 Peter 3:13) A similar prophecy was fulfilled when Jewish exiles in Babylon were restored to their homeland in 537 B.C.E. under a government with Zerubbabel as governor and Joshua as high priest. (Isaiah 65:17) But Peter pointed to a future time when “new heavens”—the heavenly Messianic Kingdom—would rule over “a new earth,” righteous human society living on this globe.—Compare Psalm 96:1.

²³ As loyal servants of Jehovah and followers of his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, we

23. What questions about virtue will we next discuss?

HOW MAY WE SUPPLY VIRTUE TO OUR FAITH?

“Supply to your faith virtue.”—2 PETER 1:5.

JEHOVAH always acts in a virtuous way. He does what is righteous and good. Therefore, the apostle Peter could speak of God as the one who called anointed Christians ‘through His glory and virtue.’ Accurate knowledge of their virtuous heavenly Father had shown them what was needed to pursue a life of true godly devotion.—2 Peter 1:2, 3.

² The apostle Paul urges Christians to “become imitators of God, as beloved chil-

1, 2. Why should we expect Jehovah’s people to do what is virtuous?

yearn for God’s promised new world. We know that it is near, and we have faith that all of Jehovah’s precious promises will be fulfilled. To walk acceptably before our God, we must strengthen our faith by supplying to it virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godly devotion, brotherly affection, and love.* At this point, it may be asked, How can we display virtue? And how will our being virtuous benefit us and others, especially our Christian associates, who have responded to God’s promises by exercising faith?

* Faith and virtue are discussed in this issue of *The Watchtower*. Knowledge, self-control, endurance, godly devotion, brotherly affection, and love will be considered more fully in future issues.

dren.” (Ephesians 5:1) Like their heavenly Father, Jehovah’s worshipers should do what is virtuous in any situation. But what is virtue?

What Virtue Is

³ Modern-day dictionaries define “virtue” as “moral excellence; goodness.” It is “right action and thinking; goodness of character.” A virtuous person is righteous. Virtue has also been defined as “conformity to a standard of right.” For Christians, of

3. How has “virtue” been defined?

course, the “standard of right” is determined by God and made clear in his Sacred Word, the Bible.

⁴ True Christians conform to Jehovah God’s righteous standards, and they respond to his precious promises by exercising faith. They also heed Peter’s counsel: “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 Peter 1:5-7) A Christian must work hard to develop these qualities. This is not done in a few days or years but calls for a lifetime of continued effort. Why, supplying virtue to our faith is a challenge in itself!

⁵ Lexicographer M. R. Vincent says that the original classical sense of the Greek word rendered “virtue” denoted “excellence of any kind.” Peter used its plural form when he said that Christians were to declare abroad the “excellencies,” or virtues, of God. (1 Peter 2:9) From a Scriptural standpoint, virtue is described not as passive but as “moral power, moral energy, vigor of soul.” In mentioning virtue, Peter had in mind the courageous moral excellence that servants of God are expected to manifest and maintain. Since we are imperfect, however, can we really do what is virtuous in God’s sight?

Imperfect but Virtuous

⁶ We have inherited imperfection and sin, so we may wonder how we can really do what is virtuous in God’s sight. (Romans

5:12) We surely need Jehovah’s help if we are to have pure hearts, from which virtuous thoughts, words, and actions can come forth. (Compare Luke 6:45.) After sinning in connection with Bath-sheba, the repentant psalmist David begged: “Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one.” (Psalm 51:10) David received God’s forgiveness and the help needed to pursue a virtuous course. Hence, if we have erred seriously but have repentantly accepted the help of God and the congregation elders, we can return to a virtuous path and remain on it.—Psalm 103:1-3, 10-14; James 5:13-15.

⁷ Because of inherent sinfulness, we must carry on a continuous inner battle to do what the course of virtue would require of us. If we are to remain virtuous, we can never allow ourselves to become slaves of sin. Instead, we must be “slaves to righteousness,” always thinking, speaking, and acting in a virtuous way. (Romans 6:16-23) Of course, our fleshly desires and sinful inclinations are strong, and we have on our hands a conflict between these and the virtuous things that God demands of us. So, what is to be done?

⁸ For one thing, we need to follow the leadings of Jehovah’s holy spirit, or active force. We should therefore heed Paul’s counsel: “Keep walking by spirit and you will carry out no fleshly desire at all. For the flesh is against the spirit in its desire, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, so that the very things that you would like to do you do not do.” (Galatians 5:16, 17) Yes, as a force for righteousness, we have God’s spirit, and as a guide to right conduct, we have his Word. We also have the

7, 8. (a) If we are to remain virtuous, what is necessary? (b) What help do Christians have in being virtuous?

4. What qualities mentioned at 2 Peter 1:5-7 must Christians work hard to develop?

5. What is virtue from a Scriptural standpoint?

6. Though we are imperfect, why can it be said that we can do what is virtuous in God’s sight?

loving help of Jehovah's organization and the counsel of "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47) Thus, we can wage a successful fight against sinful tendencies. (Romans 7:15-25) Of course, if an unclean thought should come to mind, we must dismiss it promptly and pray for God's help to resist any temptation to act in any way lacking virtue.—Matthew 6:13.

Virtue and Our Thoughts

⁹ Virtue begins with the way a person thinks. To enjoy divine favor, we must think about righteous, good, virtuous things. Paul said: "Brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are of serious concern, whatever things are righteous, whatever things are chaste, whatever things are lovable, whatever things are well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things." (Philippians 4:8) We need to set our minds on righteous, chaste things, and anything lacking virtue should not appeal to us. Paul could say: "The things that you learned as well as accepted and heard and saw in connection with me, practice these." If we are like Paul—virtuous in thought, speech, and action—we will be good associates and fine examples in Christian living, and 'the God of peace will be with us.'—Philippians 4:9.

¹⁰ If it is our desire to remain virtuous in thought and thus please our heavenly Father, it is necessary that we apply Paul's counsel: "Do not become young children in powers of understanding, but be babes as to badness; yet become full-grown in powers of understanding." (1 Corinthians 14:20) This means that as Christians we do not seek

9. Virtuous conduct calls for what kind of thinking?

10. How will the personal application of 1 Corinthians 14:20 help us to remain virtuous?

knowledge of or experience in wickedness. Instead of allowing our minds to be corrupted in this way, we wisely choose to remain inexperienced and innocent as babes in this respect. At the same time, we fully understand that immorality and wrongdoing are sinful in Jehovah's sight. A keen heartfelt desire to please him by being virtuous will benefit us, for it will move us to avoid unclean forms of entertainment and other mentally corrupting influences of this world that is lying in Satan's power.—1 John 5:19.

Virtue and Our Speech

¹¹ If our thoughts are virtuous, this should have a profound effect on what we say. Being virtuous calls for clean, wholesome, truthful, upbuilding speech. (2 Corinthians 6:3, 4, 7) Jehovah is "the God of truth." (Psalm 31:5) He is faithful in all his dealings, and his promises are sure because he cannot lie. (Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Titus 1:2) God's Son, Jesus Christ, is "full of undeserved kindness and truth." While on earth, he always spoke the truth as he had received it from his Father. (John 1:14; 8:40) Moreover, Jesus "committed no sin, nor was deception found in his mouth." (1 Peter 2:22) If we are truly servants of God and Christ, we will be truthful in speech and upright in conduct, as if "girded about with truth."—Ephesians 5:9; 6:14.

¹² If we are virtuous, there are types of speech we will avoid. We will be governed by Paul's counsel: "Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you along with all badness." "Let fornication

11. Being virtuous calls for what kind of speech, and in this regard, what examples do we have in Jehovah God and Jesus Christ?

12. If we are to be virtuous, what types of speech must we avoid?



Since sweet and bitter water cannot bubble forth from the same source, others rightly expect Jehovah's servants to say only virtuous things

and uncleanness of every sort or greediness not even be mentioned among you, just as it befits holy people; neither shameful conduct nor foolish talking nor obscene jesting, things which are not becoming, but rather the giving of thanks." (Ephesians 4:31; 5:3, 4) Others will find it refreshing to be in our company because our righteous hearts impel us to avoid unchristian speech.

¹³ A desire to please God and say virtuous things will help us to control the tongue. Because of sinful inclinations, all of us stumble in word at times. Yet, the disciple James says that "if we put bridles in the mouths of horses," they obediently go where we direct them. Hence, we should work hard to bridle the tongue and try to use it only in virtuous ways. An uncontrolled tongue "is constituted a world of unrighteousness." (James 3:1-7) Every kind of evil trait of this

13. Why must Christians control the tongue?

ungodly world is associated with the untamed tongue. It is responsible for such damaging things as false testimony, reviling, and slander. (Isaiah 5:20; Matthew 15:18-20) And when an unruly tongue makes abusive, cutting, or slanderous remarks, it is filled with death-dealing poison.—Psalm 140:3; Romans 3:13; James 3:8.

¹⁴ As James indicates, it would be inconsistent to "bless Jehovah" by speaking well of God but then misuse the tongue to "curse men" by calling down evil upon them. How sinful to sing God's praises at meetings and then go out and speak evil of fellow believers! Both sweet and bitter water cannot bubble forth from the same fountain. If we are serving Jehovah, others have a right to expect us to say virtuous things instead of speaking distasteful words. Let us therefore shun evil speech and seek to say things that will benefit our associates and upbuild them spiritually.—James 3:9-12.

Virtue and Our Actions

¹⁵ Since Christian thought and speech must be virtuous, what about our actions? Being virtuous in conduct is the only way to have God's approval. No servant of Jehovah can abandon virtue, resort to being devious and deceitful, and rightly think that such things would find acceptance with God. Proverbs 3:32 says: "The devious person is a detestable thing to Jehovah, but His intimacy is with the upright ones." If we

14. What double standard in speech must Christians avoid?

15. Why is it so important to avoid resorting to devious ways?

cherish our relationship with Jehovah God, those thought-provoking words should deter us from plotting mischief or doing anything devious. Why, among the seven things detestable to Jehovah's soul is "a heart fabricating hurtful schemes"! (Proverbs 6:16-19) Consequently, let us avoid such actions and do what is virtuous, to the benefit of our fellow humans and the glory of our heavenly Father.

¹⁶ Displaying virtue requires that we be honest. (Hebrews 13:18) A hypocritical person, whose actions do not harmonize with his words, is not virtuous. The Greek word rendered "hypocrite" (*hy-po-kri-tes*') means "one who answers" and also denotes a stage actor. Since Greek and Roman actors wore masks, this word came to be used metaphorically for one who puts on a pretense. Hypocrites are "unfaithful ones." (Compare Luke 12:46 with Matthew 24:50, 51.) Hypocrisy (*hy-po-kri-sis*) may also denote wickedness and cunning. (Matthew 22:18; Mark 12:15; Luke 20:23) How sad it is when a trusting person is victimized by smiles, flattery, and actions that are only pretenses! But it is heartwarming when we know that we are dealing with trustworthy Christians. And God blesses us for being virtuous and unhypocritical. His approval rests upon those displaying "unhypocritical brotherly affection" and possessing "faith without hypocrisy."—1 Peter 1:22; 1 Timothy 1:5.

Virtue Is Active Goodness

¹⁷ If we supply virtue to our faith, we will strive to refrain from thinking, saying, and doing things that are unacceptable to God. However, displaying Christian virtue also requires that we practice active goodness.

16. Why must Christians not engage in any hypocritical actions?

17, 18. As we display the spirit's fruit of goodness, how will we deal with others?

In fact, virtue has been defined as goodness. And goodness is a fruit of Jehovah's holy spirit, not the product of mere human effort. (Galatians 5:22, 23) As we manifest the spirit's fruit of goodness, we will be motivated to think well of others and to commend them for their good qualities despite their imperfections. Have they served Jehovah faithfully for years? Then we should show them respect and speak well of them and their service to God. Our heavenly Father takes note of the love they show for his name and their virtuous works of faith, and so should we.—Nehemiah 13:31b; Hebrews 6:10.

¹⁸ Virtue makes us patient, understanding, compassionate. If a fellow worshiper of Jehovah is suffering distress or depression, we will speak consolingly and seek to give him some comfort, even as our loving heavenly Father comforts us. (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; 1 Thessalonians 5:14) We sympathize with those who sorrow, perhaps because of the loss of a loved one in death. If we can do anything to alleviate suffering, we will do it, for a virtuous spirit prompts loving, benevolent action.

What Are Your Answers?

- ☐ How would you define "virtue," and why can imperfect people be virtuous?
- ☐ Virtue calls for what kind of thoughts?
- ☐ How should virtue affect our speech?
- ☐ What effect should virtue have on our actions?
- ☐ What are some benefits of being virtuous?

¹⁹ Just as we bless Jehovah by speaking well of him, others are likely to be blessing us if we are virtuous in thought, word, and deed. (Psalm 145:10) A wise proverb says: "Blessings are for the head of the righteous one, but as regards the mouth of the wicked ones, it covers up violence." (Proverbs 10:6) A wicked and violent person lacks the virtue that would endear him to others. He reaps what he sows, for people cannot honestly give him their blessing by speaking well of him. (Galatians 6:7) How much better it is for those thinking, speaking, and acting in virtuous ways as Jehovah's servants! They win the love, trust, and respect of others, who are moved to bless them and speak well of them. Moreover, their godly virtue results in the priceless blessing of Jehovah. —Proverbs 10:22.

19. How are others likely to treat us if we are virtuous in thought, word, and deed?

²⁰ Virtuous thoughts, speech, and actions are sure to benefit a congregation of Jehovah's people. When fellow believers have affectionate, respectful thoughts toward one another, brotherly love flourishes among them. (John 13:34, 35) Virtuous speech, including sincere commendation and encouragement, fosters a warm feeling of cooperation and unity. (Psalm 133:1-3) And heartwarming, virtuous actions incite others to respond in a similar way. Above all, the practice of Christian virtue results in the approval and blessing of our virtuous heavenly Father, Jehovah. May we therefore make it our aim to respond to God's precious promises by exercising faith. And by all means let us put forth earnest effort to supply to our faith virtue.

20. Virtuous thoughts, speech, and actions can have what effect in a congregation of Jehovah's people?

ANNUAL MEETING

OCTOBER 2, 1993

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the members of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania will be held on October 2, 1993, at the Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, New Jersey. A preliminary meeting of the members only will convene at 9:30 a.m., followed by the general annual meeting at 10:00 a.m.

The members of the Corporation should inform the Secretary's Office now of any change in their mailing addresses during the past year so that the regular letters of notice and proxies can reach them shortly after August 1.

The proxies, which will be sent to the members along with the notice of the annual meeting, are

to be returned so as to reach the Office of the Secretary of the Society not later than August 15. Each member should complete and return his proxy promptly, stating whether he is going to be at the meeting personally or not. The information given on each proxy should be definite on this point, since it will be relied upon in determining who will be personally present.

It is expected that the entire session, including the formal business meeting and reports, will be concluded by 1:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter. There will be no afternoon session. Because of limited space, admission will be by ticket only. No arrangements will be made for tying in the annual meeting by telephone lines to other auditoriums.

Tenderly Shepherding Jehovah's Precious Sheep

THE elders listened with rapt attention. They had traveled about 30 miles from Ephesus to Miletus to receive instructions from the apostle Paul. Now they were saddened to hear that this would be the last time they would see him. So they knew that the words to follow would be of the utmost importance: "Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son."—Acts 20:25, 28, 38.

Paul's brief reference to shepherds surely conveyed a wealth of information to those Ephesian elders. They were acquainted with the work of herding sheep in the surrounding countryside. They were also familiar with the many references to shepherds in the Hebrew Scriptures. And they knew that Jehovah likened himself to a Shepherd of his people.—Isaiah 40:10, 11.

Paul spoke of them as "overseers" among "the flock," and as "shepherds" of "the congregation." Whereas the term "overseers" indicates *what* their assign-

ment is, the word "shepherd" describes *how* they are to carry out that oversight. Yes, overseers were to tend to each member of the congregation in the same loving manner that a shepherd would look after his flock of sheep.

Today, few elders have firsthand experience in herding literal sheep. But the Bible makes so many references to both sheep and shepherds, especially in a figurative sense, that Paul's words have a timeless impact. And much can be learned from the accounts of shepherds whom God favored in ancient times. Their noteworthy examples can help present-day elders to see what qualities they need to de-

velop in order to shepherd the congregation of God.

The Fearless Shepherd David

When we think of shepherds of Bible times, most likely we will remember David, for he started off as a herder of sheep. One of the first lessons we learn from David's life is that being a shepherd is not a position of prominence. In fact, when the prophet Samuel arrived to anoint a son of Jesse as the future king



of Israel, youthful David was at first overlooked entirely. It was only after Jehovah had rejected his seven older brothers that mention was made of David, who was out in the field "pasturing the sheep." (1 Samuel 16:10, 11) Nevertheless, David's years spent as a shepherd prepared him for the demanding work of shepherding the nation of Israel. "[Jehovah] chose David his servant and took him from the pens of the flock . . . to be a shepherd over Jacob his people," says Psalm 78:70, 71. Fittingly, David wrote the beautiful and well-known 23rd Psalm, starting with the words: "Jehovah is my Shepherd."

Like David, elders in the Christian congregation should serve as humble undershepherds and not seek undue prominence. As the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, those reaching out for this shepherding responsibility are "desirous of a fine work," not prominence.—1 Timothy 3:1.

Although David's work as a literal shepherd was lowly, at times it called for great courage. For example, when sheep from his father's flock were carried off on one occasion by a lion and on another by a bear, David fearlessly confronted and killed the predators. (1 Samuel 17:34-36) This was a remarkable display of courage when one considers that a lion can kill animals much larger than itself. And the Syrian brown bear that used to inhabit Palestine, weighing as much as 310 pounds, can kill a deer with a single blow of its powerful paw.

David's courageous concern for his father's sheep is a fine example for shepherds in the Christian congregation. The apostle Paul warned the Ephesian elders of "oppressive wolves" who would "not treat the flock with tenderness." (Acts 20:29) In modern times too, occasions will arise when Christian shepherds have to show courage in or-

der to guard the spiritual well-being of Jehovah's sheep.

While the sheep are to be boldly protected, they should also be treated with the utmost tenderness, in imitation of the loving shepherd David and the Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ. (John 10:11) Knowing that the flock belongs to Jehovah, elders should never be heavy-handed with the sheep, "lording it over those who are God's inheritance." —1 Peter 5:2, 3; Matthew 11:28-30; 20:25-27.

Rendering an Account

The patriarch Jacob was another well-known shepherd. He considered himself personally responsible for each individual sheep entrusted to his care. So faithfully had he cared for the flocks of his father-in-law, Laban, that after 20 years in his service, Jacob could say: "Your female sheep and your she-goats did not suffer abortions, and the rams of your flock I never ate. Any animal torn to pieces I did not bring to you. I myself would stand the loss of it. Whether one was stolen by day or was stolen by night, you would put in a claim for it from my hand."—Genesis 31:38, 39.

Christian overseers display an even greater concern for the sheep that the Shepherd of our souls, Jehovah God, "purchased with the blood of his own Son." (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4) Paul emphasized this weighty responsibility when he reminded the Hebrew Christians that men taking the lead in the congregation "are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account."—Hebrews 13:17.

Jacob's example also shows that the work of a shepherd has no time limit. It is a day-and-night affair and often requires self-sacrifice. He told Laban: "It has been my experience that by day the heat consumed

me and the cold by night, and my sleep would flee from my eyes.”—Genesis 31:40.

This is certainly true of many loving Christian elders today, as the following experience illustrates. A brother was admitted to the intensive care unit of a hospital after a brain-tumor biopsy had resulted in complications. His family arranged to be near him in the hospital day and night. To provide needed moral support and encouragement, one of the local elders adjusted his busy schedule so that he could visit the sick man and his family every day. Because of the hospital’s intensive treatment routine, though, it was not always possible for him to visit during the day. This meant that the elder often had to be at the hospital very late at night. But he gladly went there night after night. “I realized that I would have to visit at a time suitable for the patient, not at a time convenient for me,” said the elder. When the brother had recovered sufficiently to be moved to another area of the hospital, the elder continued with his encouraging daily visits.

What Moses Learned as a Shepherd

The Bible describes Moses as “by far the meekest of all the men who were upon the surface of the ground.” (Numbers 12:3) However, the record shows that this had not always been the case. As a young man, he had killed an Egyptian for striking a fellow Israelite. (Exodus 2:11, 12) Hardly the action of a meek person! Yet, God would later use Moses to lead a nation of millions through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Clearly, then, Moses was in need of further training.

While Moses had already received secular training “in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” more was needed for him to shepherd Jehovah’s flock. (Acts 7:22) What form could this additional training possibly take?

Well, for 40 years God allowed Moses to serve as a lowly shepherd in the land of Midian. As he tended the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro, Moses developed such fine qualities as patience, meekness, humility, long-suffering, mildness of temper, and self-control. He also learned to wait on Jehovah. Yes, tending literal sheep qualified Moses to be a capable shepherd of the nation of Israel.—Exodus 2:15–3:1; Acts 7:29, 30.

Are these not the very qualities that an elder needs in order to care for God’s people today? Yes, for Paul reminded Timothy that “a slave of the Lord . . . needs to be gentle toward all, qualified to teach, keeping himself restrained under evil, instructing with mildness those not favorably disposed.” —2 Timothy 2:24, 25.

There may be times when an elder feels disappointed with himself because he has difficulty in developing these qualities to the full. Nevertheless, he should not give up. As with Moses, it may take a long time to develop fully the qualities needed for one to be a good shepherd. In time, however, such earnest effort will be rewarded.—Compare 1 Peter 5:10.

As an elder, perhaps you are not being used as fully as others. Could it be that, as with Moses, Jehovah is allowing you to develop certain important qualities more fully? Never forget that Jehovah “cares for you.” However, we should also keep in mind the need to ‘gird ourselves with lowliness of mind toward one another, because God opposes the haughty ones but gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones.’ (1 Peter 5:5-7) If you apply yourself and accept the training that Jehovah permits, you can be more useful to him, just as Moses was.

All of Jehovah’s Sheep Are Precious

Dependable, loving shepherds of Bible times had a sense of responsibility toward

each individual sheep. The same should be true of spiritual shepherds. This is clear from Paul's words: "Pay attention to . . . all the flock." (Acts 20:28) Who would be included in "all the flock"?

Jesus gave an illustration about a man who had a hundred sheep but promptly searched for one that had strayed in order to bring it back to the flock. (Matthew 18: 12-14; Luke 15:3-7) In like manner an overseer should have concern for each member of the congregation. Inactivity in the ministry or in attending Christian meetings does not mean that the sheep is no longer part of the flock. He remains part of "all the flock" for whom the elders must "render an account" to Jehovah.

One body of elders became quite concerned that some who had been associated with the congregation had drifted into inactivity. A list of these individuals was prepared, and special effort was made to visit them and assist them to return to Jehovah's sheepfold. How thankful to God these elders were that over a period of two and a half years, they were able to help more than 30 persons to become active in Jehovah's service once again. One of those thus helped had been inactive for some 17 years!

The weight of this responsibility is further impressed on overseers by the fact that the sheep were "purchased with the blood of [God's] own Son." (Acts 20:28) No higher price could have been paid for these precious sheep. And think of all the time and effort that is spent in the ministry to locate and assist each sheeplike person! Should not a similar effort be made to keep all of them within God's sheepfold? Certainly, every sheep in the congregation is precious.

Even when a member of the flock becomes involved in serious wrongdoing, the elders' responsibility does not change. They con-

tinue to be concerned shepherds, tenderly and mildly endeavoring to save the wrongdoer if at all possible. (Galatians 6:1, 2) Regrettably, in certain instances it becomes evident that a member of the congregation lacks godly sorrow for serious sins that he has committed. Loving shepherds then have a Scriptural responsibility to protect the rest of the flock against this contaminating influence.—1 Corinthians 5:3-7, 11-13.

Even so, Jehovah God sets the perfect example of extending mercy to straying sheep. Our compassionate Shepherd says: "The lost one I shall search for, and the dispersed one I shall bring back, and the broken one I shall bandage and the ailing one I shall strengthen." (Ezekiel 34:15, 16; Jeremiah 31:10) In imitation of this superb example, a loving arrangement has been made for modern-day spiritual shepherds to visit disfellowshipped persons, who may now respond to their help. These merciful efforts to recover such lost sheep have yielded fine fruitage. One reinstated sister said: "When the elders called, it was the encouragement that I needed to come back."

Without a doubt Paul's words to the Ephesian elders at Miletus were packed with meaning—for them and for overseers today. His reference to shepherds was a reminder of the appealing qualities that should be evident in overseers—qualities such as humility and courage, as exemplified by the shepherd-king David; a personal sense of responsibility and protective care, evident in Jacob's day-and-night service; and a willingness to accept further training patiently, as shown by Moses. Indeed, these Biblical examples will help congregation elders to develop and display the qualities needed so that they may tenderly "shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son."

Prosperity Can Test Your Faith

PROSPERITY can test the faith of an upright person. Striving to become materially prosperous can lead to loss of faith. (1 Timothy 6:9, 10) But prosperity can also test faith in another way. When someone righteous observes that many unrighteous people are prospering materially while he is suffering, he may be tempted to pursue an ungodly course. Why, this has led even some of Jehovah's servants to doubt the value of pursuing an upright life!

This happened to the Levite musician Asaph during the reign of Israel's king David. Asaph composed psalms that were used in public worship. Along with Heman and Jeduthun, he also prophesied, giving Jehovah God praise and thanks to musical accompaniment. (1 Chronicles 25:1; 2 Chronicles 29:30) Privileged though Asaph was, Psalm 73 shows that the material prosperity of wicked people proved to be a great test of his faith.

Asaph's Dangerous Attitude

"God is indeed good to Israel, to those clean in heart. As for me, my feet had almost turned aside, my steps had nearly been made to slip." (Psalm 73:1, 2) By these words, Asaph acknowledged that Jehovah was good to the nation of Israel. Specifically that was so to those "clean in heart," for it was their desire to give God exclusive devotion and contribute to the sanctification of his holy name. If we have that attitude, we will bless Jehovah by speaking well of him even if we are sorely tried by the prosperity of the wicked or by any other situation.—Psalm 145:1, 2.

Though Asaph was aware of Jehovah's goodness, his feet almost turned aside from

a righteous path. It was as if they were slipping on icy ground during a tiring marathon. Why had his faith become so weak? He explained: *"For I became envious of the boasters, when I would see the very peace of wicked people. For they have no deathly pangs; and their paunch is fat. They are not even in the trouble of mortal man, and they are not plagued the same as other men."*—Psalm 73:3-5.

The material prosperity of unrighteous people made Asaph envy them. Peace seemed to be their lot, even though they accumulated wealth by fraudulent means. (Compare Psalm 37:1.) Despite their evil deeds, from outward appearances they were secure. Why, their life seemed to end without terrible death pangs! They sometimes died peacefully and self-assured, with no awareness of a spiritual need. (Matthew 5:3) On the other hand, some of God's servants suffer painful illness and death, but he sustains them, and they have the wonderful resurrection hope.—Psalm 43:1-3; John 5:28, 29.

Many wicked people have no health problems that prevent them from enjoying their plentiful supply of food. "Their paunch is fat," their bellies protruding. Moreover, they are not "in the trouble of mortal man," for unlike the masses of mankind, they need not struggle to obtain life's necessities. Asaph concluded that the wicked "are not plagued the same as other men." Especially do they escape trials that godly people experience because the latter adhere to Jehovah's righteous standards in Satan's wicked world.—1 John 5:19.

Because the wicked prosper, Asaph went on to say of them: *"Therefore haughtiness has served as a necklace to them; violence envelops them as a garment. Their eye has bulged from fatness; they have exceeded the imaginations of the heart. They scoff and speak about what is bad; about defrauding they speak in an elevated style. They have put their mouth in the very heavens, and their tongue itself walks about in the earth."* —Psalm 73:6-9.

Evildoers wear pride as "a necklace," and so numerous are their violent deeds that they are 'covered with them as with a garment.' Determined to have their own way, they browbeat others. The eyes of the wicked are not sunken from lack of nourishment but 'bulge from fatness,' standing out because of obesity resulting from gluttony. (Proverbs 23:20) So successful is their scheming that they even 'surpass the imaginations of their hearts.' They speak of their fraud in a proud, "elevated style." Why, 'they put their mouth in the heavens, and their tongue walks about in the earth'! Lacking respect for anyone in heaven or on earth, they blaspheme God and malign humans.

Apparently, Asaph was not alone in being adversely affected by what he saw. Said he: *"Therefore he brings his people back hither, and the waters of what is full are drained out for them. And they have said: 'How has God come to know? And does there exist knowledge in the Most High?'"* (Psalm 73:10, 11) The Hebrew text may mean that because the wicked seem to prosper, some among God's people adopt a wrong view and are brought to the same state as the lawless, saying: 'God does not know what is happening and will not act against lawlessness.' On the other hand, seeing bad people

practice lawlessness with seeming impunity is like having to drink a bitter potion, which moves the upright to ask: 'How can God tolerate these things? Does he not see what is happening?'

Comparing his circumstances with those of the wicked, Asaph said: *"Look! These are the wicked, who are at ease indefinitely. They have increased their means of maintenance. Surely it is in vain that I have cleansed my heart and that I wash my hands in innocence itself. And I came to be plagued all day long, and my correction is every morning."* (Psalm 73:12-14) Asaph felt that it was useless to lead an upright life. Wicked people prospered, likely 'increasing their means of maintenance' by fraudulent means. They seemed to escape penalty for the worst wrongdoing, but Asaph was plagued "all day long"—from when he awoke until he retired at night. He felt that Jehovah was correcting him every morning. Since this did not seem fair, it tested Asaph's faith.

A Readjustment in Thinking

Finally realizing that his thinking was wrong, Asaph stated: *"If I had said: 'I will tell a story like that,' look! against the generation of your sons I should have acted treacherously. And I kept considering so as to know this; it was a trouble in my eyes, until I proceeded to come into the grand sanctuary of God. I wanted to discern their future. Surely on slippery ground is where you place them. You have made them fall to ruins. O how they have become an object of astonishment as in a moment! How they have reached their end, have been brought to their finish through sudden terrors! Like a dream after awaking, O Jehovah, so when arousing yourself you will despise their very image."* —Psalm 73:15-20.

It was good that Asaph did not voice a complaint, for publicly saying that it is useless to serve Jehovah might have discouraged members of his family of worshipers or might have undermined their faith. How much better to remain silent and do what Asaph did! To see why wicked ones seem to get away with wrongdoing while the upright suffer, he went to God's sanctuary. That setting allowed Asaph to meditate calmly among Jehovah's worshipers, and his thinking was readjusted. So today, if we are perplexed by what we see, let us likewise seek answers to our questions by associating with God's people instead of isolating ourselves.—Proverbs 18:1.

Asaph came to realize that God had placed the wicked "on slippery ground." Because their lives revolve around material things, they are in danger of experiencing a sudden crash. At the latest, death will overtake them in old age, and their ill-gotten wealth will not secure a longer life for them. (Psalm 49:6-12) Their prosperity will be like a quickly passing dream. Justice may even catch up with them before they reach old age as they reap what they are sowing. (Galatians 6:7) Since they have turned their back on the only One able to help them, they are left helpless, without

hope. When Jehovah acts against them, he will view their "image"—their pomp and position—with contempt.

Guard Your Reaction

Not having reacted well to what he saw, Asaph admitted: *"For my heart was soured and in my kidneys I was sharply pained, and I was unreasoning and I could not know; I became as mere beasts from your standpoint. But I am constantly with you; you have taken hold of my right hand. With your counsel you will lead me, and afterward you will take me even to glory."*—Psalm 73:21-24.

Dwelling on the material prosperity of the wicked and on the suffering of the upright can sour a person's heart or embitter him. Deep inside—in his kidneys—Asaph's turmoil over this situation caused him great pain. From Jehovah's standpoint, he became like an unreasoning animal reacting on the basis of mere sensations. Yet, Asaph 'was constantly with God, who had taken hold of his right hand.' If we err in our thinking but seek Jehovah's counsel as Asaph did, God will take us by the hand, to support and lead us. (Compare Jeremiah 10:23.) Only by applying his counsel can we be led into a happy future. We may suffer humiliation for a time, but Jehovah will bring about a reversal, 'taking us to glory,' or honor.

Appreciating the need for reliance on Jehovah, Asaph added: *"Whom do I have in the heavens? And besides you I do have no other delight on the earth. My organism and my heart have failed. God is the rock of my heart and my share to time indefinite. For, look! the very ones keeping away from you will perish. You will certainly silence every one immorally leaving you. But as for me, the drawing near to God is good for me. In the Sovereign Lord Jehovah I have placed*

In Our Next Issue

Communication
—More Than Just Talk

Let No One Spoil Your Useful Habits

Jehovah Remembers
the Sick and the Elderly

my refuge, to declare all your works.”—Psalm 73: 25-28.

Like Asaph, we have no one but Jehovah on whom to rely for true security and comfort. (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) So instead of coveting anyone's earthly riches, let us serve God and store up treasures in heaven. (Matthew 6:19, 20) Having an approved standing with Jehovah should be our greatest delight. Even if our organism and heart should fail, he will strengthen us and give stability to our heart so that we do not lose hope and courage amid adversities. Intimacy with Jehovah is a priceless possession. Letting it go would spell calamity for us along with all who abandon him. Like Asaph, therefore, let us draw close to God and throw all our anxiety upon him. (1 Peter 5:6, 7) This promotes our spiritual welfare and moves us to tell others about Jehovah's wonderful works.

Remain Loyal to Jehovah

Asaph was troubled because he saw evildoers prospering in Israel, his homeland. In among Jehovah's loyal servants, there were "wicked people" guilty of boasting, haughtiness, violence, scoffing, and fraud, and who denied that God knew what they were doing. (Psalm 73:1-11) What a warning! To please Jehovah God, we must refrain from displaying such traits as pride, violence, scoffing, and dishonesty. Like Asaph, let all servants of Jehovah 'come into God's grand sanctuary' by assembling regularly with His loyal worshipers. Indeed, let all who



love Jehovah 'draw near to God,' relying on him to sustain them amid sufferings, regardless of what others may say or do.—Psalm 73:12-28; 3 John 1-10.

True, the material prosperity of evildoers may test our faith, as it did that of Asaph. Yet, we can endure this trial if we center our life on Jehovah's service. We will be rewarded for doing this because 'God is not unrighteous so as to

forget our work and the love we show for his name.' (Hebrews 6:10) Our trials will be "momentary and light" in comparison with our reward. (2 Corinthians 4:17) Even some 70 or 80 years of suffering are like a mere breath passing our lips in a whisper when compared with the eternal happy life Jehovah promises his loyal servants.—Psalm 90:9, 10.

May we never permit the material prosperity of evildoers in contrast with our sufferings for righteousness' sake prevent us from displaying the faith that is a fruit of God's holy spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23; 1 Peter 3:13, 14) Satan would be pleased if we copied the wicked, who often prosper because they are unscrupulous. Instead, let us honor Jehovah's name by resisting temptations to abandon his righteous standards. (Zephaniah 2:3) Let us not be distressed over the success of evildoers, for, at most, they can achieve only material prosperity. And of what value is that? It does not even begin to compare with the spiritual prosperity enjoyed by those exercising faith in the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.

“A Sign From Heaven”

AN OLD rhyme says: “Red sky at night, sailors’ delight, Red sky at morning, sailors take warning.” Today, satellites, computer-enhanced temperature studies, Doppler radar, and other scientific means are employed to forecast the weather. Predictions often harmonize with the rhyme just quoted.

Jesus Christ’s religious foes once demanded of him “a sign from heaven,” an unusual display to prove that he was the Messiah. “When evening falls,” he said, “you are accustomed to say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is fire-red’; and at morning, ‘It will be wintry, rainy weather today, for the sky is fire-red, but gloomy-looking.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but the signs of the times you cannot interpret. A wicked and adulterous generation keeps on seeking for a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah.”—Matthew 16:1-4.

Jesus’ enemies could forecast the weather but were unable to comprehend spiritual matters. For instance, what about “the sign of Jonah”? After spend-

ing about three days in the belly of a great fish, God’s prophet Jonah preached in Nineveh and thereby became a sign to that capital city of Assyria. Jesus’ generation had “the sign of Jonah” when Christ spent parts of three days in a tomb and was resurrected. His disciples proclaimed the evidence of that event, and thus Jesus was a sign to that generation.—Matthew 12:39-41.



On another occasion, Jesus’ disciples asked him for “the sign” of his future “presence” in Kingdom power. In reply, he gave a composite sign made up of various fea-

tures, including unparalleled wars, great earthquakes, food shortages, and earth-wide preaching about God’s established heavenly Kingdom.—Matthew 24:3-14.

Do you recognize the sign of Christ’s presence as invisible heavenly King? Its features are being fulfilled upon this generation. (Matthew 24:34) And what of the future? The Bible not only reveals that the end of this system of things is at hand but also forecasts God’s promised new day that is soon to dawn clear and bright for mankind.—2 Peter 3:13.