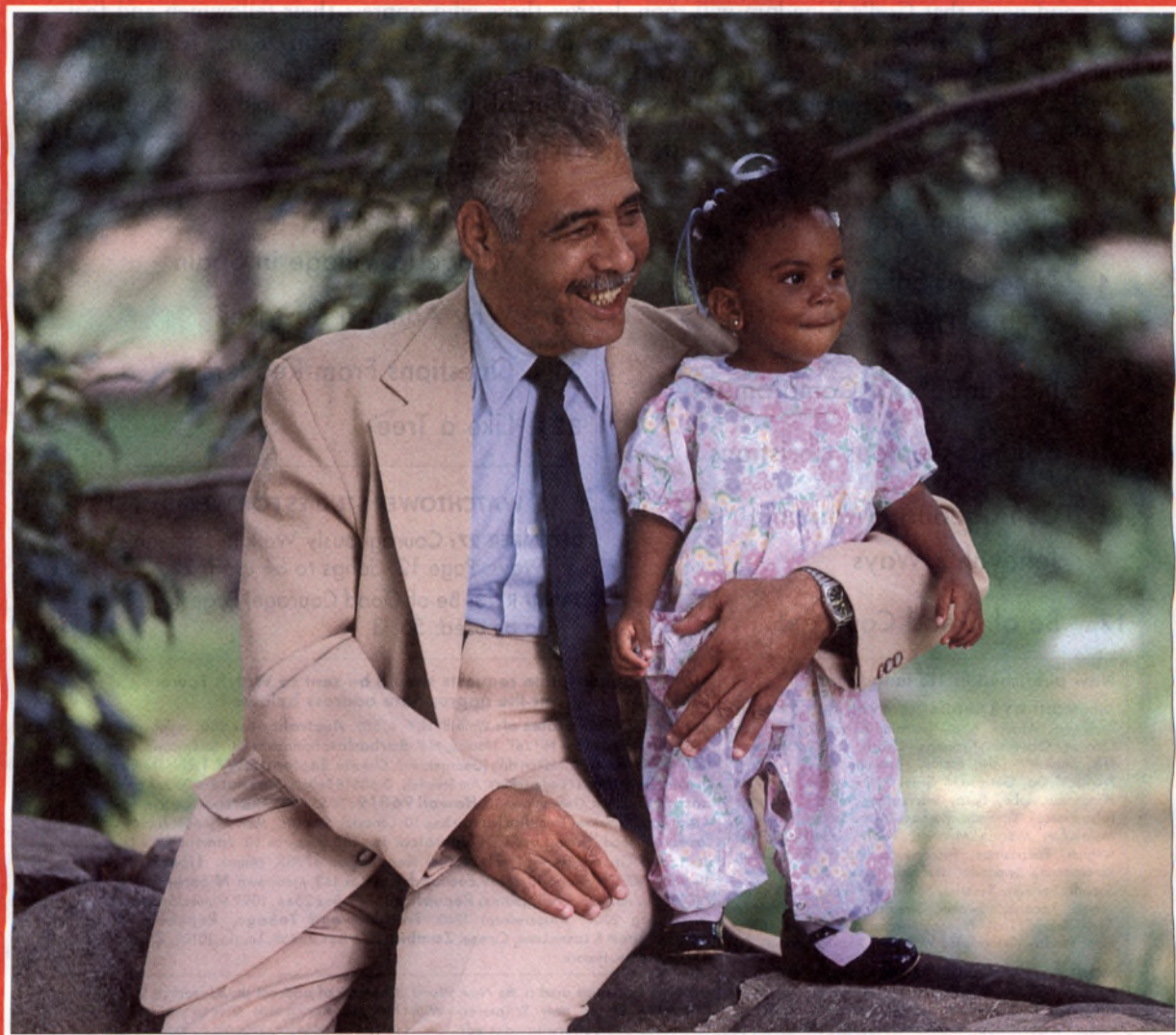


NOVEMBER 15, 1993

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



How Long Can You Live?

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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How Long Can You Live?

MOST of us will readily admit that there are problems along life's pathway. Yet, we are happy to be alive. We are not satisfied with just our childhood or a short life span; we would like to live for many years. Nevertheless, death seems inevitable. Is it?

Is it possible to delay death? Can our life span be extended?

Extended Life Span?

In 1990 a news report heralded the possibility of extending the human life span to "five score years and ten." No doubt this was a veiled reference to these words of the Bible psalmist Moses: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." (Psalm 90:10, *King James Version*) So the Bible gives 70 or 80 years as the average human life span. But what is the probable number of years a person can expect to live today?

A report published by WHO (World Health Organization) in 1992 placed the average life expectancy worldwide at 65 years. According to WHO, this was "expected to grow by about four months per year for the next five years, mainly because of reducing infant mortality." Even if a medical miracle prevented the death of anyone before the age of 50, however, *Time* magazine says that in the United States, "the increase in average life expectancy would be only 3 1/2 years."

Why Is Life So Short?

Dr. Jan Vijg of the Netherlands' Institute of Experimental Gerontology argues that just as certain diseases are linked to defects in the structure of human body cells, so the process of aging appears to be influenced by genetic factors. Some researchers believe that we could live longer if a

"handful of master genes" could be replaced as we grow older. Others label such a proposal "simplistic."

In any case, scientists admit that



"there seems to be a kind of built-in biological limit programmed into the cells of the human body," reports *Time* magazine. Even those who contend that we are "programmed to stay alive" concede that "something goes wrong." Indeed, at 65, 70, or 80

or a few more years, our life is “soon cut off” in death, as the Bible says.

Yet, the Christian apostle Paul of the first century C.E. confidently pre-

dicted: “As the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing.” (1 Corinthians 15:26) How can death be brought to an end? Even if it is, how can you cope with the death of loved ones today?

“The Last Enemy” Will Be Defeated!

WHEN you were a child, you may have been afraid of the dark. Horror stories and even some fairy tales may have filled you with anxiety. How reassuring



it was when your mother or father left a lamp lit while you tried to fall asleep!

Death likewise frightens many. Yet, it need not do so. Why? Because of what death really is.

Know Your Enemy

Wise King Solomon of ancient Israel declared: “The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) According to this divinely inspired thought found in your own Bible, death is simply the opposite of life. The dead have no conscious existence.

Referring to death in an illustrative way, the Christian apostle Paul writes: “Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?” What is the sting that produces death? Says Paul: “The sting producing death is sin.” (1 Corinthians 15:55, 56; Hosea 13:14) What, then, is the origin of this lethal sting? Elsewhere in the Scriptures, Paul states: “Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) The apostle leaves no doubt about the identity of that “one man” when he says: “In Adam all are dying.” (1 Corinthians 15:22) Yes, through the disobedience of our first forefather, Adam, all of us are susceptible to death’s sting.—Genesis 3:1-19.

With good health and a loving family in pleasant surroundings, none of us would choose to die. As the Bible shows, however, “time and unforeseen

occurrence" may rob us of life. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) In fact, we do not know what will happen to our life tomorrow. (James 4:14) One thing is certain—all of us have inherited sin and death. Therefore, death stalks us and strikes as an enemy.

Coping With the Death of a Loved One

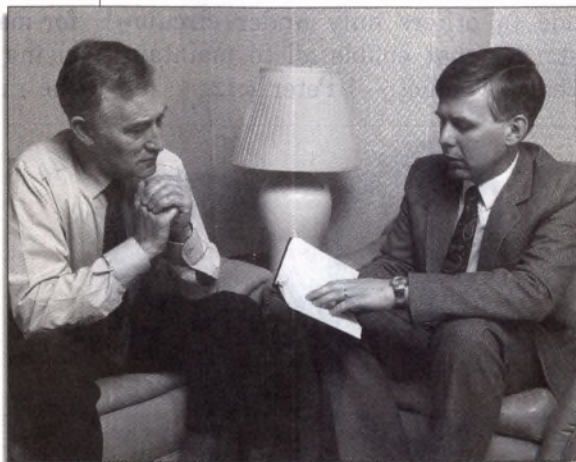
Death is especially an enemy when it strikes a loved one. "It will be worse for you," said a terminally ill wife to her husband as she contemplated death. Why could she say that? Because the Bible says: "All that your hand finds to do, do with your very power, for there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol [the common grave of mankind], the place to which you are going." (Ecclesiastes 9:10) The dead suffer no more. But the burden of grief falls on surviving relatives and friends. Can anything be done about such suffering?

The pages of God's Word, the Bible, contain many words of comfort. For example, reading and meditating on the psalms surely is one source of consolation. Comforting, indeed, are such words as these: "Blessed be Jehovah, who daily carries the load for us, the true God of our salvation."—Psalm 68:19.

Another source of comfort is the Christian congregation. In the first century C.E., the apostle Paul wrote: "Honor widows that are actually widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren [who can care for her materially], let these learn first to practice godly devotion in their own household and to keep paying a due compensation to their parents and grandparents, for this is acceptable in God's sight. Let a widow be put on the list who has become not less than sixty years old, a wife of one husband, having a witness borne to her for fine works, if she reared children, if she entertained strangers, if she washed the feet of holy ones, if she relieved those in tribulation, if

she diligently followed every good work." (1 Timothy 5:3, 4, 9, 10) Jehovah's Witnesses today likewise help and comfort such fellow believers.

Often the greatest adjustment the bereaved have to make is emotional. "I loved my wife dearly," wrote one man whose mate died two years earlier. "This is the saddest event in my



**Good Christian associates can build
the bereaved up spiritually**

life, and I find it difficult to endure." A person who has been married for some time has shared his or her life in the most intimate of human relationships. When a marriage mate dies, the surviving partner naturally feels a great loss. To whom can that one turn for help?

In such circumstances, good Christian associates can be upbuilding. "A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress," says a wise proverb. (Proverbs 17:17) A widow or widower needs help—companions who give real support. Wise friends

encourage the grieving one to talk, even if doing so brings tears. Perhaps a Christian who has already experienced the pain and heartache of losing a mate can offer some kindly help. "Speak consolingly to the depressed," counsels the Bible. (1 Thessalonians 5:14) But remember that widows and widowers miss their marriage mates. Therefore, the bereaved should confide in others only under circumstances that enable all to maintain chaste conduct.—1 Peter 2:12.



The best antidote for the pain that death inflicts is to keep busy helping others—quite a challenge for those who believe they are the ones in need of help! Here is where unselfishness plays a part. Unselfishly doing things for others helps to banish sadness and grief, for Jesus said: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving."—Acts 20:35.

Victory Over Death

A bee sting can be very painful, even fatal. Usually, though, removal of the insect's stinger embedded in your skin will help bring relief. But

what prospects are there for relief from the sting producing death?

After explaining that sin is the sting producing death, Paul exclaims: "Thanks to God, for he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Corinthians 15:57) How is victory over death associated with Christ? Jesus showed that this is the case when he said concerning himself: "The Son of man came, not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many." (Matthew 20:28) Yes, for those exercising faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ, and the ransom sacrifice that Jehovah has provided through him, the death inherited from Adam will not result in permanent non-existence.—John 3:16.

Heartening indeed are Jesus' words: "The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment."—John 5:28, 29.

Centuries earlier, God's prophet Isaiah had foretold: "He [Jehovah God] will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces." (Isaiah 25:8) Again, at Revelation 21:4, the Bible presents this marvelous prospect: "[God] 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." Fortified by this Bible hope for those sleeping in death, bereaved ones need not "sorrow just as the rest also do who have no hope."—1 Thessalonians 4:13.

Try to visualize what God has in store for mankind, as revealed in the Bible. The imminent "great tribulation" spells doom for the present wicked system of things. (Revelation 7:14) Those practicing false religion *meet their end*. *Gone are* the greedy political and commercial elements that

contribute to famine and warfare. Jesus Christ proceeds to abyss Satan the Devil, who has caused so much human death. Then Christ begins his Millennial Reign, during which he applies the value of his ransom sacrifice to mankind. The dead return in the hoped-for resurrection, and the light from God's Word shines so brightly that superstitious views about death, mankind's enemy, no longer exist. All then alive have the opportunity to learn God's ways and conform to his righteous standards.—Proverbs 4:18; Acts 24:15; Hebrews 2:14, 15; Revelation 18:4-8; 19:19-21; 20:1-3.

'Next, the end,' says Paul, 'when Christ Jesus hands over the kingdom to his God and Father. For he rules as king until God has put all enemies under his feet. As the last enemy, death is brought to nothing.' (1 Corinthians 15:24-26) Every disability resulting from Adam's sin is gone. A final test takes place, and lovers of God come through it in faithfulness. (Revelation 20:4-10) Restored to perfection, these obedient humans live, not for a mere three score years and ten or even for five score and ten, but forever. What a gift from God through his beloved Son!—Romans 6:23.

So, then, how long can you live? Your life span can stretch out for all eternity. Living as you do in this world's "time of the end," you may never die at all. (Daniel 12:4; John 11:25, 26; 17:3) If you do the divine will, you may live right into God's promised new world.—2 Peter 3:13.

If you are well along in years, however, you realistically need to consider the possibility of dying. Surely, the resurrection hope brings joy. But you may wonder how Jehovah will arrange family

life in that new system of things. Do not let such matters concern you, for Jehovah will see to the lasting happiness of those forever faithful to him.

As these critical "last days" of Satan's wicked system run their course, do not let the fear of death rob you of the privilege of serving Jehovah right



Keeping busy helping others lessens the grief caused by the death of a loved one

now. (2 Timothy 3:1) If you lose a loved one in death, console yourself with the temporary nature of its hold. (Revelation 20:13, 14) Trust in the resurrection hope. Then, whether you gain entry into the new world through survival of the great tribulation or by means of a resurrection, be assured of the inspired guarantee that death, the last enemy, is to be brought to nothing.—Revelation 7:9, 14.

No Thought of Compromise!

JEHOVAH'S hand was with the early followers of Jesus Christ. (Acts 11:21) With God's help, they uncompromisingly pursued an upright course. That they also experienced hostility and even intense persecution is a well-known historical fact.

The integrity of the first faithful followers of Christ has become proverbial. Even at the cost of their lives, they refused to compromise their faith. But why were they treated so cruelly?

Hated Without Cause

Like Jesus, true Christians did not share the aspirations and beliefs of this world. (1 John 4:4-6) Moreover, the growth of Christianity "had been so rapid, and its success so marked, that a terrible collision [with the imperial power of Rome] was inevitable," notes historian Edmond de Pressensé.

Jesus once applied to himself a prophetic psalm, saying: "They hated me without cause." (John 15:25; Psalm 69:4) Before telling his disciples this, he had warned: "A slave is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also." (John 15:20) It would not be easy to follow in his footsteps. For one thing, religious leaders among the Jews would treat Jesus' Jewish disciples as apostates from Judaism. When it was demanded that Jesus' followers no longer speak about him, however, they refused to comply and thus compromise their faith.—Acts 4:17-20; 5:27-32.

In testimony presented to the Jewish Sanhedrin shortly after Pentecost 33 C.E., the disciple Stephen was accused of "speaking

blasphemous sayings against Moses and God." Outrageous though the charges were, he was stoned to death. As a result, "great persecution arose against the congregation that was in Jerusalem," and "all except the apostles were scattered throughout



Nero



Model of imperial Rome

Nero: Courtesy of The British Museum

the regions of Judea and Samaria." (Acts 6:11, 13; 8:1) Many were imprisoned.

The Jews pursued Jesus' followers "with implacable hatred," says the book *Christianity and the Roman Empire*. Why, the Roman

government often had to act to protect Christians! For example, Roman soldiers rescued the apostle Paul from Jews intent on murdering him. (Acts 21:26-36) Yet, the relationship between Christians and Romans remained an uneasy one.

Rome Steps Up the Pace

Some nine years after Stephen's death, the Roman ruler Herod Agrippa I had the

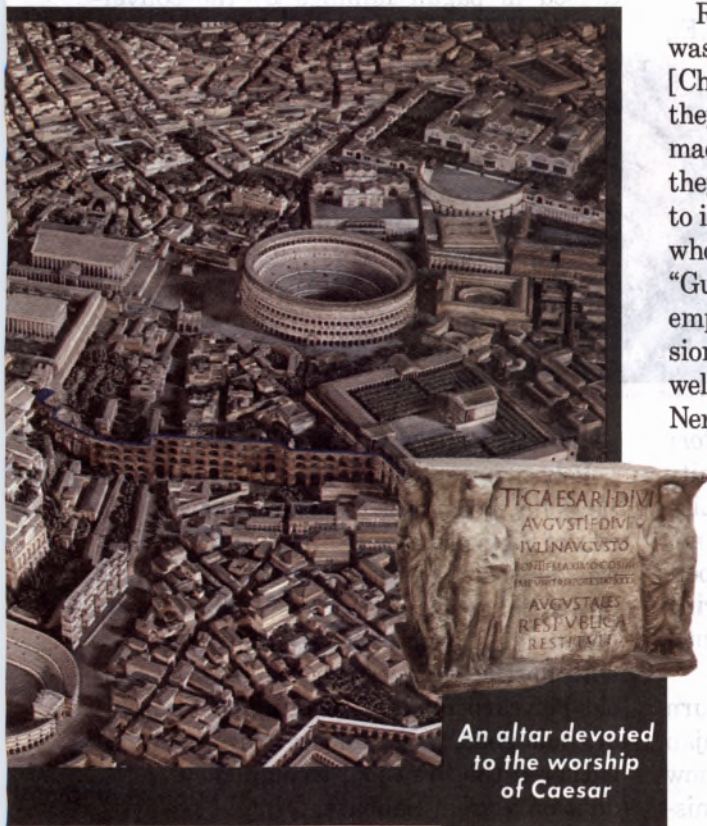
Christians followed after Nero blamed them for the disaster in his effort to squelch rumors that he was responsible for the conflagration. Did he set fire to the city as an excuse to rebuild it on more magnificent lines and rename it Neropolis after himself? Or did his empress Poppaea, a Jewish proselyte with known antipathy toward Christians, influence his decision to accuse them? Researchers are not sure, but the effect was fearsome.

Roman historian Tacitus says: "Mockery was added to death; clad in skins of beasts, [Christians] were torn to pieces by dogs; they were nailed up to crosses; they were made inflammable, so that when day failed, they might serve as lights," human torches to illuminate the imperial gardens. Tacitus, who was no friend of the Christians, adds: "Guilty as they were, and deserving of exemplary punishment, they excited compassion, as being destroyed, not for the public welfare, but from the cruelty of one man," Nero.

Clear-Cut Contrasts

Though it suited Nero's purpose to accuse Christians of Rome's destruction, he never banned them or proscribed Christianity as a religion within the State. So why did the Romans go along with the persecution? Because "the little Christian communities were troubling the pleasure-mad pagan world with their piety and their decency," says historian Will Durant.

The contrast between Christianity and the bloodletting of Roman gladiatorial contests could hardly have been greater. An opportunity for the Romans to get rid of the Christians and thus salve their own consciences was too good to miss.



An altar devoted to the worship of Caesar

▲ Museo della Civiltà Romana, Roma ►

apostle James killed in order to curry favor with the Jews. (Acts 12:1-3) By that time, belief in Christ had spread to Rome. (Acts 2:10) In 64 C.E., much of that city was destroyed by fire. Horrendous persecution of

As a world power, Rome seemed invincible. Romans believed that one reason for their military prowess was their worship of all deities. They therefore found it difficult to comprehend the exclusiveness of Christian monotheism and its rejection of all other gods, including worship of the emperor. It was not surprising that Rome saw Christianity as an influence undermining the very foundations of the empire.

The Price of Bearing Witness

Toward the end of the first century C.E., the apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos “for speaking about God and bearing witness to Jesus.” (Revelation 1:9) Roman emperor Domitian is believed to have been responsible for this. Despite the pressure brought to bear upon Jesus’ followers, however, by the turn of the century, Christianity had spread throughout the Roman Empire. How was this possible? *A History of the Early Church* says that Christianity was “held together by its ministry.” Like John, persecuted early Christians would not compromise their faith but zealously persisted in speaking about God and bearing witness to Jesus.—Acts 20:20, 21; 2 Timothy 4:2.

Persecution of Christians took a new turn by 112 C.E., two years after Emperor Trajan appointed Pliny governor of Bithynia (now northwest Turkey). The previous administration there had been lax, resulting in disorder. Temples were almost deserted, and sales of fodder for sacrificial animals dropped considerably. Traders blamed the simplicity of Christian worship, for it lacked both animal sacrifices and idols.

Pliny worked hard to restore pagan wor-

ship, while Christians paid with their lives for refusing to offer wine and incense before statues of the emperor. Eventually, Roman authorities conceded that Christians “were virtuous folk, but inexplicably hostile to the old religious tradition,” says Professor Henry Chadwick. Though being a Christian remained a capital offense, Jesus’ true followers had no thought of compromise.

Hatred also resulted from “annoyance caused in pagan families by the conversion of individual members,” says Professor W. M. Ramsay. “Social life was made very difficult when one’s neighbour could not conform with the most ordinary convention on the ground that it implied the recognition of pagan deities,” states Dr. J. W. C. Wand. No wonder many viewed the early Christians as haters of mankind or considered them to be atheists.



Marcus Aurelius

The Bettmann Archive

Growth Brings Greater Persecution

Polycarp, reportedly taught by the apostle John, became a respected elder in the city of Smyrna (now Izmir). For his faith he was burned at the stake in 155 C.E. Roman provincial governor Statius Quadratus convened the crowds. The stadium was filled with hostile pagans who despised 86-year-old Polycarp for discouraging the worship of their gods, and fanatical Jews willingly gathered the firewood, though they had to do it on a great Sabbath.

A torrent of persecution next descended upon Christians throughout the Roman world. Under Emperor Marcus Aurelius, their blood flowed even more freely. If they were Roman citizens, they died by the sword; if not, they were killed by wild beasts in the amphitheaters. Their crime? Simply

being Christians who refused to compromise or to renounce their faith.

The modern French city of Lyons grew from the Roman colony of Lugdunum, a key administrative center and the only Roman garrison between Rome and the Rhine River. By 177 C.E., it had a strong Christian community against which the pagan populace rose in fury. This began when Christians were excluded from places of public resort. The mob provoked a riot, and subsequent persecution was so great that no Christian dared to venture out-of-doors. The Roman governor commanded that Christians be found and put to death.

The Reward

With the death of Jesus' apostles and the passing of their restraining influence, apostasy began to develop among professed Christians. (2 Thessalonians 2:7) Toward

the end of the fourth century C.E., apostate Christianity became a State religion. By then, it had become corrupted and was prepared to compromise and identify itself with the world—something Jesus and his early disciples never did. (John 17:16) Much earlier, however, the Bible canon had been completed, with its record of Christian faith.

Was the suffering and death of thousands of the early Christians in vain? By no means! With no thought of compromising their faith, 'they proved themselves faithful even to death and were given the crown of life.' (Revelation 2:10) Jehovah's servants still feel the heat of persecution, but the faith and integrity of early fellow believers remains a source of great encouragement to them. Hence, modern-day Christians also entertain no thought of compromise.

BRITAIN'S ZEALOUS CHRISTIANS

Less than 10 percent of Britain's 56 million people are currently zealous Christians, according to *The Economist*. On a typical Sunday, fewer than four million people attend church services. Of these, only 1.1 million are Anglicans. Despite widespread agnosticism, however, the Church of England continues its established role as the State religion. "Britain has not been a Christian society for years but refuses to admit to agnosticism, largely out of nostalgia," claims the same news magazine. Little wonder that modern politicians and newspapers call for the Church's disestablishment, a break in the Church-State link.

"A world which is really secular, which professes to be Christian, is the worst of worlds," lamented Walter Bagehot, the 19th-century editor of *The Economist*. But in the first century C.E., Jesus Christ said that his disciples were 'no part of the world, just as he was no part of the world.' (John 17:16) However, he sent them into the world to preach God's Kingdom. Likewise today, Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide are well-known for zealously preaching "publicly and from house to house."—Acts 20:20.

Compared with Anglicans, the 126,173 Witnesses in Britain are few in number. Yet they spend some 20 hours a month attending Christian meetings. Further, during 1992 each Witness spent an average of 16 additional hours a month declaring to others the good news of God's Kingdom, the government that will soon establish a righteous new world. (Matthew 24:14; 2 Peter 3:13) The next time Jehovah's Witnesses visit your home, will you listen to their distinctive message and discover what motivates their zeal?

COURAGEOUSLY WALK IN JEHOVAH'S WAYS

"Happy is everyone fearing Jehovah, who is walking in his ways."—PSALM 128:1.

JEHOVAH'S Sacred Word is filled with accounts of the trials and joys of his loyal servants. Experiences of Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Joshua, Deborah, Barak, David, and others virtually leap from its pages. All of them were real people with something special in common. They had faith in God and courageously walked in his ways.

² The words and deeds of early witnesses of Jehovah can be of encouragement to us as we endeavor to walk in God's ways. Moreover, happiness will be our lot as we display reverence for God and wholesome fear of displeasing him. This is true though we face trials in life, for the inspired psalmist sang: "Happy is everyone fearing Jehovah, who is walking in his ways."—Psalm 128:1.

What Courage Is

³ To walk in Jehovah's ways, we must have courage. In fact, the Scriptures command God's people to display this quality. For instance, the psalmist David sang: "Be courageous, and may your heart be strong, all you who are waiting for Jehovah." (Psalm 31:24) Courage is "mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty." (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*) A courageous person is strong, bold, valiant. That Jehovah gives his servants courage is clear

- 1, 2. Of what help is the Biblical record of the words and deeds of early witnesses of Jehovah?
3. What is courage?

from these words of the apostle Paul to his coworker Timothy: "God gave us not a spirit of cowardice, but that of power and of love and of soundness of mind."—2 Timothy 1:7.

⁴ One way to acquire God-given courage is to give prayerful consideration to Jehovah's Word, the Bible. Many accounts appearing in the Scriptures can help us to become more courageous. Therefore, let us first see what we can learn from the record in the Hebrew Scriptures of some who courageously walked in Jehovah's ways.

Courage to Declare God's Message

⁵ *Enoch's courage can help Jehovah's present-day servants to speak God's message courageously.* Before Enoch was born, "a start was made of calling on the name of Jehovah." Some scholars say that men "began profanely" to call on Jehovah's name. (Genesis 4:25, 26; 5:3, 6) The divine name may have been applied to humans or even to idols. Hence, false religion was flourishing when Enoch was born in 3404 B.C.E. In fact, he seems to have been alone in 'walking with God,' pursuing a righteous course harmonizing with Jehovah's revealed truth.—Genesis 5:18, 24.

⁶ Enoch courageously delivered God's message, likely by preaching. (Hebrews

4. What is one way to acquire courage?
5. How can Enoch's courage benefit Jehovah's present-day servants?
6. (a) What strong message *did Enoch declare*?
(b) What confidence can we have?

11:5; compare 2 Peter 2:5.) “Look!” declared this solitary witness, “Jehovah came with his holy myriads, to execute judgment against all, and to convict all the ungodly concerning all their ungodly deeds that they did in an ungodly way, and concerning all the shocking things that ungodly sinners spoke against him.” (Jude 14, 15) Enoch had the courage to use the name Jehovah when delivering that message condemning the ungodly. And as God gave Enoch courage to declare that strong message, so Jehovah has empowered His present-day Witnesses to speak His word boldly in the ministry, at school, and elsewhere.—Compare Acts 4:29-31.

Courage Under Trial

⁷ *Noah’s example can help us to be courageous in performing righteous works when we are under trial.* With courage and faith, he acted upon divine warning of a global flood and “constructed an ark for the saving of his household.” By obedient and righteous acts, Noah condemned the unbelieving world for its evil works and proved it worthy of destruction. (Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 6:13-22; 7:16) Meditating on Noah’s course helps God’s modern-day servants to engage courageously in such righteous works as the Christian ministry.

⁸ If we are pursuing a righteous course but do not know how to deal with a certain trial, let us pray for wisdom to cope with it. (James 1:5-8) Noah’s loyalty to God under test shows that it is possible to meet trials with courage and faithfulness. He withstood pressure from an evil world and from materialized angels and their hybrid

offspring. Yes, Noah was a courageous “preacher of righteousness” to “an ancient world” headed for destruction. (2 Peter 2:4, 5; Genesis 6:1-9) Though he spoke boldly as a herald proclaiming God’s warning to the antediluvians, “they took no note until the flood came and swept them all away.” (Matthew 24:36-39) But let us remember that despite persecution and the rejection of our Bible-based message by most people today, Jehovah will uphold us as he upheld Noah if we display similar faith and courage as preachers of righteousness.

Courage to Obey God

⁹ *“Jehovah’s friend” Abraham is a fine example of courageous obedience to God.* (James 2:23) Abraham needed faith and courage to obey Jehovah and leave Ur of the Chaldeans, a city full of material advantages. He believed God’s promise that “all the 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) By faith Abraham “resided as an alien in the land of the promise” and looked forward to “the city having real foundations”—God’s heavenly Kingdom, under which he would be resurrected to life on earth.—Hebrews 11:8-16.

¹⁰ Abraham’s wife, Sarah, had the faith and courage needed to leave Ur, accompany her husband to a foreign land, and endure any hardships they would encounter there. And how she was rewarded for her courageous obedience to God! Though barren until about 90 and “past the age limit,” Sarah was empowered ‘to conceive seed, since she esteemed God faithful who had promised.’ In time, she bore Isaac. (Hebrews 11:11, 12; Genesis 17:15-17; 18:11; 21:1-7) Years later,

9, 10. In what respects did Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac display courageous obedience?

7. Noah provides what example of courage?

8. (a) What did Noah face as a courageous “preacher of righteousness”? (b) What will Jehovah do for us if we are courageous preachers of righteousness?

Abraham courageously obeyed God and “as good as offered up Isaac.” Stopped by an angel, the patriarch received his courageous and obedient son out of death “in an illustrative way.” He and Isaac thus prophetically portrayed that Jehovah God would provide his Son, Jesus Christ, as a ransom so that those exercising faith in him might have eternal life. (Hebrews 11:17-19; Genesis 22:1-19; John 3:16) Surely, the courageous obedience of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac should move us to obey Jehovah and always do his will.

Courage to Stand With God’s People

¹¹ *Moses courageously took his stand with God’s oppressed people.* In the 16th century B.C.E., Moses’ parents themselves showed courage. Not fearing the king’s order to kill newborn Hebrew males, they hid Moses and then put him in an ark among the reeds by the bank of the river Nile. Found by Pharaoh’s daughter, he was brought up as her own son, though he first received spiritual training in his parents’ home. As part of Pharaoh’s household, Moses “was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” and became “powerful in his words and deeds,” mighty in mental and physical capabilities.—Acts 7:20-22; Exodus 2:1-10; 6:20.

¹² Despite the material advantages of the royal house, Moses courageously chose to take his stand with Jehovah’s worshipers, then enslaved by the Egyptians. In defense of an Israelite, he killed an Egyptian and then ran away to Midian. (Exodus 2:11-15) About 40 years later, God used him to lead the Israelites out of bondage. Moses then “left Egypt, but not fearing the anger of the king,” who threatened him with death for

11, 12. (a) How did Moses display courage with regard to Jehovah’s people? (b) In view of Moses’ courage, what question might be asked?

representing Jehovah in Israel’s behalf. Moses walked as if he saw ‘the invisible One,’ Jehovah God. (Hebrews 11:23-29; Exodus 10:28) Do you have such faith and courage that you will stick with Jehovah and his people despite hardship and persecution?

Courage to ‘Follow Jehovah Wholly’

¹³ *Courageous Joshua and Caleb provided evidence that we can walk in God’s ways.* They “followed Jehovah wholly.” (Numbers 32:12) Joshua and Caleb were among the 12 men sent to spy out the Promised Land. Fearing its inhabitants, ten spies tried to dissuade Israel from entering Canaan. However, Joshua and Caleb courageously said: “If Jehovah has found delight in us, then he will certainly bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that is flowing with milk and honey. Only against Jehovah do not rebel; and you, do not you fear the people of the land, for they are bread to us. Their shelter has turned away from over them, and Jehovah is with us. Do not fear them.” (Numbers 14:8, 9) Lacking faith and courage, that generation of Israelites never reached the land of promise. But Joshua and Caleb, together with a new generation, did enter it.

¹⁴ God told Joshua: “Be courageous and very strong to take care to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn aside from it to the right or to the left, in order that you may act wisely everywhere you go. This book of the law should not depart from your mouth, and you must in an undertone read in it day and night, in order that you may

13. How did Joshua and Caleb furnish examples of courage?

14, 15. (a) As Joshua applied the words of Joshua 1:7, 8, what did he and the Israelites experience? (b) What lesson involving *courage* do we learn from Joshua and Caleb?



**Gideon and his small band
courageously trusted in Jehovah**

take care to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way successful and then you will act wisely.” —Joshua 1:7, 8.

¹⁵ As Joshua applied those words, Jericho and other cities fell to the Israelites. God even made the sun stand still so that it kept shining until Israel was victorious at Gibeon. (Joshua 10:6-14) When imperiled by united enemy forces “as numerous as the grains of sand that are on the seashore,” Joshua acted courageously, and God again made Israel victorious. (Joshua 11:1-9) Though we are imperfect humans, like Joshua and Caleb, we can follow Jehovah wholly, and God can empower us to walk in his ways courageously.

Courage to Trust in God

¹⁶ *Courageous trust in God is rewarded, as shown by events in the days when judges administered justice in Israel.* (Ruth 1:1) For example, Judge Barak and the prophetess Deborah courageously trusted in God. Canaanite king Jabin had oppressed Israel for 20 years when Jehovah had Deborah prompt Barak to assemble 10,000 men on Mount Tabor. Jabin’s military chief, Sisera, rushed to the torrent valley of Kishon, sure that on this level ground Israel’s men would be no match for his army and its 900 war chariots with iron scythes on their wheels. When the Israelites marched into the valley plain, God acted in their behalf, and a flash flood turned the battlefield into a quagmire

16. In what ways did Deborah, Barak, and Jael show courage?

that immobilized Sisera's chariots. Barak's men prevailed, so that "all the camp of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword." Sisera fled to the tent of Jael, but as he slept, she had the courage to kill him by driving a tent pin through his temples. True to Deborah's prophetic statement to Barak, "the beautifying thing" of this victory thus went to a woman. Because Deborah, Barak, and Jael courageously trusted in God, Israel "had no further disturbance for forty years."—Judges 4:1-22; 5:31.

¹⁷ Judge Gideon courageously trusted in Jehovah God when the Midianites and others invaded Israel. Though outnumbered by some 135,000 invaders, Israel's 32,000 fighting men might still have been inclined to ascribe God-given victory to their own valor. At Jehovah's direction, Gideon therefore reduced his forces to three groups of 100 men. (Judges 7:1-7, 16; 8:10) As the 300 encircled the Midianite camp at night, each had a horn and a water jar with a torch inside. At a signal, they blew the horns, smashed the jars, raised flaming torches aloft, and shouted: "Jehovah's sword and Gideon's!" (Judges 7:20) The terrorized Midianites began to flee and were subdued. Such events should convince us that courageous trust in God is also rewarded today.

Courage to Honor Jehovah and Promote Pure Worship

¹⁸ *Some Bible examples impart courage to honor Jehovah and promote pure worship.* Young David, who boldly rescued his father's sheep, proved courageous before the Philistine giant Goliath. "You are coming to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin," said David, "but I am coming to

17. What example of courageous trust in Jehovah was provided by Judge Gideon?

18. When he struck down Goliath, David courageously did what?

you with the name of Jehovah of armies, the God of the battle lines of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day Jehovah will surrender you into my hand, and I shall certainly strike you down and remove your head off you; . . . and people of all the earth will know that there exists a God belonging to Israel. And all this congregation will know that neither with sword nor with spear does Jehovah save, because to Jehovah belongs the battle." (1 Samuel 17:32-37, 45-47) With divine help, David courageously honored Jehovah, struck down Goliath, and thus played a vital role in removing a Philistine threat to pure worship.

¹⁹ When King David's son Solomon was about to build God's temple, his aged father urged him: "Be courageous and strong and act. Do not be afraid nor be terrified, for Jehovah God, my God, is with you. He will not desert you or leave you until all the work of the service of Jehovah's house is finished." (1 Chronicles 28:20) Taking courageous action, Solomon successfully completed the temple. When a theocratic building program presents a challenge today, let us remember David's words: "Be coura-

19. For what project did Solomon need courage, and how can his approach be applied in our day?

How Would You Reply?

- ☐ What is courage?
- ☐ How did Enoch and Noah display courage?
- ☐ In what respects did Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac act courageously?
- ☐ What courageous examples were set by Moses, Joshua, and Caleb?
- ☐ How did others show that they had courage to trust in God?

geous and strong and act.” What a fine way to honor Jehovah and promote pure worship!

²⁰ Because of King Asa’s desire to honor God and promote pure worship, he rid Judah of idols and male temple prostitutes. He also removed his apostate grandmother from her high position and burned her “horrible idol.” (1 Kings 15:11-13) Yes, Asa “took courage and proceeded to cause the disgusting things to vanish from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he had captured from the mountainous region of Ephraim, and to renew Jehovah’s altar that was before the porch of Jehovah.” (2 Chronicles 15:8) Do you also courageously reject apostasy and promote pure wor-

20. In what respect did King Asa take courage?

ship? Are you using your material resources to advance Kingdom interests? And are you seeking to honor Jehovah by having a regular share in declaring the good news as one of his Witnesses?

²¹ How grateful we are that God has preserved Scriptural accounts regarding courageous pre-Christian integrity keepers! Surely, their fine examples can help us to render sacred service to Jehovah with courage, godly fear, and awe. (Hebrews 12:28) But the Christian Greek Scriptures also contain examples of godly courage in action. How can some of these accounts help us to walk courageously in Jehovah’s ways?

21. (a) How can accounts of pre-Christian integrity keepers help us? (b) What will be considered in the next article?

BE OF GOOD COURAGE!

“Be of good courage and say: ‘Jehovah is my helper.’”—HEBREWS 13:6.

IT WAS the first century of our Common Era. The long-awaited Messiah had come. He had taught his disciples well and had launched a vital preaching work. It was time for people to hear the good news of God’s Kingdom. Hence, men and women who had learned the truth boldly declared that wonderful message.—Matthew 28:19, 20.

² The Kingdom was not established in

1. What boldness was displayed by those who learned God’s truth in the first century C.E.?
2. Why do Jehovah’s Witnesses need courage today?

those days. But the King-Designate, Jesus Christ, had prophesied about his future invisible presence in Kingdom power. It would be marked by such things as unparalleled warfare, famine, pestilences, earthquakes, and worldwide preaching of the good news. (Matthew 24:3-14; Luke 21:10, 11) As Witnesses of Jehovah, we need courage to cope with these conditions and the persecution we experience. It will therefore be beneficial to consider Bible accounts about courageous Kingdom proclaimers of the first century C.E.



Courage to Imitate Christ

³ *Jesus Christ provides the best example of courage.* After citing the ‘great cloud’ of courageous pre-Christian witnesses of Jehovah, the apostle Paul focused on Jesus by saying: “Because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, as we look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus. For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Indeed, consider closely the one who has endured such contrary talk by sinners against their own interests, that you may not get tired and give out in your souls.”—Hebrews 12:1-3.

3. Who provides the best example of courage, and what was said about him at Hebrews 12:1-3?

Like Jesus, we can withstand temptation if we apply and quote the Scriptures

⁴ After his baptism and 40 days of meditation, prayer, and fasting in the wilderness, Jesus bravely opposed Satan. Tempted by the Devil to turn stones into bread, Jesus refused because it was wrong to perform a miracle to satisfy personal desire. “It is written,” said Jesus, “Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah’s mouth.” When Satan challenged him to jump off the temple battlement, Jesus refused because it would have been a sin to tempt God to rescue him from potential suicide. “Again it is written,” Christ stated, “You must not put Jehovah your God to the test.” Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world for one “act of worship,” but Jesus would not apos-

4. How did Jesus display courage when tempted by Satan?

tatize and support the Devil's challenge that humans would not remain faithful to God under test. So Jesus declared: "Go away, Satan! For it is written, 'It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.'" At that, the Tempter "retired from him until another convenient time."—Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:13.

⁵ Jesus was in subjection to Jehovah and was opposed to Satan. If we similarly 'subject ourselves to God and oppose the Devil, he will flee from us.' (James 4:7) Like Jesus, we can courageously withstand temptation if we apply the Scriptures, perhaps even quoting them at the time we are tempted to do something sinful. Is it probable that we will yield to temptation to commit thievery if at that time we repeat to ourselves God's law: "You must not steal"? Are two Christians likely to succumb to sexual immorality if even one of them courageously quotes the words: "You must not commit adultery"?—Romans 13:8-10; Exodus 20:14, 15.

⁶ As Christians hated by this world, we can avoid its spirit and sinful conduct. Jesus told his followers: "In the world you are having tribulation, but take courage! I have conquered the world." (John 16:33) He triumphed over the world by not becoming like it. His example as a conqueror and the outcome of his integrity-keeping course can fill us with the courage to imitate him by remaining separate from this world and undefiled by it.—John 17:16.

Courage to Keep On Preaching

⁷ *Jesus and his disciples relied on God for courage to keep on preaching despite persecution. Christ boldly fulfilled his ministry*

5. What can help us to withstand temptation?

6. How was Jesus a courageous world conqueror?

7, 8. What will help us to keep on preaching despite persecution?

despite persecution, and after Pentecost 33 C.E., his persecuted followers continued to proclaim the good news even though Jewish religious leaders tried to stop them. (Acts 4:18-20; 5:29) The disciples prayed: "Jehovah, give attention to their threats, and grant your slaves to keep speaking your word with all boldness." And what happened? "When they had made supplication, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken," says the account, "and they were one and all filled with the holy spirit and were speaking the word of God with boldness."—Acts 4:24-31.

⁸ Since the majority of people today are not receptive to the good news, boldness is often needed to keep on preaching to them. Especially when persecuted, Jehovah's servants are in need of God-given courage in order to bear thorough witness. (Acts 2:40; 20:24) So the courageous Kingdom proclaimer Paul told a youthful, less-experienced coworker: "God gave us not a spirit of cowardice, but that of power and of love and of soundness of mind. Therefore do not become ashamed of the witness about our Lord, neither of me a prisoner for his sake, but take your part in suffering evil for the good news according to the power of God." (2 Timothy 1:7, 8) If we pray for courage, we will be able to keep on preaching, and even persecution will not rob us of our joy as Kingdom proclaimers.—Matthew 5:10-12.

Courage to Take Sides With Jehovah

⁹ *Many first-century Jews and Gentiles courageously abandoned unscriptural traditions to become baptized followers of Christ. Shortly after Pentecost 33 C.E., "the number of the disciples kept multiplying in*

9, 10. (a) What did first-century Jews and Gentiles do in order to become baptized followers of Christ? (b) Why did it take courage to become a Christian?

Jerusalem very much; and a great crowd of priests began to be obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:7) Those Jews had the courage to break religious ties and accept Jesus as the Messiah.

¹⁰ Beginning in 36 C.E., many Gentiles became believers. When Cornelius, members of his family, and other Gentiles heard the good news, they promptly accepted it, received holy spirit, and were “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” (Acts 10:1-48) In Philippi a Gentile jailer and his household quickly embraced Christianity, and “he and his were baptized without delay.” (Acts 16:25-34) Courage was required to take such steps because Christians were a persecuted, unpopular minority. They still are. But if you have not made a dedication to God and been baptized as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, is it not time for you to take these courageous steps?

Courage in Divided Households

¹¹ *Eunice and her son Timothy set fine examples of courageous faith in a religiously divided household.* Though Eunice had a pagan husband, she taught her son “the holy writings” from his infancy. (2 Timothy 3:14-17) Upon becoming a Christian, she manifested ‘faith without any hypocrisy.’ (2 Timothy 1:5) She also had the courage to impart Christian teaching to Timothy while showing respect for the headship of her unbelieving husband. Surely, her faith and courage were rewarded when her well-taught son was chosen to accompany Paul on missionary travels. How this can encourage Christian parents who find themselves in similar circumstances!

¹² Though Timothy lived in a religiously divided household, he courageously accept-

ed Christianity and became a spiritual person about whom Paul could say: “I am hoping in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you [Philippians] shortly, that I may be a cheerful soul when I get to know about the things pertaining to you. For I have no one else of a disposition like his who will genuinely care for the things pertaining to you. . . . You know the proof he gave of himself, that like a child with a father he slaved with me in furtherance of the good news.” (Philippians 2:19-22) Today, many boys and girls in religiously divided homes bravely embrace true Christianity. Like Timothy they are giving proof of themselves, and how we rejoice that they are part of Jehovah’s organization!

Courage to ‘Risk Our Necks’

¹³ *Aquila and his wife, Priscilla (Prisca), set an example by courageously ‘risking their necks’ for a fellow believer.* They received Paul into their home, worked with him in tentmaking, and helped him to build up the new congregation in Corinth. (Acts 18:1-4) During their 15-year friendship, they even put their lives in jeopardy in his behalf in an undisclosed way. They were living in Rome when he told Christians there: “Give my greetings to Prisca and Aquila my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who have risked their own necks for my soul, to whom not only I but also all the congregations of the nations render thanks.”—Romans 16:3, 4.

¹⁴ By risking their necks for Paul, Aquila and Prisca acted in accord with Jesus’ words: “I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (John 13:34) This commandment

13. In what way did Aquila and Priscilla display courage?

14. By risking their necks for Paul, Aquila and Prisca were acting in harmony with what commandment?

11. Eunice and Timothy provided what fine examples of courage?

12. What kind of person did Timothy become, and who are now proving to be like him?

was “new” in that it went beyond the Mosaic Law requirement that a person love his neighbor as he loved himself. (Leviticus 19:18) It demanded self-sacrificing love that would go as far as to give one’s life for others, as Jesus did. The writer Tertullian of the second and third centuries C.E. quoted the words of worldly people regarding Christians when he wrote: “‘See,’ they say, ‘how they love one another . . . and how they are ready even to die for one another.’” (*Apology*, chapter XXXIX, 7) Especially amid persecution may we be obligated to demonstrate brotherly love by courageously risking our lives so as to avoid exposing fellow believers to brutality or death at enemy hands.—1 John 3:16.

Courage Brings Joy

¹⁵ *Paul and Silas provide evidence that displaying courage amid trials can bring joy.* By order of the civil magistrates in the city of Philippi, they were publicly beaten with rods and put in prison stocks. Yet, they did not dejectedly cower in fear. Despite their trying circumstances, they still had God-given courage and the joy that it brings to faithful Christians.

¹⁶ About the middle of the night, Paul and Silas were praying and praising God in song. Suddenly, an earthquake shook the prison, loosened their bonds, and threw open the doors. The frightened jailer and his family were given a bold witness that led to their baptism as Jehovah’s servants. He himself “rejoiced greatly with all his household now that he had believed God.” (Acts 16:16-34) What joy this must have brought Paul and Silas! Having considered this and other Scriptural examples of courage, how can we remain courageous as Jehovah’s servants?

15, 16. As shown in Acts chapter 16, how may courage and joy be linked?

Continue to Be of Good Courage

¹⁷ *Hoping in Jehovah will help us to remain courageous.* David sang: “Hope in Jehovah; be courageous and let your heart be strong. Yes, hope in Jehovah.” (Psalm 27:14) Psalm 27 shows that David relied on Jehovah as “the stronghold” of his life. (Verse 1) Having seen how God dealt with David’s adversaries in the past gave him courage. (Verses 2, 3) Appreciation for Jehovah’s center of worship was another factor. (Verse 4) Trusting in Jehovah’s help, protection, and deliverance also built up David’s courage. (Verses 5-10) Helpful, too, was continued instruction in the principles of Jehovah’s righteous way. (Verse 11) Confident prayer for deliverance from his adversaries, coupled with faith and hope, helped David to be courageous. (Verses 12-14) We can build up our courage in similar ways, thus showing that we really “hope in Jehovah.”

¹⁸ *Regular association with fellow worshipers of Jehovah can help us to remain courageous.* When Paul appealed to Caesar

17. As shown in Psalm 27, how is hoping in Jehovah related to courage?

18. (a) What shows that regular association with fellow worshipers of Jehovah can help us to remain courageous? (b) Christian meetings play what role in building up courage?

In Our Next Issue

Natural Disasters
—Is God Responsible?

Jehovah’s Saving Acts Now

Happy Are the Humble

and was traveling to Rome, fellow believers met him at the Marketplace of Appius and Three Taverns. "Upon catching sight of them," says the account, "Paul thanked God and took courage." (Acts 28:15) As we regularly attend Christian meetings, we are heeding Paul's counsel: "Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10: 24, 25) What does it mean to encourage one another? To encourage means "to inspire with courage, spirit, or hope." (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*) We can do much to inspire other Christians with courage, and their encouragement can likewise build up this quality in us.

¹⁹ *To remain courageous, we must regularly study God's Word and apply its counsel in our lives.* (Deuteronomy 31:9-12; Joshua 1:8) Our regular study should include Christian publications based on the Scriptures, for the sound counsel thus provided will help us to meet tests of faith with God-given courage. From Bible accounts, we have seen how Jehovah's servants have been courageous in various situations. Right now, we may not know how such information can help us, but God's Word has power, and what we learn from it can always benefit us. (Hebrews 4:12) For instance, if fear of man should begin to affect our ministry, we may remember how Enoch had the courage to deliver God's message to the ungodly.—Jude 14, 15.

²⁰ *To remain courageous as Jehovah's servants, we must persevere in prayer.* (Romans

19. How are the Scriptures and Christian publications related to our remaining courageous?

20. Why can it be said that prayer is vital if we are to remain courageous as Jehovah's servants?

12:12) Jesus endured his trials courageously because he "offered up supplications and also petitions to the One who was able to save him out of death, with strong outcries and tears, and he was favorably heard for his godly fear." (Hebrews 5:7) By staying close to God in prayer, we will not be like worldly cowards destined to experience "the second death" from which there is no resurrection. (Revelation 21:8) Divine protection and life in God's new world are for his courageous servants.

²¹ As loyal Witnesses of Jehovah, we need not fear demon and human foes, for we have God's support and Jesus' courageous example as a world conqueror. Spiritually up-building association with Jehovah's people likewise helps us to be courageous. Our courage is also built up through the guidance and counsel of the Scriptures and Christian publications. And Bible accounts of God's servants of the past help us to walk in his ways courageously. In these critical last days, therefore, let us forge ahead boldly in sacred service. Yes, let all of Jehovah's people be of good courage!

21. Why can loyal Witnesses of Jehovah be courageous?

How Would You Reply?

- ☐ How can Jesus' example fill us with courage?
- ☐ What gave Jesus and his disciples courage to keep on preaching?
- ☐ Why did Jews and Gentiles need courage to take sides with Jehovah?
- ☐ What examples of courage were provided by Eunice and Timothy?
- ☐ What evidence is there that courage brings joy even amid persecution?

Preaching From Village to Village in

S · P · A · I · N

JESUS CHRIST traveled “from city to city and from village to village, teaching and continuing on his journey to Jerusalem.” (Luke 13:22) To accomplish the ministry, Jesus and his disciples preached not only “from city to city” but also “from village to village.” Though it would have been easier to concentrate on the cities, they did not bypass the many villages in the countryside.*

Jehovah’s Witnesses in Spain were faced with a challenge like the one that confronted Jesus. As late as 1970, there were huge areas of untouched rural territory ready for harvesting. (Matthew 9:37, 38) Hundreds of villages in the rainy mountains of the north, on the arid central plains, and along the coast had never been reached with the Kingdom message.

The Spanish Witnesses of Jehovah were determined to spare no effort in order to take the good news to these regions. But why did people in these areas have to wait so long to hear the Kingdom message? And how did they respond?

Legal Recognition Spurs Rural Witnessing

The work of Jehovah’s Witnesses in

* Josephus calculated that there were a total of 204 “cities and villages” in Galilee, and he described the region as having “very many villages.”



Spain had been under ban since the end of the civil war in 1939. During the 1950’s and 1960’s, zealous Witnesses preached with caution in the cities, where their presence was less noticeable. When their work was finally legalized in 1970, there were some 10,000 Kingdom publishers in Spain. Almost all of them lived in cities and large towns, but the villages of Spain also needed to hear the Kingdom message. Who would meet the challenge?

In the 1970’s a campaign was launched to reach all areas of the peninsula with the good news. Nearly every month from 1973 until 1979, special notices outlining the need in different regions of the country appeared in *Our Kingdom Ministry*, the monthly service publication for the congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Many willing and responsive families answered the call and volunteered to serve where the need was greater.

Typical is the example of Rosendo and his wife, Luci. They were sent as special pioneers (full-time Kingdom preachers) to a fishing village in northwest Spain and then decided to stay in the area when they became parents. “I must admit that we went through very difficult times,” acknowledges

Rosendo. "Secular work was hard to find, but we counted on Jehovah's help and never went hungry or lacked a roof over our heads. It was certainly worth it." Over the years, they have been able to help in the formation of four congregations in this region of Spain.

'Search Out Who Is Deserving'

Jesus told his disciples to "search out" the deserving ones in each city or village.



Vilac, Llérida

(Matthew 10:11) In rural areas of Spain, the search requires diligence and initiative, as discovered by Ángel, a brother from Alcoy (Alicante). He had just finished calling at some homes in the village of Masías when he heard the sound of a cock crowing. He thought to himself, "If there is a cock, there must be a house somewhere—a house we have overlooked." After searching around, Ángel found a path that led over the ridge of a hillside and finally to an isolated house.

On this farmstead lived José and Dolores, *fleshly* brother and sister in their 60's. They

listened attentively and immediately accepted the offer of a Bible study. However, it was not easy to study with these humble individuals, since they could not read or write, and everything had to be translated from Spanish into the Valencian tongue, the only language they understood. Furthermore, they faced considerable opposition from their neighbors. Despite these obstacles, both José and Dolores progressed in the truth, even though attending the meetings meant a long journey over the mountains. Eventually, they qualified for baptism, and both of them continue serving Jehovah faithfully.

Rosendo and Luci, mentioned earlier, recall how a paralyzed individual in an isolated house near Moaña, northwest Spain, accepted the truth. Her name was María. When she first spoke to the Witnesses, she could neither read nor write and had been bedridden for years because of having been



Puebla de Sanabria, Zamora

stricken with polio as a child. Her house was over a mile from the nearest road. Nevertheless, she was eager to study the Bible, and her determination to serve Jehovah soon became apparent. María learned to read and write and began to attend the meetings, thanks to the devoted efforts of the congregation. Brothers carried her for two hundred yards from her house to an

unpaved lane where they would carefully lower her into a car. Despite initial opposition from her family, she progressed to the point of baptism. Because of the confidence that her spiritual advancement gave her,



Casarabonela, Málaga

she has now learned to drive a specially adapted car and has completed a course of basic education. "Being able to help people like María makes any sacrifice worthwhile," explains Rosendo.

Bible Readers Respond Readily

In the 1970's the Bible for the first time became available to the general public in Spain. Many Spaniards bought a copy, and some began to read the Scriptures. Pilar, from Medina del Campo (Valladolid), was already reading the Bible when Jehovah's Witnesses first came to her town in 1973. Being a Catholic, she was wary of accepting literature from the Witnesses, but she did want to understand the Bible. Consequently, she agreed to have weekly discussions to answer her Bible questions.

Making good use of literature published by the Watch Tower Society, the pioneer sister who visited Pilar was able to answer her many questions. Impressed by what she was learning, Pilar after several weeks

agreed to study the Bible using the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*. Before completing her study of the *Truth* book, she finished reading the entire Bible and was convinced that she had found the truth. She became the first Witness in Medina del Campo, which now has a fine Kingdom Hall and a congregation of 63 publishers.

Spanish Witnesses still find people who are "conscious of their spiritual need" and who regularly read the Bible in an effort to understand God's will. (Matthew 5:3) Pepi, a former Catholic who once taught the catechism in the parish of Zumaia (northern Spain), was preaching in a nearby village when she met the parish priest.

"Pepi, you are wasting your time," the priest told her. "In this village of Itziar,



Simón, Huesca

there are only two people—a married couple—who are spiritually inclined. The rest just go to church out of habit."

"Well," replied Pepi, "if there are two people who are spiritually inclined, they will become Jehovah's Witnesses."

Pepi continued her house-to-house preaching work along with the other Witnesses until the village was completed. And sure enough, in an isolated house, the brothers

found the very couple that the priest had mentioned. They were reading the Bible but did not understand it. They eagerly accepted a Bible study, progressed rapidly, and were baptized in April 1991.

Some honesthearted people have learned the truth simply by reading on their own the Bible-based literature published by the Watch Tower Society. For instance, the Witnesses from Almadén (Ciudad Real) were preaching in the small town of Ciruelas (Badajoz) when they found a lady who listened intently to their message. In view of her evident interest, they offered her a home Bible study. She declined, however, saying that an elderly gentleman was already giving her Bible lessons. Several other people in the area also mentioned the same thing. Their curiosity aroused, the brothers inquired about the elderly gentleman. They got his address and went to pay him a visit.

To their surprise they discovered that in Madrid this man, named Felipe, had obtained the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. After reading it through, he understood that it was his responsibility to share the good news with his neighbors. Hence, he had been using the book to give them Bible lessons. The brothers made arrangements to study with him. A lady with whom he studied the Bible also accepted a study. Though 80 years of age and not enjoying good health, Felipe is making good progress in the truth.

Prejudices Overcome

Rural territories pose certain unique problems. Religious traditions and superstitions usually have a strong hold in such areas, and many people living in the rurals have an ingrained suspicion of a "new religion." Some villagers are especially sensitive about what their neighbors and rela-

tives would think if they changed their religion. But the power of God's Word can overcome such problems and change a person's life. This was the case in the fishing village of Cangas de Morrazo in northwest Spain.

Roberto, a native of this village, went to sea at the age of 14 because he yearned for independence. His life as a merchant seaman brought him into company with other young sailors who drank heavily and used



Lekettio, Vizcaya

drugs to pass away the lonely hours spent at sea. Before long, Roberto also became a heavy drinker and a drug addict.

In time Roberto returned home but was unable and unwilling to give up his bad habits. To finance his drug addiction, he became a thief and ended up in prison on six different occasions. When he was 18, he consumed an almost fatal mixture of wine and tranquilizers. Doctors saved his life, but he lost the use of his arms and legs. He left the hospital a quadriplegic. Even being confined to a wheelchair did not make him

break the drug habit. He was disillusioned with religion, and drugs seemed to be all he had to make life worth living—until three years later when he was visited by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Learning about fulfilled Bible prophecies helped Roberto to overcome his skepticism. The warm welcome he received at the Kingdom Hall convinced him that true religion does enrich people's lives. Within nine months, Roberto had overcome his drug addiction and was baptized. Despite his severe physical disabilities, he has been serving as a pioneer for eight years. He has also been a congregation elder for the last two years. Francisco, one of his former companions, was so impressed by the changes in Roberto's life that he too became a Witness and is now a ministerial servant. The remarkable change in this supposedly incurable addict helped people in that locality to appreciate better the nature of our work. One woman even brought her young drug addict son to the Kingdom Hall to see if the Witnesses could cure him.

Searching the Bible for the Truth

Generally, country folk have such appreciation for the truth that this often puts the worldly-wise to shame. (1 Corinthians 1:26, 27) Adelina, a shy middle-aged woman, is one of these appreciative ones. She used to take her Catholic faith very seriously. Each morning without fail she would kneel down to pray, saying several Our Fathers and Hail Marys. She would direct her prayers to a different "saint" each day of the week—just to be on the safe side.

When Adelina began studying the Bible, she directed this same religious zeal to her newfound faith. Even her shyness did not hold her back, although the first time she and her husband went to the Kingdom Hall, it took them ten minutes to muster up enough courage to enter. Once inside, how-

ever, she listened intently. On one occasion, she learned about the Thousand Year Reign of Christ. This subject fascinated her, and when she returned home, she wanted to read more about it in her Bible. But neither she nor her husband knew where the information could be found, although they thought it was mentioned somewhere in the book of Revelation. So Adelina began to read Revelation that night and kept reading until she finally arrived at chapter 20 in the early hours of the morning.

On another occasion, Adelina learned that it was appropriate for a husband to represent his wife in prayer. Although he was willing to pray, her husband did not know what to say in prayer. That very night, Adelina decided to look for instructions in the Bible. At two o'clock in the morning, she woke her husband up to tell him that she had found Matthew chapter 6, which considers the subject of prayer in detail. After reading Jesus' instructions, her husband finally said a prayer for the two of them. Now both Adelina and her husband are Witnesses of Jehovah.

A Fine Harvest

After nearly 25 years of rural witnessing by zealous servants of Jehovah, every corner of Spain has heard the good news. As was true of Asia Minor in the first century, 'the word of Jehovah is being carried throughout the whole country.' (Acts 13:49) Consequently, thousands of village folk have responded favorably.

In Spain and elsewhere, preaching thoroughly in rural areas does require patience and self-sacrifice. But since God's will is that 'all kinds of people be saved,' Jehovah's Witnesses are happy to search out appreciative ones. (1 Timothy 2:4) And as the foregoing experiences demonstrate, Jehovah has richly rewarded efforts put forth to preach from village to village in Spain.

Why Admit a Mistake?

IT WAS one of the most unusual encounters in military history. An unarmed envoy turned back 400 battle-hardened soldiers bent on avenging an insult. After hearing the entreaties of just one brave woman, the leader of those men abandoned his mission.

That leader was David, who later became Israel's king. He listened to the woman Abigail because he wished to please God. When she tactfully showed him that taking vengeance on her husband, Nabal, would result in bloodguilt, David exclaimed: "Blessed be Jehovah the God of Israel, who has sent you this day to meet me! And blessed be your sensibleness, and blessed be you who have restrained me this day from entering into bloodguilt and having my own hand come to my salvation." David was grateful that God used Abigail to keep him from making a grave mistake.—1 Samuel 25:9-35.

In a psalm, David asked: "Mistakes—who can discern?" (Psalm 19:12) Like him, we may not be aware of our mistakes unless someone points them out to us. On other occasions unpleasant consequences force us to realize that we have been mistaken, unwise, or unkind.

No Cause for Despair

Though all of us make mistakes, these need not be a cause for despair. Diplomat Edward John Phelps observed: "The man who makes no mistakes does not usually make anything." And the Christian disciple James said: "We all stumble many times." (James 3:2) Would a child learn to walk without ever stumbling? No, for a child learns from mistakes and keeps on trying until balance is achieved.

To lead balanced lives, we also need to learn from our mistakes and those of others. Since the Bible relates the experiences of many whose circumstances may mirror our own, we can be helped to avoid making the same mistakes that they made. What, then, can we learn from their mistakes?

Humility a Vital Quality

One lesson is that God does not condemn all who make mistakes but judges only those refusing to rectify them if possible. Israel's King Saul disobeyed Jehovah's instructions about the annihilation of the Amalekites. When confronted by the prophet Samuel, Saul first minimized matters and then tried to blame others. He was more concerned about losing face before his men than righting the wrong. Hence, 'Jehovah rejected him as king.'—1 Samuel 15:20-23, 30.

Though Saul's successor, David, made serious mistakes, he was forgiven because he humbly accepted counsel and discipline. David's humility moved him to heed the words of Abigail. His troops were poised for battle. Yet, in front of his men, David admitted that he had made a rash decision. Throughout his life, such humility helped David to seek forgiveness and correct his steps.

Humility also moves Jehovah's servants to rectify thoughtless remarks. During a hearing before the Sanhedrin, the high priest ordered that Paul be slapped. The apostle retorted: "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall." (Acts 23:3) Perhaps because of poor eyesight, Paul did not realize who he was addressing until bystanders asked: "Are you reviling the high priest of God?" At that, Paul immediately acknowledged his mistake, saying: "Broth-

ers, I did not know he was high priest. For it is written, 'You must not speak injuriously of a ruler of your people.'” (Acts 23:4, 5; Exodus 22:28) Yes, Paul humbly admitted his mistake.

They Admitted Mistakes

The Bible also shows that some changed their mistaken way of thinking. For instance, consider the psalmist Asaph. Because wicked people seemed to fare well, he said: “Surely it is in vain that I have cleansed my heart.” But Asaph came to his senses after going to Jehovah’s house and meditating on the benefits of pure worship. Moreover, he admitted his mistake in Psalm 73.

Jonah also allowed wrong thinking to cloud his viewpoint. After preaching in Nineveh, he was concerned about personal vindication instead of the sparing of that city’s inhabitants. Jonah was displeased when Jehovah did not punish the Ninevites in spite of their repentance, but God corrected him. Jonah came to realize that his viewpoint was mistaken, for the Bible book bearing his name honestly acknowledges his mistakes. —Jonah 3:10-4:11.

Mistakenly assuming that Jehovah God, not Satan the Devil, was causing his distress, the man Job tried to prove that he did not deserve his sufferings.

He was unaware of the greater issue: Would God’s servants remain loyal to him under test? (Job 1:9-12) After Elihu and then Jehovah helped Job to see his mistake, he admitted: “I talked, but I was not understanding . . . That is why I make a retraction, and I do repent in dust and ashes.” —Job 42:3, 6.

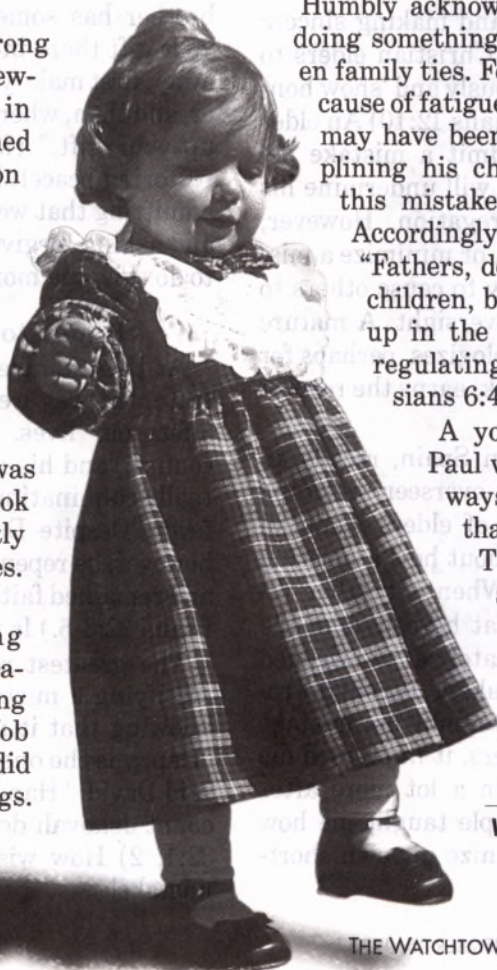
Admitting mistakes helps us to maintain a good relationship with God. As the foregoing examples show, he will not condemn us for our mistakes if we admit them and do what we can to rectify wrong thinking, thoughtless words, or foolhardy actions. How can we apply this knowledge?

Doing Something About Our Mistakes

Humbly acknowledging a mistake and doing something about it can strengthen family ties. For instance, perhaps because of fatigue or annoyance, a parent may have been rather harsh in disciplining his child. Refusal to correct this mistake can have bad effects. Accordingly, the apostle Paul wrote: “Fathers, do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah.” —Ephesians 6:4.

A young Christian named Paul warmly recalls: “Dad always apologized if he felt that he had overreacted. That helped me to respect him.” Whether an apology is necessary in a particular situation is something for personal decision. Nevertheless,

**Would a child learn
to walk without ever
stumbling?**



apologies need to be followed by earnest efforts to avoid similar mistakes in the future.

What if a husband or a wife makes a mistake that causes distress? Frank admission, a heartfelt apology, and a forgiving spirit will help to maintain their loving relationship. (Ephesians 5:33; Colossians 3:13) Jesús, a Spanish man of strong temperament in his 50's, is not too proud to apologize to his wife, Albina. "We have the custom of apologizing when we offend each other," she says. "This helps us to put up with each other in love."

When an Elder Makes a Mistake

Admitting mistakes and making sincere apologies will also help Christian elders to work together harmoniously and 'show honor to one another.' (Romans 12:10) An elder may be reluctant to admit a mistake because he fears that this will undermine his authority in the congregation. However, trying to justify, ignore, or minimize a mistake is much more likely to cause others to lose confidence in his oversight. A mature brother who humbly apologizes, perhaps for some thoughtless remark, earns the respect of others.

Fernando, an elder in Spain, recalls an occasion when a circuit overseer presiding over a large gathering of elders made an inaccurate statement about how a meeting should be conducted. When a brother respectfully corrected what he had said, the circuit overseer immediately acknowledged that he had been mistaken. Fernando recalls: "When I saw him admit his mistake in front of all those elders, it impressed me greatly. I respected him a lot more after that apology. His example taught me how important it is to recognize my own shortcomings."

Be Quick to Admit a Mistake

An apology is usually appreciated, especially if made quickly. In fact, the sooner we admit a mistake the better. To illustrate: On October 31, 1992, Pope John Paul II admitted that the Inquisition had acted "mistakenly" 360 years ago in punishing Galileo for asserting that the earth is not the center of the universe. Yet, postponing an apology for such a long time tends to diminish its value.

The same is true in personal relationships. A quick apology can heal a wound caused by an unkind word or deed. Jesus urged us not to delay in making peace, saying: "If . . . you are bringing your gift to the altar and you there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away; first make your peace with your brother, and then, when you have come back, offer up your gift." (Matthew 5:23, 24) Often, restoring peaceful relations simply requires admitting that we handled matters wrongly and asking forgiveness. The longer we wait to do this, the more difficult it becomes.

Happy to Admit Mistakes

As the examples of Saul and David illustrate, the way we handle our mistakes can affect our lives. Saul stubbornly resisted counsel, and his mistakes multiplied, eventually culminating in his death in God's disfavor. Despite David's mistakes and sins, however, he repentantly accepted correction and remained faithful to Jehovah. (Compare Psalm 32:3-5.) Is that not our desire?

The greatest reward for admitting and rectifying a mistake or repenting of sin is knowing that it has been forgiven by God. "Happy is the one . . . whose sin is covered," said David. "Happy is the man to whose account Jehovah does not put error." (Psalm 32:1, 2) How wise it is, then, to admit a mistake!

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Since the ancient priest named Melchizedek was a real human, why does the Bible say that he was "without genealogy"?

This statement is made at Hebrews 7:3. Note the verse in its context:

"For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him and to whom Abraham apportioned a tenth from all things, is first of all, by translation, 'King of Righteousness,' and is then also king of Salem, that is, 'King of Peace.' In being fatherless, motherless, without genealogy, having neither a beginning of days nor an end of life, but having been made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually."—Hebrews 7:1-3.

As mentioned, Melchizedek was a real human, as real as Abraham, with whom he had direct dealings. (Genesis 14:17-20; Hebrews 7:4-10) That being so, Melchizedek must have had parents, a father and a mother, and he might have had offspring. Hence, as a human he had a genealogy, or family tree. He also had an end of his physical life. At some point Melchizedek died, in line with the apostle Paul's statement at Romans 5:12, 14. But since we do not know when Melchizedek died and so ceased to serve as priest, in that respect he served without any known end.

In Hebrews, Paul made comments about Melchizedek when discussing Jesus Christ's role as a superior High Priest. Referring to Melchizedek as a type, or pattern, of Jesus in this priestly role, Paul said: "Jesus . . . has become a high priest according to the manner of Melchizedek." (Hebrews 6:20) In what sense?

Paul must have realized that the Bible record does not give details about Melchizedek's family lineage—his ancestors or any possible descendants. That information is just not a matter of Biblical record. From the standpoint of what Paul knew or we know, therefore, Melchizedek could

correctly be said to be "without genealogy" (*New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures; American Standard Version*), "without table of descent" (W. J. Conybeare), or with "no family tree."—J. B. Phillips.

In what way was Jesus like that? Granted, we know that Jesus' Father was Jehovah God and that his human mother was Mary of the tribe of Judah. Still, there was a similarity between Melchizedek and Jesus. How so? Jesus was not born in the tribe of Levi, the tribe for priests in the nation of Israel. No, Jesus had not become a priest through human genealogy. Neither had Melchizedek, who had not become a priest "according to the law of a commandment depending upon the flesh," that is, by being born into a priestly tribe and family. (Hebrews 7:15, 16) Rather than becoming a priest through a human father who had himself been a priest, Jesus had "been specifically called by God a high priest according to the manner of Melchizedek."—Hebrews 5:10.

Further, Jesus did not have any descendants or successors to his priesthood. In this sense too, he was without genealogy. He will eternally carry out his priestly service as a helpful instructor. Paul commented on this perpetual service, saying:

"[Jesus] because of continuing alive forever has his priesthood without any successors. Consequently he is able also to save completely those who are approaching God through him, because he is always alive to plead for them."—Hebrews 7:24, 25.

Our consideration of Paul's words at Hebrews 7:3 should therefore be more than a mere piece of knowledge to store away in our head. It should reinforce our appreciation for the loving provision that Jehovah God has made for us to obtain forgiveness of sin everlastingly and for the way he has arranged for us to receive help and guidance perpetually.

Like a Tree

“POEMS are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree.” Extolling the many virtues of trees, poet Joyce Kilmer thus gave God the credit for their creation.

Jehovah God has made trees of great variety, splendor, and usefulness. Dwarfs and giants alike, they can be so beautiful that they defy description. Moreover, trees provide food, fuel, and shelter. And designers keep on finding new uses for wood.

In the Bible, trees are sometimes used figuratively to represent kingdoms, rulers, and individuals. (Ezekiel 31: 1-18; Daniel 4:10-26) Trees are mentioned in association with the joyful, peaceful, and fruitful conditions resulting from Jehovah’s kingship and the restoration of his people. (1 Chronicles 16:33; Isaiah 55:12; Ezekiel 34:27; 36:30) The Scriptures also promise that the days of God’s people will be like those of a tree. (Isaiah 65:22) This has great meaning when we realize that some trees live for centuries.

A Biblical psalmist said that a man who delights in God’s law “will certainly become like a tree planted by streams of water, that gives its own fruit in its season and the foliage of which does not wither, and everything he does will succeed.” A luxuriant tree planted by a plentiful water source reminded the psalmist of the spiritual prosperity enjoyed by one whose “delight is in the law of Jehovah.” (Psalm 1:1-3) If you take genuine delight in God’s law and Sacred Word, your days can become like those of a tree. In fact, by acting in harmony with accurate knowledge of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, you can entertain the hope of life everlasting. —John 17:3.

