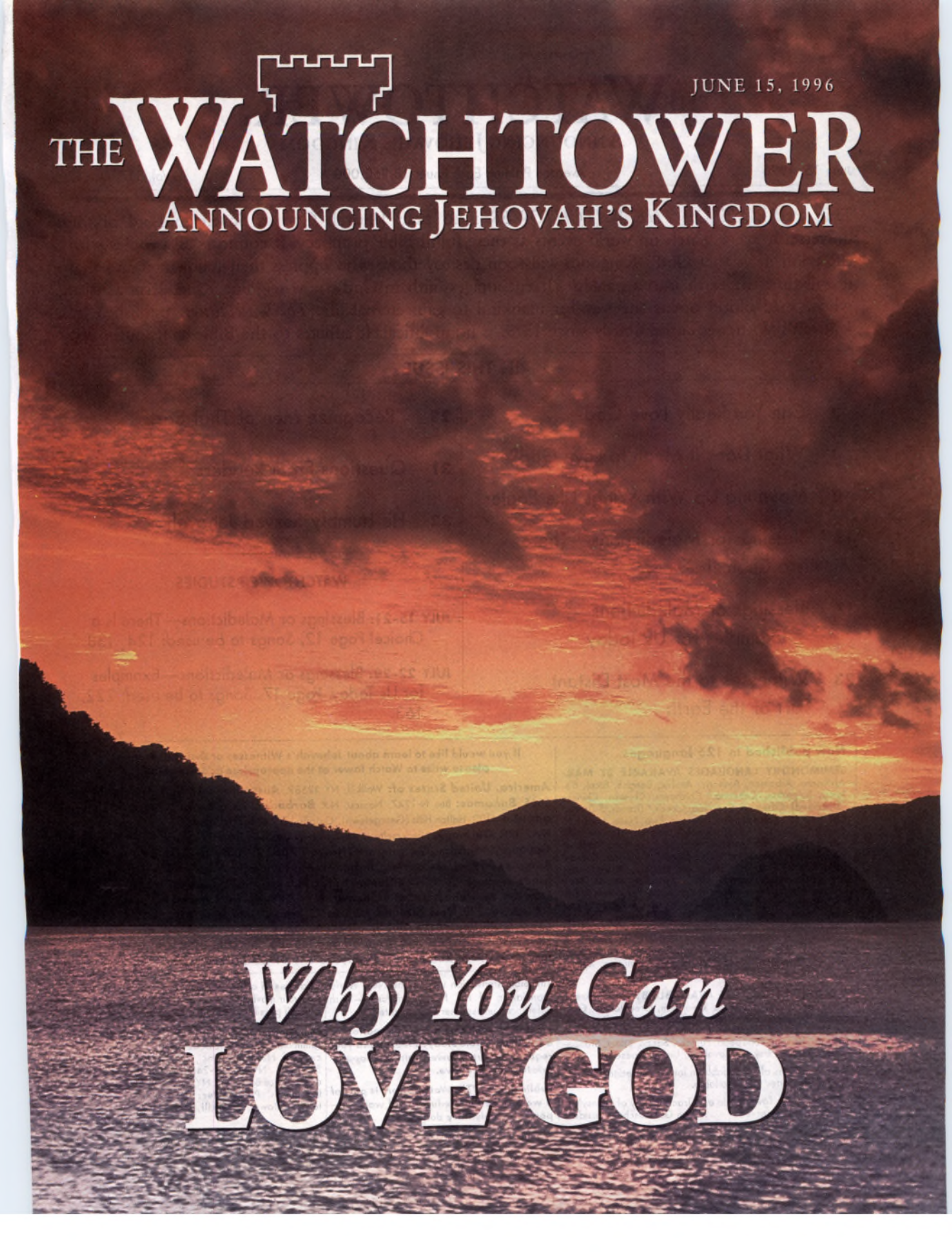




JUNE 15, 1996

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

*Why You Can*  
**LOVE GOD**

# 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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**“N**O MAN may see me and yet live,” says God. (Exodus 33:20) Further, since Bible times there has been no evidence of any human having had direct communication with him. Does it not seem difficult—even impossible—to develop deep affection for someone whom you have never directly seen or heard? Is it really possible to have a loving relationship with the Creator of the universe?

There should be no doubt that it is possible to develop a warm personal attachment to God. At Deuteronomy 6:5, we read that the nation of Israel was commanded: “You must love Jehovah your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your vital force.” Jesus Christ later reaffirmed this law to his followers and added: “This is the greatest and first commandment.” (Matthew 22:37, 38) Would the Bible exhort us to love God if such a relationship were unattainable?

But does Jehovah expect us to love him just because he commands it? No. God created the first human couple with the capacity to love him. Adam and Eve were not forced into a loving relationship with their Creator. Rather, God surrounded them with ideal circumstances in which to develop deep affection for him. The choice was theirs—get closer to God or withdraw from him.

Adam and Eve chose to rebel. (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:6, 7) Their descendants, however, would have the potential for developing a loving relationship with the Creator.



## *Can you really* **LOVE GOD?**

### **Walking With the True God**

For example, in the Bible, Abraham is spoken of as being God’s “friend.” (James 2:23) Yet Abraham was by no means the only one who enjoyed an intimate relationship with God. The Bible speaks of many other imperfect humans who displayed genuine affection for Jehovah and “walked with the true God.”—Genesis 5:24; 6:9; Job 29:4; Psalm 25:14; Proverbs 3:32.

God’s servants of old were not born with love and affection for God. They had to develop it. How? By getting to know him by his personal name, Jehovah. (Exodus 3:13-15; 6:2, 3) By being aware of his existence and Godship. (Hebrews 11:6) By frequently meditating on his loving acts. (Psalm 63:6) By expressing in prayer to God their innermost thoughts. (Psalm 39:12) By learning of his goodness. (Zechariah 9:17) By developing a healthy fear of offending him.—Proverbs 16:6.

Can you become God’s friend and walk with him? True, you cannot see God or hear his voice. Nevertheless, Jehovah invites you to become ‘a guest in his tent,’ his friend. (Psalm 15:1-5) Thus, it is possible for you to love God. But how can you develop an intimate and affectionate relationship with him?

**A**BOUT six thousand years ago, the first human baby was born. After his birth, his mother, Eve, said: "I have produced a man with the aid of Jehovah." (Genesis 4:1) Her statement reveals that, although already condemned to death for their rebellion, Eve and her husband, Adam, were still aware of Jehovah's Godship. Later they produced a second son. The boys were named Cain and Abel.

As the sons grew up, they undoubtedly learned much about Jehovah's love just by examining his creation. They enjoyed the beautiful colors in nature and the variety of animals and plants. Not only did God give them life but he also gave them the ability to find pleasure in life.

They learned that their parents had been created perfect and that Jehovah's original purpose was for humans to live forever. Likely Adam and Eve described to them the beautiful garden of Eden, and they somehow had to explain why they had been expelled from such a paradisaic home. Cain and Abel may also have been aware of the divine prophecy recorded at Genesis 3:15. With that prophecy Jehovah expressed his purpose to set matters straight in due time for the benefit of those who love him and prove loyal to him.

Learning about Jehovah and his qualities must have generated in Cain and Abel a desire for God's favor. So they approached Jehovah by presenting offerings to him. The Bible account says: "It came about at the expiration of some time that Cain proceeded to bring some fruits of the ground as an offering to Jehovah. But as for Abel, he too brought some firstlings of his flock, even their fatty pieces."—Genesis 4:3, 4.

Their desire for God's favor established a foundation for a relationship with him.

## *What does it mean to* **LOVE GOD?**

Cain ended up rebelling against God, whereas Abel continued to be motivated by genuine love of God. Abel would never have developed such a relationship with God unless he had first acquired knowledge about Jehovah's personality and his purposes.

You too can get to know Jehovah. For instance, in the Bible you can learn that God is a real person, not simply a lifeless force that goes about creating things by mere accident. (Compare John 7:28; Hebrews 9:24; Revelation 4:11.) The Bible also teaches that Jehovah is "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth."—Exodus 34:6.

### **"To Obey Is Better Than a Sacrifice"**

As illustrated by the account of Cain and Abel, having knowledge of God and a desire for a close relationship with him is not enough. True, the two brothers approached God with offerings. Yet, "while Jehovah was looking with favor upon Abel and his offering, he did not look with any favor upon Cain and upon his offering. And Cain grew hot with great anger, and his countenance began to fall."—Genesis 4:3-5.

Why did Jehovah reject Cain's sacrifice? Was there something wrong with the quality of his offering? Was Jehovah offend-

ed because Cain offered the “fruits of the ground” instead of an animal sacrifice? Not necessarily. Later, God gladly accepted offerings of grain and other fruits of the ground from many of his worshipers. (Leviticus 2:1-16) Evidently, then, there was something wrong with Cain’s heart. Jehovah could read Cain’s heart and warned him: “Why are you hot with anger and why has your countenance fallen? If you turn to doing good, will there not be an exaltation? But if you do not turn to doing good, there is sin crouching at the entrance, and for you is its craving.”—Genesis 4:6, 7.

Genuine love of God means more than merely offering sacrifices. That is why Jehovah encouraged Cain to “turn to doing good.” God wanted obedience. Such obedience to God would have helped Cain to form a good foundation for a loving relationship with the Creator. The Bible emphasizes the value of obedience with these words: “Does Jehovah have as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Look! To obey is better than a sacrifice, to pay attention than the fat of rams.”—1 Samuel 15:22.

This concept was well established later with the words of 1 John 5:3: “This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments; and yet his commandments are not burdensome.” There is no better way to show our love for Jehovah than by submitting ourselves to his authority. This means obedience to the Bible’s moral code. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) It means loving what is good and hating what is bad.—Psalm 97:10; 101:3; Proverbs 8:13.

One important manifestation of our love for God is our love of neighbor. The Bible tells us: “If anyone makes the statement: ‘I love God,’ and yet is hating his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his broth-

er, whom he has seen, cannot be loving God, whom he has not seen.”—1 John 4:20.

### **Intimacy With God Is Possible**

Some may say, ‘I worship Jehovah. I obey his laws. I treat my fellowman fairly. I do all of that. Still, I don’t really feel close to God. I don’t feel a strong love for him, and that makes me feel guilty.’ Some may think that they are not worthy of attaining such an intimate relationship with Jehovah.

After almost 37 years of dedicated service to Jehovah, one Christian wrote: “Many times in my life I have felt that I was rather perfunctory in my service to Jehovah, that maybe my heart wasn’t even in it. But I knew that serving Jehovah was the right thing to do, and I wouldn’t allow myself to stop. However, every time I would read of someone saying that his or her ‘heart swelled with love for Jehovah,’ I would wonder, ‘What’s wrong with me, since I’ve never felt that way?’” How can we find intimacy with God?

When you truly love someone, you often think about that person. You have a strong desire to be close to him because you care for him. The more you see him, talk to him, and think about him, the more your love for him grows. This principle also applies to your cultivating love for God.

At Psalm 77:12, the inspired writer says: “I shall certainly meditate on all your activity, and with your dealings I will concern myself.” Meditation is vital in cultivating love for God. This is especially true in view of the fact that he is invisible. But the more you think about him, the more real he will become to you. Only then can you develop a heartfelt and affectionate relationship with him—because he is real to you.

Your inclination to meditate frequently on Jehovah’s ways and dealings will depend

on how often you listen to him. You listen through regular reading and study of his Word, the Bible. The psalmist speaks of a happy man as one whose "delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night."—Psalm 1:1, 2.

Another important element is prayer. That is why the Bible repeatedly exhorts us to pray—"on every occasion," 'devoting time to prayer,' 'persevering in prayer,' and 'praying incessantly.' (Ephesians 6:18; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Romans 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17) Our incessant prayers to Jehovah will endear us to him, and the assurance that he listens will draw us close to him. This was confirmed by the psalmist, when he declared: "I do love, because Jehovah hears my voice, my entreaties. For he has inclined his ear to me, and throughout my days I shall call."—Psalm 116:1, 2.

### **Imitating the God of Love**

Jehovah is good to us. Being the Creator of the universe, he certainly has many things to keep in mind and to care for. Yet, the Bible tells us that as majestic as he is, he still cares for his human creation. He loves us. (1 Peter 5:6, 7) The psalmist confirms this with his words: "O Jehovah our Lord, how majestic your name is in all the earth, you whose dignity is recounted above the heavens! When I see your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have prepared, what is mortal man that you keep him in mind, and the son of earthling man that you take care of him?"—Psalm 8:1, 3, 4.

How has Jehovah kept mortal man in mind? The Bible answers: "By this the love of God was made manifest in our case, because God sent forth his only-begotten Son into the world that we might gain life through him. The love is in this respect, not

that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent forth his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins."—1 John 4:9, 10.

How is this propitiatory sacrifice the greatest evidence of God's love? Let us consider what happened in the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were faced with the decision of whether to submit to Jehovah's law with the prospect of perfect life forever or to rebel against Jehovah with death as a result. They chose to rebel. (Genesis 3:1-6) In doing so they also condemned all of mankind to death. (Romans 5:12) They presumptuously robbed us of the opportunity to decide for ourselves. None of us had a say in the matter.

However, Jehovah has lovingly kept mortal man in mind, recognizing his predicament. Through the sacrificial death of His Son, Jesus Christ, Jehovah has provided the legal grounds for each of us to choose for himself life or death, obedience or rebellion. (John 3:16) It is as if Jehovah granted us our own day in court—an opportunity to go back to Eden, as it were, and make our own decision. This is the greatest manifestation of love ever made.

Imagine the pain that Jehovah endured as he saw his firstborn being insulted, tortured, and impaled like a criminal. And God endured that for us. Our awareness of Jehovah's initiative in loving us first should, in turn, motivate us to love him and incite us to search for him. (James 1:17; 1 John 4:19) The Bible invites us to "search for Jehovah and his strength. Seek his face constantly. Remember his wonderful works that he has performed, his miracles and the judicial decisions of his mouth."—Psalm 105:4, 5.

To have a personal attachment and a loving relationship with God, to be his friend,

**Abel's sacrifice was  
acceptable to God**



is not unrealistic. It is attainable. True, we cannot strictly equate our love for God with human relationships. The love we feel for our mate, parents, siblings, children, or friends is different from the love we have for God. (Matthew 10:37; 19:29) Loving Jehovah involves our devotion, worship, and an unconditional dedication to him. (Deuteronomy 4:24) No other relationship has such implications. Still, we can develop strong and deep emotions for God in a reverential way, with awe.—Psalm 89:7.

Although imperfect, like Cain and Abel you have the potential for loving your Cre-

ator. Cain made his choice, joined Satan, and became the first human murderer. (1 John 3:12) In contrast, Abel will be remembered by Jehovah as a man of faith and righteousness and will be rewarded with life in the coming Paradise.—Hebrews 11:4.

You too have a choice. With the help of God's spirit and his Word, you can truly come to love God "with all your heart and all your soul and all your vital force." (Deuteronomy 6:5) Jehovah, in turn, will continue to love you, for he is "the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him."—Hebrews 11:6.

# MOUNTING UP WITH WINGS LIKE EAGLES



**H**OW does a man feel after enduring five years in Nazi concentration camps? Disheartened? Bitter? Vengeful?

Strange as it may seem, one such man wrote: "My life was enriched more than I could ever have hoped for." Why did he feel that way? He explained: "I found refuge under the wings of the Most High, and I experienced the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Isaiah, when he said: 'Those who are hoping in Jehovah will regain power. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will . . . walk and not tire out.'" —Isaiah 40:31.

This Christian man, whose body was beaten down by the most horrendous treatment imaginable, had a spirit that figuratively soared upward, a spirit that Nazi brutality could not conquer. Like David he found refuge in the shadow of God's "wings." (Psalm 57:1) This Christian drew on a simile used by the prophet Isaiah, comparing his spiritual strength with that of an eagle that soars higher and higher in the sky.

Do you ever feel bowed down by problems? Doubtless you too would like to find refuge under the wings of the Most High, to "mount up with wings like eagles." To un-

derstand how this is possible, it is helpful to know something about the eagle, which is frequently used figuratively in the Scriptures.

## Under the Banner of the Eagle

Of all the birds the ancient people observed, the eagle was perhaps the one most admired because of its power and majestic flight. Many ancient armies, including those of Babylon, Persia, and Rome, marched under the banner of the eagle. The army of Cyrus the Great was one of these. The Bible prophesied that this Persian king would be like a bird of prey coming from the east to devour the Babylonian Empire. (Isaiah 45:1; 46:11) Two hundred years after this prophecy was penned, Cyrus' troops, who had eagles on their battle standards, swooped down on the city of Babylon like an eagle pouncing on its prey.

More recently, warriors like Charlemagne and Napoleon and countries such as the United States and Germany have also chosen the eagle as their symbol. The Israelites were commanded not to venerate images of eagles or any other creature. (Exodus 20:4, 5) Yet, Bible writers alluded to characteristics of the eagle in order to illustrate their message. Thus the eagle, the bird most frequently mentioned in the Scriptures, is em-

ployed to symbolize such things as wisdom, divine protection, and swiftness.

### **The Eye of an Eagle**

The keen eyesight of the eagle has always been proverbial. Although the golden eagle rarely weighs more than ten pounds, its eye is actually bigger than a man's, and its eyesight is much keener. Jehovah himself, describing to Job the eagle's ability to search out its food, said: "Far into the distance its eyes keep looking." (Job 39:27, 29) Alice Parmelee, in her book *All the Birds of the Bible*, reports that "an eagle once spotted a dead fish floating in a lake three miles away and made a diagonal dive to the exact place. Not only was the eagle able to see a small object at a far greater distance than a man could, but the bird kept the fish in constant focus through its three-mile dive."

Because of its keen eyesight, the eagle is a fitting symbol of wisdom, one of Jehovah's principal qualities. (Compare Ezekiel 1:10; Revelation 4:7.) Why is that? Wisdom involves foreseeing the consequences of any action we may take. (Proverbs 22:3) The eagle, with its ability to see far into the distance, can spot danger a long way off and take precautions, just like the discreet man in Jesus' illustration, who foresaw the possibility of a storm and built his house upon a rock-mass. (Matthew 7:24, 25) Interestingly, in the Spanish language, describing someone as an eagle means that he has insight or discernment.

If you ever have a chance to see an eagle close up, notice the way it uses its eyes. It does not eye you with a cursory glance;

rather, it seems to scrutinize every detail of your appearance. Likewise, the wise man analyzes a matter carefully before making a decision instead of trusting his instinct or his feelings. (Proverbs 28:26) While the eagle's keen eyesight makes it an apt symbol of the divine quality of wisdom, its magnificent flight is also used figuratively by Bible writers.

### **"The Way of an Eagle in the Heavens"**

"The way of an eagle in the heavens" is striking for both its speed and the way it seems to fly so effortlessly, following no prescribed path and leaving no trail. (Proverbs 30:19) The eagle's swiftness is alluded to at Lamentations 4:

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19, where the Babylonian soldiers are described: "Swifter than the eagles of the heavens our pursuers have proved to be. Upon the mountains they have hotly pursued us." When an eagle circling overhead spots its prey, it angles its wings and goes into a steep dive, during which it can attain speeds of up to 80 miles an hour, according to some reports. Not surprisingly, the Scriptures use the eagle as a synonym for speed, especially in connection with a military force.—2 Samuel 1:23; Jeremiah 4:13; 49:22.

Isaiah, on the other hand, refers to the effortless flight of an eagle. "Those who are hoping in Jehovah will regain power. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not tire out." (Isaiah 40:31) What is the secret of the eagle's buoyant flight? Mounting up requires little effort since the eagle uses thermals, or columns of rising warm air. Thermals are invisible, but the eagle



Foto: Cortesía de Zoo de Madrid

is adept at finding them. Once a thermal is located, the eagle spreads out its wings and tail and circles within the column of warm air, which carries the eagle higher and higher. When sufficient height is gained, it glides to the next thermal, where the process is repeated. In this way the eagle can stay aloft for hours with a minimum expenditure of energy.

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## It does not eye you with a cursory glance

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In Israel, especially in the Rift Valley that stretches from Ezion-geber on the shores of the Red Sea up to Dan in the north, eagles are a familiar sight. They are particularly numerous during spring and autumn when they migrate. In some years nearly 100,000 eagles have been counted. When the morning sun warms the air, hundreds of raptors can be seen flying over the cliffs that border the Rift Valley.

The eagle's effortless flight is a beautiful illustration of how Jehovah's strength can lift us up spiritually and emotionally so that we can carry on with our work. Just as an eagle cannot soar to such heights using its own strength, we cannot cope if we rely on our own abilities. "For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me," explained the apostle Paul. (Philippians 4:13) Like an eagle that constantly searches for invisible thermals, we "keep on asking" for Jehovah's invisible active force by means of our fervent prayers.—Luke 11:9, 13.

Migrating eagles often find the thermals by observing other birds of prey. Naturalist D. R. Mackintosh reported that on one occasion 250 eagles and vultures were seen circling upward in the same thermal. Christians today can likewise learn to rely on Jehovah's strength by imitating the faithful examples of other godly servants.—Compare 1 Corinthians 11:1.

### In the Shadow of an Eagle's Wings

One of the most dangerous periods of an eagle's life is when it learns to fly. Not a few eagles die in the attempt. The fledgling Israelite nation was also in danger when it

departed from Egypt. Thus the words of Jehovah to the Israelites were most fitting: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, that I might carry you on wings of eagles and bring you to myself." (Exodus 19:4) There are reports of eagles briefly carrying a young bird on its back so that the young one would not crash in its initial attempts to fly. G. R. Driver, commenting in the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* on such reports, said: "The [Biblical] picture then is not a mere flight of fancy but is based on actual fact."

Eagles are exemplary parents in other ways too. Not only do they provide the nestling with regular meals but the mother bird also carefully chops up the meat the male eagle brings to the nest so that the eaglet can swallow it. As their nests are usually built on cliffs or in tall trees, the young birds are exposed to the elements. (Job 39:27, 28) The scorching sun, common to Bible lands, could cause the death of the young bird were it not for the care of its parents. The adult eagle spreads out its wings, sometimes for hours at a time, in order to shade its tender nestling.

Thus it is very appropriate that the wings of an eagle are used in the Scriptures as a symbol of divine protection. Deuteronomy 32:9-12 describes how Jehovah protected the Israelites during their wilderness trek: "For Jehovah's share is his people; Jacob is the allotment that he inherits. He came to find him in a wilderness land, and in an empty, howling desert. He began to encircle him, to take care of him, to safeguard him as the pupil of his eye. Just as an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its fledglings, spreads out its wings, takes them, carries them on its pinions, Jehovah alone kept leading him." Jehovah will give us the same loving protection if we trust in him.

## The Way of Escape

Sometimes when we are faced with problems, we may find ourselves wishing to fly away from all our difficulties. That was exactly how David felt. (Compare Psalm 55:6, 7.) But although Jehovah has promised to assist us as we face trials and sufferings in this system, he does not offer a complete escape. We have the Bible's assurance: "No temptation has taken you except what is common to men. But God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out in order for you to be able to endure it."—1 Corinthians 10:13.

"The way out" or "a way to escape" (*King James Version*) involves learning to trust in Jehovah. This is what Max Liebster, whose comments were quoted at the beginning of this article, discovered. During his years in the concentration camps, he came to know and to rely on Jehovah. As Max discovered, Jehovah strengthens us through his Word, his spirit, and his organization. Even in the camps, the Witnesses sought out fellow believers and offered them spiritual help, sharing Scriptural thoughts and whatever Bible literature was available. And as faithful survivors have testified time and again, Jehovah did fortify them. "I continually asked Jehovah to help," Max explains, "and his spirit sustained me."

Whatever trial we face, we can likewise count on God's holy spirit, provided we keep asking for it. (Matthew 7:7-11) Vitalized by this "power beyond what is normal," we will soar rather than get bogged down by our problems. We will keep walking in Jehovah's way, and we will not tire out. We will mount up with wings like eagles.—2 Corinthians 4:7; Isaiah 40:31.

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# BLESSINGS OR MALEDICTIONS —THERE IS A CHOICE!

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*"I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and you must choose life in order that you may keep alive."*—DEUTERONOMY 30:19.

**J**EHOVAH GOD designed us—his intelligent human creatures—to be free moral agents. We were not created as mere automatons, or robots, but were extended the privilege and responsibility of making choices. (Psalm 100:3) The first humans—Adam and Eve—were free to choose their course of action, and they were accountable to God for their choice.

<sup>2</sup> The Creator has provided bountifully for human life of perpetual blessing on a paradise earth. Why has that purpose not yet been achieved? Because Adam made the wrong choice. Jehovah had laid this command upon the man: "From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will positively die." (Genesis 2:16, 17) If Adam had chosen to obey, our first parents would have been blessed. Disobedience brought death. (Genesis 3:6, 18, 19) So sin and death have been passed on to all of Adam's progeny.—Romans 5:12.

## **Blessings Made Possible**

<sup>3</sup> Jehovah God instituted a means by

1. Humans were endowed with what capacity?
2. What choice did Adam make, and with what result?
3. How did God provide assurance that his purpose for mankind would be accomplished?

which his purpose for blessing mankind would eventually be fulfilled. He himself foretold a Seed, prophesying in Eden: "I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel." (Genesis 3:15) God later promised that blessings would come to obedient mankind by means of this Seed, a descendant of Abraham.—Genesis 22:15-18.

<sup>4</sup> That promised Seed of blessing proved to be Jesus Christ. Concerning Jesus' role in Jehovah's arrangement for blessing mankind, the Christian apostle Paul wrote: "God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) Blessings will be enjoyed by those of sinful mankind who obey God and avail themselves of the merit of Jesus Christ's ransom sacrifice. (Acts 4:12) Will you choose obedience and blessings? Disobedience will result in something far different.

## **What About Maledictions?**

<sup>5</sup> The opposite of a blessing is a malediction. The word "malediction" means to

4. What arrangement has Jehovah made for blessing mankind?
5. What is the meaning of the word "malediction"?

speak ill of someone or pronounce evil against him. The Hebrew word *qela-lah'* is derived from the root verb *qa-lal'*, literally meaning "be light." When used in a figurative sense, however, it means to 'call down evil upon' or to 'treat with contempt.'—Leviticus 20:9; 2 Samuel 19:43.

<sup>6</sup> Consider a dramatic example of prompt action involving a malediction. This occurred as God's prophet Elisha was walking from Jericho to Bethel. The account states: "As he was going up on the way, there were small boys that came out from the city and began to jeer him and that kept saying to him: 'Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!' Finally he turned behind him and saw them and called down evil upon them in the name of Jehovah. Then two she-bears came out from the woods and went tearing to pieces forty-two children of their number." (2 Kings 2:23, 24) Exactly what Elisha said when he spoke that malediction by calling down evil upon those jeering children is not revealed. Nevertheless, that verbal pronouncement got results because it was spoken in the name of Jehovah by a prophet of God acting in harmony with the divine will.

<sup>7</sup> The main reason for the jeering seems to have been that Elisha was wearing Elijah's familiar official garment, and the children did not want any successor of that prophet around. (2 Kings 2:13) To answer the challenge of his being Elijah's successor and to teach these young people and their parents proper respect for Jehovah's prophet, Elisha called down evil upon the jeering mob in the name of Elijah's God. Jehovah manifested his approval of Elisha as his prophet by causing the two she-bears to come out of

the woods and tear to pieces 42 of those mockers. Jehovah dealt decisively because of their blatant lack of respect for the channel of communication that he was using on earth at that time.

<sup>8</sup> Years earlier, the Israelites showed a similar lack of respect for God's arrangements. This is how it developed: In 1513 B.C.E., Jehovah showed the people of Israel favor by delivering them from Egyptian bondage as if "on wings of eagles." Shortly thereafter, they pledged to obey God. Notice how obedience was inseparably linked to receiving God's approval. Jehovah said through Moses: "If you will strictly obey my voice and will indeed keep my covenant, then you will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples, because the whole earth belongs to me." Thereafter, the people responded in the affirmative, saying: "All that Jehovah has spoken we are willing to do." (Exodus 19:4, 5, 8; 24:3) The Israelites claimed to love Jehovah, were dedicated to him, and vowed to obey his voice. Doing so would result in great blessings.

<sup>9</sup> Before the basic tenets of that agreement were etched in stone by the 'finger of God,' though, divine maledictions became necessary. (Exodus 31:18) Why were such tragic consequences merited? Had not the Israelites indicated a desire to do all that Jehovah had spoken? Yes, in *word* they sought blessings, but by their *actions* they chose a course that merited maledictions.

<sup>10</sup> During a 40-day period when Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, the Israelites broke their earlier promise of loyalty to Jehovah. "Meanwhile,"

8. What did the people of Israel agree to do, and with what prospects?

9, 10. While Moses was on Mount Sinai, what did the Israelites do, and with what consequences?

6. What incident involving Elisha occurred near ancient Bethel?

7. What happened to the children who jeered Elisha, and why?

says the account, "the people got to see that Moses was taking a long time about coming down from the mountain. So the people congregated themselves about Aaron and said to him: 'Get up, make for us a god who will go ahead of us, because as regards this Moses, the man who led us up out of the land of Egypt, we certainly do not know what has happened to him.'" (Exodus 32:1) This is another example of a disrespectful attitude manifested toward the human agency that Jehovah was then using to lead and direct his people. The Israelites were lured into imitating Egyptian idolatry and reaped dire results when some 3,000 of them fell to the sword in one day.—Exodus 32:2-6, 25-29.

### **Pronouncement of Blessings and Maledictions**

<sup>11</sup> Near the end of Israel's 40-year trek in the wilderness, Moses itemized the blessings to be reaped by choosing a course of obedience to God. He also enumerated the maledictions that the Israelites would experience if they chose to disobey Jehovah. (Deuteronomy 27:11-28:10) Shortly after Israel entered the Promised Land, Joshua carried out Moses' instructions involving these blessings and maledictions. Six tribes of Israel stood at the foot of Mount Ebal, and the other six took positions in front of Mount Gerizim. The Levites stood in the valley between. Apparently, the tribes stationed in front of Mount Ebal said "Amen!" to the maledictions, or curses, read in that direction. Others responded to the blessings that the Levites read in their direction at the foot of Mount Gerizim.—Joshua 8:30-35.

<sup>12</sup> Imagine that you hear the Levites say:

11. What instructions regarding blessings and maledictions were carried out by Joshua?

12. What were some of the maledictions pronounced by the Levites?

"Cursed is the man who makes a carved image or a molten statue, a thing detestable to Jehovah, the manufacture of the hands of a wood-and-metal worker, and who has put it in a hiding place. . . . Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt. . . . Cursed is the one who moves back the boundary mark of his fellowman. . . . Cursed is the one who causes the blind to go astray in the way. . . . Cursed is the one who perverts the judgment of an alien resident, a fatherless boy and a widow. . . . Cursed is the one who lies down with his father's wife, because he has uncovered the skirt of his father. . . . Cursed is the one who lies down with any beast. . . . Cursed is the one who lies down with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother. . . . Cursed is the one who lies down with his mother-in-law. . . . Cursed is the one who fatally strikes his fellowman from a hiding place. . . . Cursed is the one who accepts a bribe to strike a soul fatally, when it is innocent blood. . . . Cursed is the one who will not put the words of this law in force by doing them." After each malediction, the tribes in front of Mount Ebal say, "Amen!"—Deuteronomy 27:15-26.

<sup>13</sup> Now imagine that you hear those in front of Mount Gerizim respond vocally to each blessing as the Levites call out: "Blessed will you be in the city, and blessed will you be in the field. Blessed will be the fruit of your belly and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your domestic beast, the young of your cattle and the progeny of your flock. Blessed will be your basket and your kneading trough. Blessed will you be when you come in, and blessed will you be when you go out."—Deuteronomy 28:3-6.

13. In your own words, how would you express certain blessings that the Levites pronounced?

**The Israelites assembled in front  
of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal**



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

<sup>14</sup> What was the basis for receiving these blessings? The account says: “If you will without fail listen to the voice of Jehovah your God by being careful to do all his commandments that I am commanding you today, Jehovah your God also will certainly put you high above all other nations of the earth. And all these blessings must come upon you and overtake you, because you keep listening to the voice of Jehovah your God.” (Deuteronomy 28:1, 2) Yes, the key to enjoying divine blessings was obedience to God. But what about us today? Will we individually choose blessings and life by continuing to “listen to the voice of Jehovah”?—Deuteronomy 30:19, 20.

**Taking a Closer Look**

<sup>15</sup> Let us reflect on certain blessings an Israelite could enjoy for obeying Jehovah. For

14. On what basis would the Israelites receive blessings?

15. What point was made in the blessing recorded at Deuteronomy 28:3, and how can we benefit from it?

example, Deuteronomy 28:3 says: “Blessed will you be in the city, and blessed will you be in the field.” Being blessed by God is not contingent on location or assignment. Some may feel trapped in their circumstances, perhaps because they live in a materially devastated area or in a war-torn country. Others may yearn to serve Jehovah in a different location. Some Christian men may be discouraged because they have not been appointed as ministerial servants or as elders in the congregation. At times, Christian women feel disheartened because they are not in a position to engage in the full-time ministry as pioneers or missionaries. Yet, everyone who ‘listens to Jehovah’s voice and carefully does all that he requires’ will be blessed now and to all eternity.

<sup>16</sup> Deuteronomy 28:4 says: “Blessed will be the fruit of your belly and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your domestic beast, the young of your cattle and the progeny of

16. How is the principle of Deuteronomy 28:4 being experienced by Jehovah’s organization today?

your flock.” The use of the singular Hebrew pronoun rendered “your” indicates that this would be the personal experience of an obedient Israelite. What about Jehovah’s obedient servants today? The worldwide increase and expansion under way in the organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses are the result of God’s blessing on the earnest efforts of over 5,000,000 proclaimers of the good news of the Kingdom. (Mark 13:10) And the potential for greater increase is evident because over 13,000,000 attended the 1995 observance of the Lord’s Evening Meal. Are you enjoying Kingdom blessings?

### Israel’s Choice Made a Difference

<sup>17</sup> In effect, blessings would pursue an obedient Israelite. It was promised: “All these blessings must come upon you and overtake you.” (Deuteronomy 28:2) Similarly, it was said of maledictions: “All these maledictions must also come upon you and overtake you.” (Deuteronomy 28:15) If you had been an Israelite of ancient times, would you have been ‘overtaken’ by blessings or by maledictions? That would have depended on whether you obeyed God or you disobeyed him.

17. Being ‘overtaken’ by blessings or by maledictions depended on what?

### How Would You Answer?

- ☐ How has Jehovah made blessings possible for sinful humans?
- ☐ What are maledictions?
- ☐ How could the Israelites have received blessings instead of maledictions?
- ☐ What blessings did Israel enjoy for obeying God?

<sup>18</sup> At Deuteronomy 28:15-68, the painful consequences of disobedience are set forth as maledictions. Some are the exact opposite of the blessings for obedience enumerated at Deuteronomy 28:3-14. Often, the people of Israel reaped the blistering results of maledictions because they chose to engage in false worship. (Ezra 9:7; Jeremiah 6:6-8; 44:2-6) How tragic! Such consequences could have been avoided by making the right choice, that of obedience to Jehovah’s wholesome laws and principles, which clearly define good and bad. Many today suffer pain and tragedy because they have chosen to act contrary to Bible principles by practicing false religion, engaging in sexual immorality, using illicit drugs, overindulging in alcoholic beverages, and the like. As in ancient Israel and Judah, making such bad choices results in divine disapproval and unnecessary pain of heart.—Isaiah 65:12-14.

<sup>19</sup> Blessings were abundant and tranquility reigned only when Israel obeyed Jehovah. For example, concerning the days of King Solomon, we read: “Judah and Israel were many, like the grains of sand that are by the sea for multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing. . . . And Judah and Israel continued to dwell in security, everyone under his own vine and under his own fig tree, from Dan to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon.” (1 Kings 4:20-25) Even in King David’s time, which was marked by much opposition from enemies of God, the nation felt Jehovah’s backing and blessing when they chose to obey the God of truth.—2 Samuel 7:28, 29; 8:1-15.

18. How could the Israelites have avoided maledictions?

19. Describe the conditions enjoyed when Judah and Israel chose to obey Jehovah.

<sup>20</sup> Will you obey God, or will you disobey him? The Israelites had a choice. Though all of us have inherited a sinful inclination from Adam, we have also received the gift of free choice. Despite Satan, this wicked world, and our imperfections, we can make the right choice. Moreover, our Creator is confident that in the face of every trial and temptation, there will be those who make the right choice, not only in word but also in

20. Of what is God confident concerning humans?

action. (1 Peter 5:8-10) Will you be among them?

<sup>21</sup> In the next article, we will be able to weigh our attitudes and actions in the light of past examples. May each of us respond gratefully to God's words through Moses: "I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and you must choose life in order that you may keep alive." —Deuteronomy 30:19.

21. What will be examined in the next article?

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## BLESSINGS OR MALEDICTIONS —EXAMPLES FOR US TODAY

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*"These things went on befalling them as examples, and they were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived."*—1 CORINTHIANS 10:11.

**U**NSEEN under a coat of paint, rust can begin to corrode an implement made of iron. It may be some time before the rust becomes visible on the surface. Similarly, the attitudes and desires of one's heart may begin to deteriorate long before this results in serious consequences or is even noticed by others. As we would wisely inspect an implement to see if it is becoming rusty, so a close inspection of our hearts and timely maintenance may preserve our Christian integrity. Put another way, we can receive God's blessings and

1. Even as one inspects an implement, what inspection should we make?

can avoid divine maledictions. Some may think that the blessings and maledictions pronounced upon ancient Israel have little meaning for those facing the conclusion of this system of things. (Joshua 8:34, 35; Matthew 13:49, 50; 24:3) However, that is not so. We can benefit greatly from the warning examples involving Israel, as set out in 1 Corinthians chapter 10.

<sup>2</sup> The apostle Paul parallels the Israelites under Moses with Christians under Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:1-4) Though the people of Israel could have entered the Promised

2. What does 1 Corinthians 10:5, 6 say about Israel's experiences in the wilderness?



Land, “on most of them God did not express his approval, for they were laid low in the wilderness.” Paul therefore told fellow Christians: “Now these things became *our examples*, for us not to be persons desiring injurious things, even as they desired them.” (1 Corinthians 10:5, 6) Desires are nurtured in the heart, so we need to heed the warning examples that Paul cites.

### Warning Against Idolatry

<sup>3</sup> Paul’s first warning is: “Neither become *idolaters*, as some of them did; just as it is written: ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and they got up to have a good time.’” (1 Corinthians 10:7) This warning example is that of the Israelites’ reverting to the ways of Egypt and making an idolatrous golden calf. (Exodus, chapter 32) The disciple Stephen indicated the underlying problem: “To [Moses, God’s representative] our forefathers refused to become obedient, but they thrust him aside and in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, saying to

3. How did the Israelites sin in connection with the golden calf?

Aaron, ‘Make gods for us to go ahead of us. For this Moses, who led us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him.’ So they made a calf in those days and brought up a sacrifice to the idol and began to enjoy themselves in the works of their hands.” (Acts 7:39-41) Notice that “in their hearts” the wayward Israelites harbored wrong desires that led to idolatry. “They made a calf . . . and brought up a sacrifice to the idol.” Moreover, they “began to enjoy themselves in the work of their hands.” There was music, singing, dancing, eating, and drinking. Obviously, the idolatry was enticing and entertaining.

<sup>4</sup> Antitypical Egypt—Satan’s world—virtually worships entertainment. (1 John 5:19; Revelation 11:8) It idolizes actors, singers, and sports stars, as well as their dancing, their music, their concepts of fun and good times. Many have been tempted to drench themselves in entertainment while still claiming to worship Jehovah. When a Christian must be reproved for wrongdoing, his weakened spiritual state can often be traced back to drinking alcoholic beverages, dancing, and the having of a good time in some way that may border on idolatry. (Exodus 32:5, 6, 17, 18) Some entertainment is wholesome and enjoyable. Yet, today most worldly music, dancing, movies, and videos cater to corrupt fleshly desires.

<sup>5</sup> True Christians do not succumb to the worship of idols. (2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 John 5:21) May each of us be just as careful not to become addicted to idolatrous entertainment and risk suffering the detrimental effects of being immersed in having a good time in a worldly way. If we subject ourselves to worldly influences, injurious desires and

4, 5. What idolatrous practices do we need to avoid?

attitudes can almost imperceptibly lodge in the mind and heart. When not corrected, these can eventually result in being 'laid low in the wilderness' of Satan's system.

<sup>6</sup> Like Moses at the time of the golden-calf incident, in effect "the faithful and discreet slave" is saying: "Who is on Jehovah's side? To me!" Taking positive action to show that we stand firmly for true worship can be lifesaving. Moses' tribe of Levi acted promptly to clear out debasing influences. (Matthew 24:45-47; Exodus 32:26-28) So, then, carefully examine your choice of entertainment, music, videos, and the like. If it is corrupt in some way, take your stand for Jehovah. With prayerful reliance on God, make changes in your choice of entertainment and music, and destroy the spiritually harmful material, even as Moses destroyed the golden calf.—Exodus 32:20; Deuteronomy 9:21.

<sup>7</sup> How can we counteract corrosion of the heart? By studying God's Word diligently, letting its truths sink into our minds and hearts. (Romans 12:1, 2) Of course, we should attend Christian meetings regularly. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Passively attending meetings could be likened to painting over a rust spot. This may brighten us for a while, but it does not solve the underlying problem. Instead, by advance preparation, meditation, and active participation in meetings, we can aggressively remove corrosive elements that may linger in the recesses of our figurative heart. This will help us to adhere to God's Word and will strengthen us to endure tests of faith and become "sound in all respects."—James 1:3, 4; Proverbs 15:28.

6. What positive action may we need to take concerning entertainment?

7. How can we protect the figurative heart?

### Warning Against Fornication

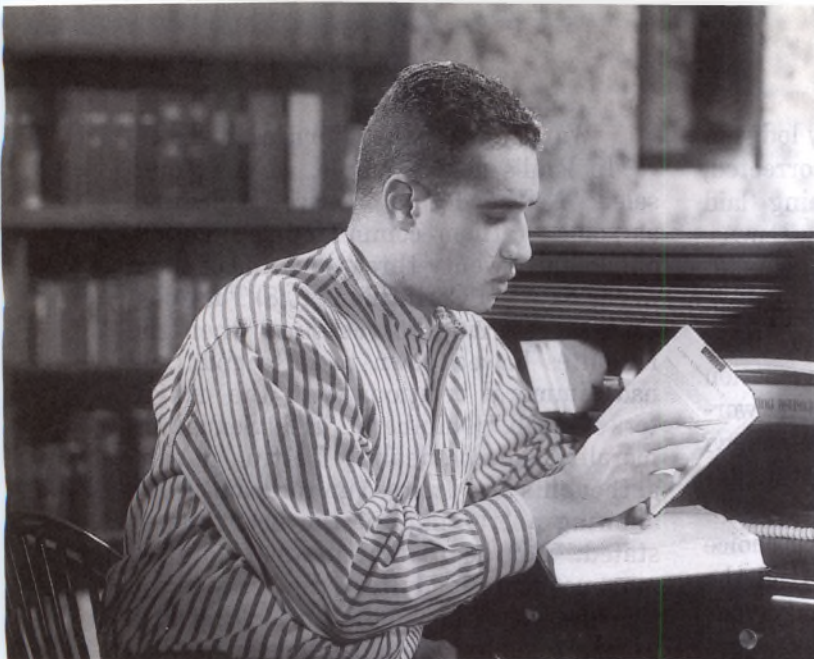
<sup>8</sup> In Paul's next example, we are counseled: "Neither let us practice fornication, as some of them committed fornication, only to fall, twenty-three thousand of them in one day."\* (1 Corinthians 10:8) The apostle was referring to the time when the Israelites bowed down to false gods and had "immoral relations with the daughters of Moab." (Numbers 25:1-9) Sexual immorality is death dealing! Letting immoral thoughts and desires run rampant is like allowing a "rusting" of the heart. Jesus stated: "You heard that it was said, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."—Matthew 5:27, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Testifying to the consequences of 'looking so as to have a passion for a woman' is the result of the debased thinking of the disobedient angels prior to the Flood of Noah's day. (Genesis 6:1, 2) Remember, too, that one of the most tragic incidents of King David's life was ignited by his continuing to look improperly at a woman. (2 Samuel 11:1-4) In contrast, the righteous married man Job 'made a covenant with his eyes that he would not show himself attentive to a virgin,' thus avoiding immorality and proving to be an integrity keeper. (Job 31:1-3, 6-11) The eyes might be likened to the windows of the heart. And it is out of a corrupt heart that many wicked things issue forth.—Mark 7:20-23.

<sup>10</sup> If we apply Jesus' words, we will not allow free rein to wrong thoughts by viewing pornographic material or by entertaining

\* See *The Watchtower* of July 15, 1992, page 4.

8-10. (a) What warning example is referred to at 1 Corinthians 10:8? (b) How can Jesus' words found at Matthew 5:27, 28 be applied beneficially?



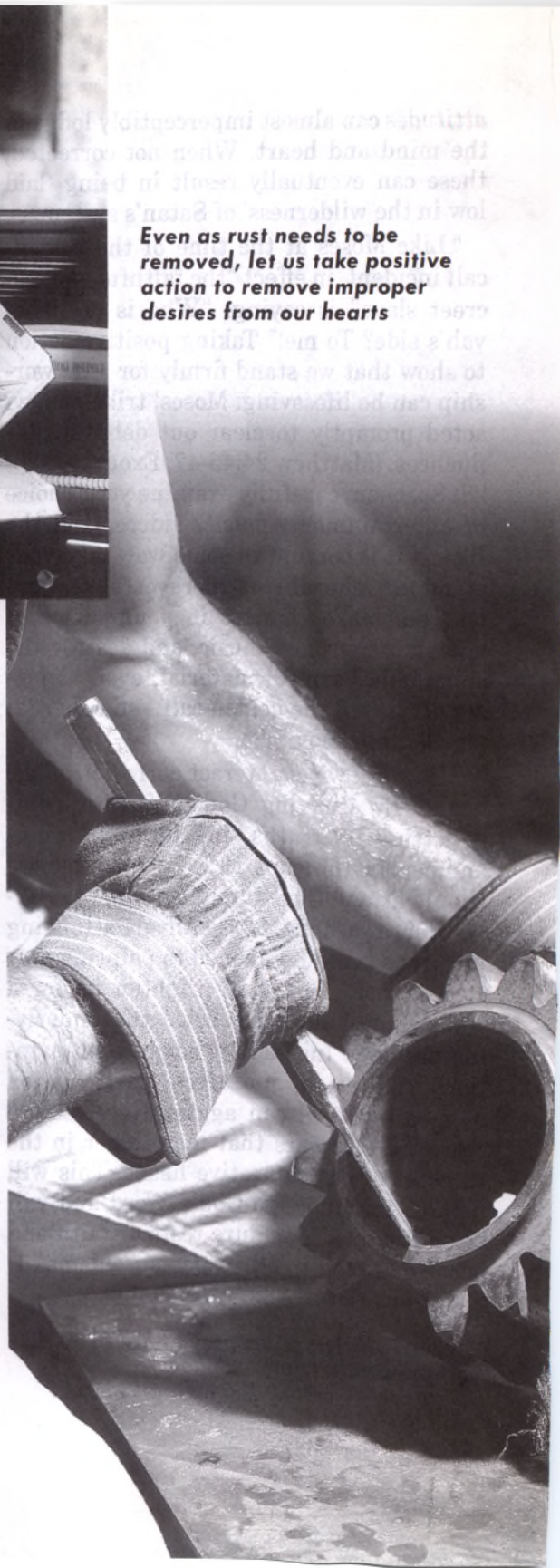
**Even as rust needs to be removed, let us take positive action to remove improper desires from our hearts**

immoral thoughts regarding a fellow Christian, a workmate, or anyone else. Rust is not removed from metal by merely brushing off the corrosion. Therefore, do not lightly brush off immoral ideas and tendencies as though they were of little significance. Take strong measures to rid yourself of immoral leanings. (Compare Matthew 5:29, 30.) Paul exhorts fellow believers: "Deaden . . . your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of those things the wrath of God is coming." Yes, on account of such things as sexual immorality, "the wrath of God is coming" as the expression of his malediction. So we need to "deadens" our body members as respects these things. —Colossians 3:5, 6.

### **Warning Against Rebellious Complaints**

<sup>11</sup> Paul next warns: "Neither let us put Jehovah to the test, as some of them put

11, 12. (a) What warning is given at 1 Corinthians 10:9, and what incident was referred to? (b) How should Paul's warning affect us?



him to the test, only to perish by the serpents." (1 Corinthians 10:9) While trekking in the wilderness near the border of Edom, the Israelites "kept speaking against God and Moses: 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread and no water, and our soul has come to abhor the contemptible bread,'" the miraculously provided manna. (Numbers 21:4, 5) Just think! Those Israelites "kept speaking against God," calling his provisions contemptible!

<sup>12</sup> By their complaints, the Israelites were testing Jehovah's patience. Punishment was not withheld, for Jehovah sent poisonous serpents among them, and many died from serpent bites. After the people repented and Moses interceded in their behalf, the plague was brought to an end. (Numbers 21:6-9) Surely this incident should serve as a warning for us not to display a rebellious, complaining spirit, especially against God and his theocratic arrangements.

### **Warning Against Murmuring**

<sup>13</sup> Citing his final example involving the Israelites in the wilderness, Paul writes: "Neither be murmurers, just as some of them murmured, only to perish by the destroyer." (1 Corinthians 10:10) Rebellion erupted when Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their associates acted untheocratically and challenged the authority of Moses and Aaron. (Numbers 16:1-3) After the destruction of the rebels, the Israelites started to murmur. This was because they began to reason that the destruction of the rebels was unjust. Numbers 16:41 states: "Directly the next day the whole assembly of the sons of Israel began to murmur against Mo-

ses and Aaron, saying: 'You men, you have put Jehovah's people to death.'" As a result of their finding fault with the way justice was administered on that occasion, 14,700 Israelites perished from a divinely sent scourge.—Numbers 16:49.

<sup>14</sup> In the first century C.E., "ungodly men" who slipped into the Christian congregation proved to be false teachers as well as murmurers. These men were "disregarding lordship and speaking abusively of glorious ones," anointed men then entrusted with the spiritual oversight of the congregation. Concerning the ungodly apostates, the disciple Jude also said: "These men are murmurers, complainers about their lot in life, proceeding according to their own desires." (Jude 3, 4, 8, 16) Today, some individuals become murmurers because they allow a spiritually corrosive attitude to develop in their heart. Often they concentrate on the imperfections of those in positions of oversight in the congregation and begin to murmur against them. Their murmuring and complaining may even extend to criticizing publications of the 'faithful slave.'

<sup>15</sup> It is proper to ask sincere questions about a Scriptural subject. But what if we were to develop a negative attitude that manifested itself in critical discussions among an intimate circle of friends? We would do well to ask ourselves, 'Where is this likely to end? Would it not be far better to stop murmuring and pray humbly for wisdom?' (James 1:5-8; Jude 17-21) Korah and his supporters, who rebelled against the authority of Moses and Aaron, may have been so convinced that their

14, 15. (a) What was one of the sins of the "ungodly men" who slipped into the congregation? (b) What can be learned from the incident involving Korah?

13. Against what does 1 Corinthians 10:10 warn, and what rebellion did Paul have in mind?

perspective was valid that they did not examine their motives. Nonetheless, they were completely wrong. So were the Israelites who murmured about the destruction of Korah and the other rebels. How wise it is to let such examples move us to examine our motives, dispel murmuring or complaining, and allow Jehovah to refine us!—Psalm 17:1-3.

### **Learn, and Enjoy the Blessings**

<sup>16</sup> Under divine inspiration, Paul concludes the list of warning messages with the exhortation: “Now these things went on befalling them as examples, and they were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived. Consequently let him that thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:11, 12) May we not take for granted our standing in the Christian congregation.

<sup>17</sup> As iron has a tendency to rust, likewise we descendants of sinful Adam have inherited an inclination toward badness. (Gene-

16. What is the substance of the exhortation at 1 Corinthians 10:11, 12?

17. If we sense an improper motive in our heart, what should we do?

### **How Would You Answer?**

- ☐ How can we apply Paul’s counsel not to become idolaters?
- ☐ What can we do to heed the apostle’s warning against fornication?
- ☐ Why should we avoid murmuring and complaining?
- ☐ How can we receive divine blessings, not maledictions?

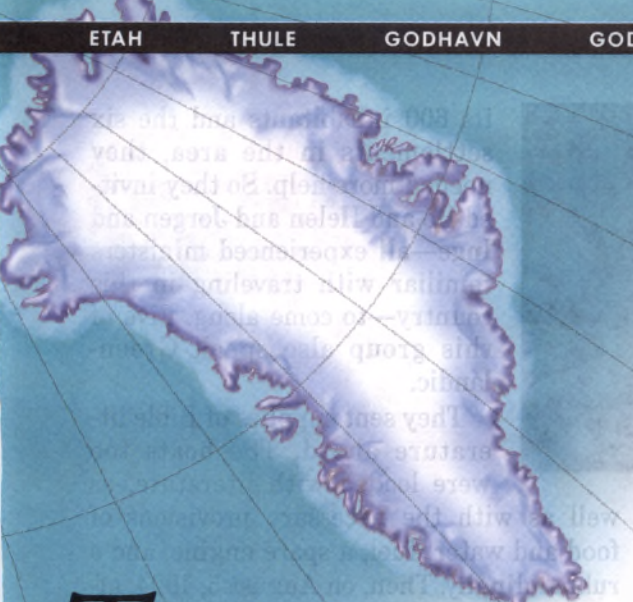
sis 8:21; Romans 5:12) Hence, we should not be discouraged if we sense an improper motive in our heart. Instead, let us take decisive action. When iron is exposed to moist air or a caustic environment, its corrosion is greatly accelerated. We need to avoid exposure to the “air” of Satan’s world, with its vile entertainment, rampant immorality, and negative bent of mind.—Ephesians 2:1, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Jehovah has provided humankind with a means to counteract wrong tendencies that we have inherited. He gave his only-begotten Son so that those exercising faith in him might have everlasting life. (John 3:16) If we follow Jesus’ steps closely and manifest a Christlike personality, we will be a blessing to others. (1 Peter 2:21) We will also receive, not maledictions, but divine blessings.

<sup>19</sup> Though we today are as susceptible to error as were the Israelites of old, we have God’s complete written Word to guide us. From its pages we learn about Jehovah’s dealings with mankind as well as his qualities exemplified in Jesus, ‘the reflection of God’s glory and the exact representation of His very being.’ (Hebrews 1:1-3; John 14:9, 10) Through prayer and diligent study of the Scriptures, we can have “the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16) When confronted with temptations and other tests of our faith, we can benefit from considering ancient Scriptural examples and especially the superlative example of Jesus Christ. If we do so, we will not have to experience the outworking of divine maledictions. Instead, we will enjoy Jehovah’s favor today and his blessings forever.

18. What has Jehovah done respecting the wrong tendencies of mankind?

19. How can we benefit from considering Scriptural examples?



# WITNESSES *to the* MOST DISTANT PART *of the* EARTH

**T**HULE is part of a name used since ancient times to describe an ultimate goal, geographic or otherwise. Today Thule is the name of a settlement in the far north of Greenland, the world's largest island. The settlement was so named in 1910, when Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen used it as the staging post for polar expeditions. Even now, going to Thule is more of an expedition than a pleasure trip.

Still, there is an urgent need for expeditions to Thule. In response to Jesus' command: "Be witnesses of me . . . to the most distant part of the earth," Jehovah's Witnesses are eager to bring the good news of God's Kingdom to this place, one of the northernmost permanent human settlements on earth.—Acts 1:8; Matthew 24:14.

## 'When Can We Go to Thule?'

In 1955 two Danish Witnesses who wanted to have a share in preaching "to the most distant part of the earth" arrived in Greenland. Others came later, and gradually their preaching work covered the southern and western coast up to Melville Bay and part-way up the eastern coast. But more distant





parts like Thule were reached almost exclusively by letter or telephone.

One day in 1991, Bo and his wife, Helen, two full-time ministers, were standing on a rock overlooking Melville Bay. Looking north they wondered, 'When will we be able to go way up to Thule to take the Kingdom good news to the people there?'

In 1993, Werner, another full-time minister, ventured to cross Melville Bay in his 18-foot speedboat *Qaamaneq* (Light). He had already sailed 750 miles from Godthåb up to the Upernavik area. Yet, crossing Melville Bay—250 miles of open Arctic water—is quite another matter. Most of the year, the bay is blocked by ice. Werner succeeded in crossing the bay, even though he lost an engine because of the ice. And he managed to do some preaching work before he had to return.

### Bound for Thule

After that trip, Werner started to make new plans. He spoke with Arne and Karin—who also owned a boat, a 23-foot one with four berths and, above all, with modern navigational equipment—about making a joint trip to Thule. The boats would provide accommodations, and with two boats traveling together, crossing Melville Bay would be less risky. To cover the main town with

its 600 inhabitants and the six settlements in the area, they needed more help. So they invited Bo and Helen and Jørgen and Inge—all experienced ministers familiar with traveling in this country—to come along. Five of this group also speak Greenlandic.

They sent supplies of Bible literature ahead. The boats too were loaded with literature, as well as with the necessary provisions of food and water, fuel, a spare engine, and a rubber dinghy. Then, on August 5, 1994, after months of preparation, the team was gathered and both boats were lying ready and loaded in the harbor of Ilulissat. The northbound trip was on. Werner, Bo, and Helen sailed in the smaller of the two boats. "All you could do was sit or lie on your berth and hold on to something," writes Bo. Let us follow the ship log for the journey.

"There were long stretches of calm sea. Gorgeous panoramas unfolded before our eyes—the glimmering sea, thick patches of fog, bright sun and blue sky, icebergs of the most fascinating shapes and shades of color, a brown walrus sunning himself on an ice floe, the coastline with dark mountain slopes and little plains—the change of scenery was endless.

"The most interesting part, of course, was visiting the settlements along the way. There were always people, usually children, down at the pier to see who the visitors were and to welcome them. We distributed Bible literature and lent the people a video about our organization. Many were able to see it before we had to leave. At South Upernavik, several people sailed out to our boats even before we came in. So for a whole

evening, we had guests on board and answered many Bible questions."

Now, after the first 450 miles of the journey, the two boats were ready to cross Melville Bay.

### The Crucial Challenge

"This was widely held as the crucial part of the journey. And we had to do the crossing in one stretch because the settlement of Savissivik (where the territory begins and where we could otherwise have found shelter) was still blocked by ice.

"So we set out. Since there was a lot of ice, we sailed farther out on the open sea. Fortunately, the waters were calm. The first several hours were uneventful—plowing through mile after mile of ocean. By evening we sighted Cape York and slowly turned north, closer to land. Now there was ice again—old, thick, and disintegrating floes for as far as the eye could see. We followed the edge of the ice for a long stretch, sometimes maneuvering through narrow passages. Then there was the fog, a thick grayish soup, peculiarly beautiful in the light of the low sun. And the waves! Fog, waves, and ice all at the same time—any one of these is usually enough of a challenge."

### Our Welcome

"We entered calmer waters as we approached Pituffik. Creation gave us an overwhelming welcome: the sun high on a blue, blue sky; in front of us, the wide, shiny fjord, dotted with floating mountains of ice; and far ahead the characteristic silhouette of the rock at Dundas—the old Thule!" About 60 miles farther to the north, the travelers came to their final destination.



They were now eager to begin preaching from house to house. Two of them received a brusque response at their first door. "We were rejected just as if we were in Denmark," they said. "But the majority gave us a hearty welcome. The people were reflective and well-informed. Some mentioned that they had heard about us and were happy that we had finally come. We met some wonderful people, such as sealers who had been on expeditions to the North Pole, and natives, contented and frugal and with a somewhat skeptical view of modern civilization."

The next few days brought fine experiences for all. The Bible literature was received with appreciation everywhere. In several homes the Witnesses started Bible studies right away. Inge relates about a home where she found interest: "It was a clean and cozy one-room house. For three days in a row, we visited the mild man who lived there and grew very fond of him. He was a true sealer, with his kayak outside his house. He had shot many polar bears, walrus, and, of course, seals. On our last call, we said a prayer with him, and his eyes filled with tears. Now we must leave everything in Jehovah's hands and hope for time and opportunity to return."

Thule receives frequent visits from Canadian Eskimo. Inge reports: "Helen and I met several Eskimo from Canada. It is interesting that they can communicate with the Greenlanders; people in the Arctic area seem to speak related languages. Though the Canadian Eskimo have their own written language, they were able to read our literature in Greenlandic. This may open up exciting opportunities for them."

The settlements 30 to 40 miles away by boat were also visited. "On our way to the settlement of Qeqertat, we followed the coastline closely, hoping to find people out hunting for narwhals. Sure enough, on a rock shelf, we found a camp made up of three or four families, clothed in furs, with their tents and kayaks. Harpoon in hand, the men took turns sitting on a rock to watch for the highly desired narwhals. Having already waited in vain for several days, they were not too pleased

to see us because we might scare the whales away! They seemed to be total-

ly in a world of their own. The women accepted some literature, but it was not the right moment for further conversation. We finally arrived at Qeqertat at 11 o'clock in the evening and finished our last call in the settlement by 2 o'clock in the morning!"

"Finally we reached Siorapaluk, the northernmost settlement in Greenland. It is situated on a sandy beach at the foot of some green, grass-covered rocks in an otherwise barren environment." The Witnesses have literally reached distant parts of the earth, at least in the northerly direction, in their preaching work.

### Journey Completed

The Witnesses have completed their work. They have preached from house to house and from tent to tent, handed out literature, obtained subscriptions, shown videos, talked to many Greenlanders, and conducted Bible studies. Now it is time to go home. "When we got in our dinghy that evening to row out from the settlement of Moriusaq, quite a few people were down by



the beach to see us off, waving the books or brochures they had obtained."

Later, on a desolate part of the coast, the Witnesses were astounded to see a man waving from a rock—there in the middle of nowhere! "Of course, we went ashore to meet him. He turned out to be a young man from Berlin, Germany, who was traveling up the coast in his kayak and had been on his way for a month. In Germany he received regular calls from Jehovah's Witnesses and had several of their books. We spent a couple of hours with him, and he was truly impressed to meet Witnesses at such a place."

In the settlement of Savissivik, which was bypassed on the journey out, the traveling ministers received an overwhelming welcome. Some there had received and read the literature the previous year, and they hungered for more spiritual food.

The return crossing of Melville Bay took 14 hours. "We witnessed a sunset, which up here is an experience of many hours, with constant changes of mesmerizing colors. The sunrise, which follows immediately, also took a long time. While sunset fans of red and crimson still covered the northeastern sky, the sun rose just a little to the south. It is a scene impossible to describe—or even photograph—adequately." The crew stayed up all night.

"As we reached Kullorsuaq, we were very tired. But we were happy and satisfied. We had successfully completed the journey! On the rest of the trip, we found much interest in towns and settlements along the coast. The question was often repeated, 'Why



can't some of you stay with us? We are sad to see you leave so soon!"

In Qaarsut a friendly family invited five of the visitors to have a meal with them. "The family wanted us to stay overnight. But since there were better anchoring places 25 miles farther away, we declined and sailed on. Later we heard that a large iceberg had calved early the next morning, and a wave capsized 14 small boats where we had been!"

Finally, the group was back in Ilulissat, having completed their Thule expedition. At about the same time, two other publishers had traveled to isolated parts on the east coast of Greenland. On those two journeys, the publishers distributed a total of 1,200 books, 2,199 brochures, and 4,224 magazines, and they obtained 152 subscriptions. Contact with the many newly interested ones is now maintained by telephone and correspondence.

In spite of the time, energy, and finances involved, Jehovah's Witnesses find great joy in carrying out their Master's injunction to 'be witnesses of me . . . to the most distant part of the earth.'—Acts 1:8.

## On the East Coast of Greenland

AT ABOUT the same time that the group of publishers reached Thule, a Witness couple, Viggo and Sonja, traveled to another unworked territory—Itoqqortoormiit (Scoresbysund) on the east coast of Greenland. To get there they had to travel to Iceland, take a plane back to Constable Point on the coast of Greenland, and then go by helicopter.

"This was the first time Jehovah's Witnesses had come here," relate these two pioneers, whose mother tongue is Greenlandic. "Despite their isolation, the people were surprisingly well-informed. Still, they were also happy to learn new things. As gifted storytellers, they eagerly told us about their seal hunts and other experiences in nature." How did they respond to the preaching work?

"Preaching from house to house, we met J——, who is a catechist. 'Thank you for including me among your calls,' he said. We showed him our literature and how to use it. The next day he came to us and wanted to learn about the name Jehovah. We showed him an explanation in a footnote in his own Greenlandic Bible. When we left, he telephoned our friends in Nuuk to express his

thanks for our visit. We must try to continue helping this man.

"We also met O——, a teacher who knows about Jehovah's Witnesses. He gave us two hours to speak to his class of 14- to 16-year-olds. So we showed them our video and answered their questions. *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work\** and other books went like hotcakes. We met three of the girls later. They had lots of questions, one of them being especially interested. She asked, 'How does one become a Witness? It surely must be good to be like you. My dad is also on your side.' We promised to write.

"In one of the settlements, we met another catechist, M——, and we had an interesting discussion. He offered to make sure that the men who were out hunting would receive our literature as soon as they returned. So now he is our 'publisher' in that remote place."

Though it was a circuitous and strenuous trip, the two pioneers felt that their efforts were richly rewarded.

\* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

## "RECOGNIZE MEN OF THAT SORT"

ALL WAS not well in the Corinthian congregation. There had been a shocking case of immorality, and factions existed among the brothers. Some faced serious personal problems or had questions that needed to be answered. Some brothers were taking one another to court; others were even denying the resurrection.

Serious questions arose too. Ought those in religiously divided households stay with their unbelieving mates, or should they sep-

arate? What was the role of sisters in the congregation? Was it appropriate to partake of meat sacrificed to idols? How should the meetings—including the Lord's Evening Meal—be conducted?—1 Corinthians 1:12; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1-3, 12, 13; 8:1; 11:18, 23-26; 14:26-35.

No doubt worried about the welfare of their brothers in such a troubled spiritual climate, Achaicus, Fortunatus, and Stephanas undertook a journey to visit the apos-

tle Paul in Ephesus. In addition to such disturbing news, it is possible that they were carrying to Paul a letter from the congregation containing questions on these issues. (1 Corinthians 7:1; 16:17) Evidently, these three brothers were not the only ones who were concerned about the situation. Paul, in fact, had already received news from "those of the house of Chloe" that dissensions existed among congregation members. (1 Corinthians 1:11) Doubtless, the report of the messengers helped Paul to obtain a clearer understanding of the situation, to decide what counsel to offer, and how to answer the questions raised. It would appear that the letter we now know as First Corinthians is Paul's reply, which was guided by God's holy spirit. Achaicus, Fortunatus, and Stephanas may have been the ones who delivered the letter.

Who were Achaicus, Fortunatus, and Stephanas? What can we learn by studying what the Scriptures say about them?

### **The Household of Stephanas**

The household of Stephanas was the "firstfruits" of Paul's ministry in the Roman province of Achaia, Southern Greece, in about the year 50 C.E., and they were baptized by Paul himself. Apparently, Paul considered them a point of reference, a mature stabilizing influence for the Corinthians. He warmly praised them because of their activity in behalf of the congregation: "Now I exhort you, brothers: You know that the household of Stephanas is the firstfruits of Achaia and that they set themselves to minister to the holy ones. May you also keep submitting yourselves to persons of that kind and to everyone cooperating and laboring." (1 Corinthians 1:16; 16:15, 16) Exactly who made up Stephanas' "household" is not stated. The expression could simply mean family members but could also

include slaves or employees. Since Achaicus was a Latin name typical of a slave, and Fortunatus typical of a freedman, some commentators surmise that the two could perhaps have been members of that same household.

Whatever the case, Paul considered Stephanas' household exemplary. Its members had "set themselves to minister to the holy ones." Stephanas' family must have recognized that there was work to be done for the good of the congregation and voluntarily accepted this service as a personal responsibility. Their desire to render such service to the holy ones was undoubtedly deserving of moral support and recognition.

### **"They Have Refreshed My Spirit and Yours"**

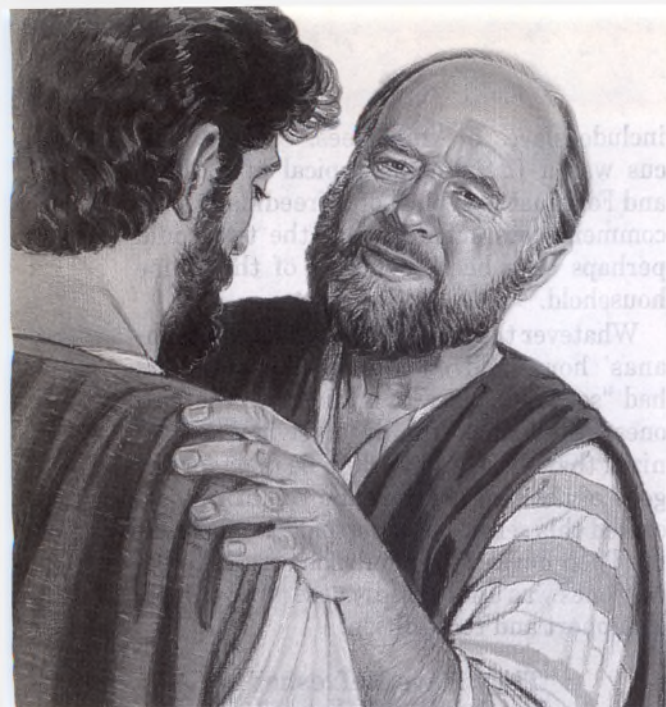
Though Paul was worried about the situation in Corinth, the arrival of the three messengers served to uplift him. Paul says: "I rejoice over the presence of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your not being here. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours." (1 Corinthians 16:17, 18) Given the circumstances, physical separation from the Corinthians had probably been a source of anxiety for Paul, but now the presence of their envoys compensated for the absence of the whole

## **In Our Next Issue**

**How Does God View  
Christendom's Worship?**

**The Triumph of  
True Worship Draws Near**

**Who Deserves to Be Called Rabbi?**



congregation. Their report likely served to complete Paul's picture of the situation and dispel at least some of his fears. Perhaps things were not as bad as he had imagined after all.

According to Paul, the mission of the three not only refreshed his spirit but also served to lift the spirit of the Corinthian congregation. No doubt it was a relief for them to know that their envoys had clearly explained every aspect of the situation to Paul and would return with his advice.

So Stephanas and his two companions were warmly recommended for their labors in behalf of the Corinthians. Paul's appreciation for these men was such that upon their return they should provide leadership in the divided Corinthian congregation. The apostle urges the brothers: "Keep submitting yourselves to persons of that kind and to everyone cooperating and laboring. . . . Recognize men of that sort." (1 Corinthians 16:16, 18) Such strong recommendations clearly indicate the complete loyalty of these men despite tensions within the

congregation. Men of that sort should be held dear.—Philippians 2:29.

### **Faithful Cooperation Produces Fine Results**

There is no doubt about it, close cooperation with Jehovah's organization and its representatives produces fine results. When Paul wrote the letter now known as Second Corinthians, shortly after the first letter, things were already going better in the congregation. The continued patient activity of brothers like Achaicus, Fortunatus, and Stephanas, as well as the visit of Titus, had produced a good effect.—2 Corinthians 7:8-15; compare Acts 16:4, 5.

Members of modern-day congregations of Jehovah's people can benefit by meditating on the brief mention of these faithful men in the Scriptures. For example, suppose an ongoing situation within the local congregation cannot be resolved promptly for some reason and is causing the brothers concern. What ought to be done? Imitate Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who did not shrink back from their responsibility to advise Paul of the situation and then confidently leave matters in Jehovah's hands. In no way did zeal for righteousness cause them to take action independently or to become "enraged against Jehovah." —Proverbs 19:3.

The congregations belong to Jesus Christ, and in his own good time, just as in Corinth, he will act to resolve any difficulties that may pose a threat to their spiritual welfare and peace. (Ephesians 1:22; Revelation 1:12, 13, 20; 2:1-4) In the meantime, if we follow the fine example set by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus and continue to labor in the service of our brothers, we too will be loyally supporting the congregation arrangement, building up our brothers, and 'inciting them to love and fine works.'—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

# QUESTIONS FROM READERS

**Can we say that God's servants today who have the earthly hope have as much of God's spirit as do spirit-anointed Christians?**

This question is not a new one. This same matter was addressed in "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of April 15, 1952. Many have become Witnesses since then, so we can consider the question and in the process review what that earlier material said.

Fundamentally, the answer is, yes, faithful brothers and sisters of the other sheep class can share equally with anointed ones in receiving God's holy spirit.—John 10:16.

This, of course, does not mean that the spirit operates in the same way on all individuals. Think back to faithful servants in pre-Christian times, who certainly received God's spirit. With power from the spirit, some of them slew ferocious beasts, cured the sick, even raised the dead. And they needed the spirit to write inspired books of the Bible. (Judges 13:24, 25; 14:5, 6; 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:17-37; 5:1-14) *The Watchtower* said: "Though not of the anointed class, they were filled with holy spirit."

From another angle, consider men and women in the first century who were anointed with holy spirit, becoming spiritual sons of God with the heavenly hope. All had been anointed, but that does not mean that the spirit thereafter operated in the same way on all of them. That is clear from 1 Corinthians chapter 12. There the apostle Paul discussed gifts of the spirit. We read in verses 8, 9, and 11: "To one there is given through the spirit speech of wisdom, to another speech of knowledge according to the same spirit, to another faith by the same spirit, to another gifts of healings by that one spirit. . . . But all these operations the one and the same spirit performs, making a distribution to each one respectively just as it wills."

Significantly, not all anointed ones back then had miraculous gifts of the spirit. In 1 Corinthians chapter 14, Paul mentioned a congregation meeting in which one had the gift of tongues, but no one pres-

ent had the gift of translation. Nonetheless, at some earlier point, each one of them had experienced anointing with spirit. Would it be reasonable to say that the brother having the gift of tongues had more of the spirit than others present? No. Those other anointed ones were not disadvantaged, as if unable to understand the Bible as well as that one or unable to face trials as well. The spirit operated in a special way on the brother who could speak in tongues. Still, he and they needed to stay close to Jehovah and to "keep getting filled with spirit," as Paul wrote.—Ephesians 5:18.

Regarding those of the remnant today, they certainly have received God's spirit. At one point it operated on them in a special way—at the time when they were anointed and adopted as spiritual sons. Thereafter they "keep getting filled with spirit," having its help when they seek to understand the Bible more clearly, take the lead in the preaching work, or face tests—personal or organizational.

Members of the "other sheep," though not having had the experience of being anointed, in other respects do receive holy spirit. *The Watchtower* of April 15, 1952, observed:

"The 'other sheep' today perform the same preaching work as the remnant, under the same trying conditions, and manifest the same faithfulness and integrity. They feed at the same spiritual table, eating the same food, absorbing the same truths. Being of the earthly class, with earthly hopes and a keen interest in earthly things, they might interest themselves more in scriptures relating to earthly conditions in the new world; whereas the anointed remnant, with heavenly hopes and strong personal interest in the things of the spirit, might study more diligently those things in God's Word. . . . Yet the fact remains that the same truths and the same understanding are available to both classes, and it is just how the individuals apply themselves in study that determines the comprehension of heavenly and earthly things they acquire. The Lord's spirit is available in equal portions to both classes, and knowledge and understanding are offered equally to both, with equal opportunities for absorbing it."

# He Humbly Served Jehovah

**"I**T'S NOT so much where you serve but whom you serve that is truly important." John Booth was fond of saying those words, and he lived by them. His life course on earth, which ended on Monday, January 8, 1996, left no question as to whom he chose to serve.

As a young man back in 1921, John Booth was searching for purpose in life. He taught Sunday school at the Dutch Reformed Church, but he resisted the idea of training to become a minister because he felt that clergymen led selfish lives. When he saw a flier for a talk entitled "Millions Now Living Will Never Die," he wasted no time in sending away for the literature it advertised. Captivated by what he had read, he was soon bicycling 15 miles to meetings of the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known. He was baptized in 1923 and began preaching from door to door in the region of Wallkill, New York, where his family had a dairy farm.

Brother Booth entered the full-time ministry in April 1928. He preached in his home territory and in the rural South, trading Bible literature for food and lodging. He had to brave such hazards as gun-brandishing owners of illegal alcohol stills,



**John Booth 1902-1996**

one of whom shot and wounded John Booth's pioneer partner. In 1935, Brother Booth was appointed a traveling overseer and began visiting congregations and smaller groups around the country. He organized assemblies and helped the brothers and sisters to persevere despite opposition. Standing up to angry mobs, taking a stand in court, and suffering imprisonment all became common occurrences

for Brother Booth. "It would take a book to give details of those exciting times," he once wrote.

In 1941, Joseph F. Rutherford, then president of the Watch Tower Society, assigned Brother Booth to work at Kingdom Farm, near Ithaca, New York. There he served faithfully for 28 years. His love of the ministry undimmed, he was delighted over the years to associate with thousands of students of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead for training missionaries, which was situated there at Kingdom Farm until 1961. In 1970, Brother Booth was asked to serve at Watchtower Farms in Wallkill, New York, and so found himself in the same area where he had begun pioneering some 45 years earlier.

In 1974, Brother Booth was appointed a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. He served faithfully in that capacity until his death at 93 years of age. John Booth was beloved for his profoundly humble and kind Christian personality. Until his health and strength failed him, he was faithfully preaching from door to door and on the city streets.

While those who served with him mourn his passing, they find comfort in the Bible's promise regarding such anointed Christians, that they are resurrected to heavenly life and that "the things they did go right with them." (Revelation 14:13; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54) A new environment to be sure, but one in which John Booth will be able to serve Jehovah forever!

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## 76 Jehovahites Jailed in Joliet

