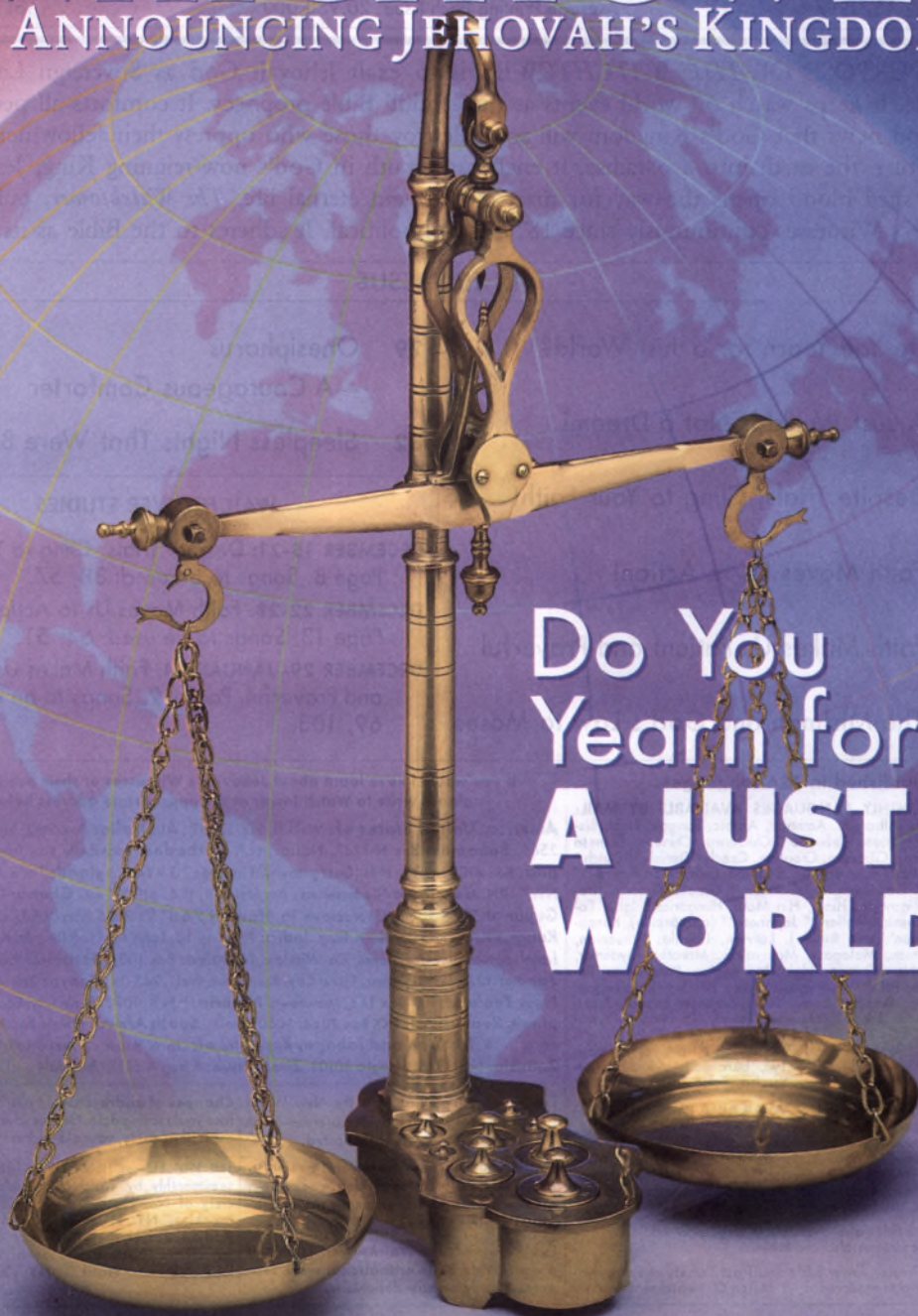


NOVEMBER 15, 1997

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Do You  
Yearn for  
**A JUST  
WORLD?**

# 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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A WOODEN sailing ship with three masts and two decks approaches the shores of what is now Cape Cod, Massachusetts, U.S.A. The crew and the 101 passengers aboard are exhausted from being at sea for 66 days. Seeking to escape religious persecution and economic hardship, they have made an arduous journey across the Atlantic Ocean.

## Do you yearn for a **JUST WORLD?**

As the passengers of this vessel, the *Mayflower*, sight land on November 11, 1620, their eyes glitter with the hope of a fresh start. Desiring to lay the groundwork for a better world, most of

the ship's adult male passengers sign the Mayflower Compact. In it they agree to enact "just and equal laws" for "the general good of the colony." Has their dream of a world that is morally upright and fair to everyone—a just world—become a reality?

Even though the Compact signed aboard the *Mayflower* is considered one of the cornerstones of the American system of government, injustice is a common occurrence in America, even as it is around the world. For example, consider a man who was shot by police while he was trying to escape after robbing and shooting a store owner. He sued the police and the city of New York and won millions of dollars in settlement.

Consider another example. While law school students were taking the bar exam in Pasadena, California, one of them suffered a seizure and collapsed. Two nearby students readily administered



**Signing of the Mayflower Compact**

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cardiopulmonary resuscitation until the paramedics arrived. They spent 40 minutes helping the man. But when they requested compensatory time to complete the exam, the bar official turned them down.

There is also the matter of punishment for criminal activity. Economic analyst Ed Rubenstein points out: "Most crimes never result in an arrest. Many of those arrested aren't prosecuted. Many convicts are paroled. Expected punishment, from the criminal's viewpoint, is a probability, not a certainty." Using the data for burglary, he concludes that a potential burglar "will escape imprisonment more than 98 percent of the time." The low risk of punishment leads to more crime and crime victims.—Ecclesiastes 8:11.

In many lands a rich minority keeps getting richer while the poor masses face economic injustice. Such injustice prevails when people because of their skin color, ethnic background, language, sex, or religion have little opportunity to better their

condition or even to sustain themselves. According to *The New York Times*, for example, "nearly a quarter of a billion human beings in Hindu-dominated South Asia—most of them in India and Nepal—are born and die as untouchables." The result is that millions are ravaged by poverty, hunger, and disease. Injustice spans their life from cradle to grave.

What of the seeming injustices that are beyond human control? Think of the babies born with congenital defects—blind, retarded, or deformed. Would not a woman feel a sense of injustice if her baby came forth crippled or dead while women nearby cuddled healthy infants?

Sadly, injustice abounds, and so do its consequences—immense suffering and the lack of peace, joy, and contentment. Outraged by the injustice they witness or experience, many have resorted to violence, only to add to human suffering. Most wars have been fought because of perceived injustice.

Why has man failed to bring about a just world? Is such a world just a dream?

**J**USTICE is the great interest of man on earth," noted American statesman Daniel Webster. And the Bible states: "Jehovah is a lover of justice." (Psalm 37:28) Made in the likeness of God, the first human couple had godly attributes, including a sense of justice. —Genesis 1:26, 27.

The Scriptures also speak of 'people of the nations that do not have law doing by nature the things of the law.' They thus "demonstrate the matter of the law to be written in their hearts, while their conscience is bearing witness with them and, between their own thoughts,

they are being accused or even excused." (Romans 2:14, 15) Yes, humans are endowed with the faculty of conscience—an inner sense of right and wrong. Clearly, the need for justice is innate in man.

Closely associated with the need for justice is man's quest

for happiness, for Psalm 106:3 declares: "Happy are those observing justice, doing righteousness all the time." Why, though, has man not been able to bring about a just world?

### Why Has Man Failed?

A basic reason for failure to achieve a just world is the blemish we have inherited from our first parents, Adam and Eve. The Bible explains: "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 blemish is sin. Though created faultless, Adam and Eve decided to rebel against God and thus made themselves sinners. (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:1-6) Because of this, they left to their children the legacy of sinful, wrong tendencies.

Are not such personality traits as greed and prejudice the outworkings of sinful tendencies? And do these traits not contribute to injustices in the world? Why, greed is at the root of deliberate environmental abuses and economic oppression! Prejudice is certainly behind ethnic strife and racial injustices. Such traits also induce people to rob, cheat, and act in a manner that harms others.

Even the best-motivated efforts to exercise justice and to do good often fail because of our sinful inclinations. The apostle Paul himself confessed: "The good that I wish I do not do, but the bad that I do not wish is what I practice." He goes on to explain the struggle, saying: "I really delight in the law of God according to the man I am within, but I behold in my members another law warring against the law of my mind and leading me captive to sin's law that is in my members."

# A Just World Is NOT A DREAM!

(Romans 7:19-23) Likely, we today have the same conflict. That is why injustices occur so frequently.

The human way of ruling has also contributed to injustice in the world. In every land, there are laws as well as those who enforce them. And there are, of course, judges and courts. Certainly, some principled men have tried to uphold human rights and to see that there is equal justice for all. Still, most of their efforts have failed. Why? Encapsulating various factors involved in their failure, Jeremiah 10:23 points out: "I well know, O Jehovah, that to earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step." Alienated from God, man simply is incapable of establishing a righteous and just world.—Proverbs 14:12; Ecclesiastes 8:9.

A great barrier to man's effort to construct a just world is Satan the Devil. The Bible clearly states that the rebellious angel Satan is the original "manslayer" and "liar" and that "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (John 8:44; 1 John 5:19) The apostle Paul identifies him as "the god of this system of things." (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4) Being a hater of righteousness, Satan does everything possible to promote wickedness. As long as he controls the world, injustices of all sorts and their resultant woes will enslave mankind.

Does all of this mean that injustice is inevitable in human society? Is a just world an impossible dream?

### **A Just World a Reality—How?**

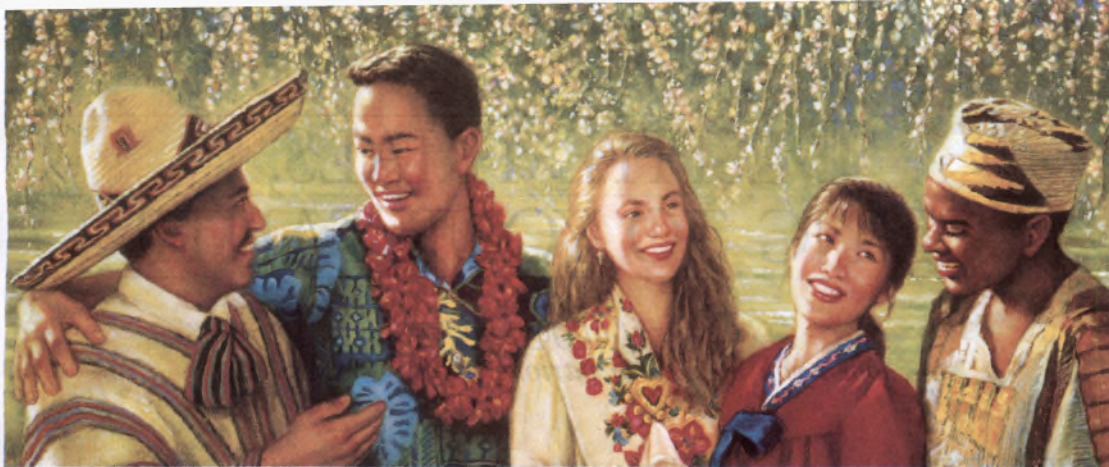
For the hope of a just world to become a reality, mankind has to look to a source that can eradicate the causes of injustice. But who can uproot sin and do away with Satan and his rulership? Clearly, no human nor any human agency can accomplish such a formidable task. Only Jehovah God can! Concerning him, the Bible states: "The Rock,

perfect is his activity, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4) And being "a lover of justice," Jehovah wants mankind to enjoy life in a just world.—Psalm 37:28.

Speaking of God's arrangement to bring about a just world, the apostle Peter wrote: "There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:13) These "new heavens" are not new physical heavens. God made our physical heavens perfect, and they bring him glory. (Psalm 8:3; 19:1, 2) The "new heavens" is a new rulership over the earth. The present "heavens" consist of man-made governments. Very soon, at God's war of Armageddon, these will give way to the "new heavens"—his heavenly Kingdom, or government. (Revelation 16:14-16) The King of that Kingdom is Jesus Christ. Bringing a permanent end to human rulership, this government will rule to time indefinite.—Daniel 2:44.

What, then, is the "new earth"? It is not a new planet, for God made the earth just right for human habitation, and it is his will that it remain forever. (Psalm 104:5) The "new earth" refers to a new society of people. (Genesis 11:1; Psalm 96:1) The "earth" that will be destroyed consists of the people that make themselves part of this wicked system of things. (2 Peter 3:7) The "new earth" that replaces them will be made up of true servants of God, who hate wickedness and love righteousness and justice. (Psalm 37:10, 11) Thus, gone will be Satan's world.

But what is in store for Satan? The apostle John foretold: "He [Christ Jesus] seized the dragon, the original serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he hurled him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he might



**All traces of injustice will be erased in God's promised new world**

not mislead the nations anymore.” (Revelation 20:1-3) The influence of enchained Satan on mankind will be no greater than that of a prisoner in a deep dungeon. What a relief that will be for mankind, coming as the harbinger of a just world! And at the end of the thousand years, Satan will be crushed out of existence.—Revelation 20:7-10.

What, though, of inherited sin? Jehovah has already provided the basis for uprooting sin. “The Son of man [Jesus Christ] came . . . to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many.” (Matthew 20:28) The word “ransom” signifies the price required for the redemption of captives. Jesus paid the price of his perfect human life as the ransom to deliver mankind.—2 Corinthians 5:14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

Jesus’ ransom sacrifice can benefit us even now. By exercising faith in it, we can enjoy a clean standing before God. (Acts 10:43; 1 Corinthians 6:11) Under the rule of God’s Kingdom, the ransom will make possible for mankind a complete recovery from sin. The last book of the Bible describes a figurative “river of water of life” issuing forth from the throne of God, and along its banks are symbolic fruit trees with leaves “for the curing of the nations.” (Revelation 22:1, 2) What the Bible portrays here represents the Creator’s marvelous provision for recover-

ing mankind from sin on the basis of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. The full application of this provision will liberate obedient humans from sin and death.

### **Life in a Just World**

Think of what life will be like under Kingdom rule. Crime and violence will be things of the past. (Proverbs 2:21, 22) Gone will be economic injustice. (Psalm 37:6; 72:12, 13; Isaiah 65:21-23) All traces of social, racial, tribal, and ethnic discrimination will be erased. (Acts 10:34, 35) Wars and weapons of warfare will be no more. (Psalm 46:9) Millions of dead will be restored to life in a world free of injustice. (Acts 24:15) Everyone will enjoy perfect and vibrant health. (Job 33:25; Revelation 21:3, 4) “In trueness,” the Bible assures us, “[Jesus Christ] will bring forth justice.”—Isaiah 42:3.

Meanwhile, injustice can befall us, but may we never be unjust in return. (Micah 6:8) Even when injustice has to be endured, may we maintain a positive outlook. The promised just world will soon become a reality. (2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3:11-13) God Almighty has given his word, and it “will prove to be.” (Isaiah 55:10, 11) Now is the time to prepare for life in that just world by learning what God requires of us.—John 17:3; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

# DESPITE TRIALS, CLING TO YOUR FAITH!

*"Consider it all joy, my brothers,  
when you meet with various trials."*—JAMES 1:2.

**J**EHOVAH'S people serve as his Witnesses with faith in him and "joy of heart." (Deuteronomy 28:47; Isaiah 43:10) They do this although they are beset by many trials. Despite their hardships, they draw comfort from the words: "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet with various trials, knowing as you do that this tested quality of your faith works out endurance."—James 1:2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> That statement was penned in about 62 C.E. by the disciple James, a half brother of Jesus Christ. (Mark 6:3) James was an elder in the Jerusalem congregation. In fact, he, Cephas (Peter), and John "seemed to be pillars"—strong, solidly fixed supporters of the congregation. (Galatians 2:9) When the issue of circumcision came before "the apostles and the older men" in about 49 C.E., James made a Scripturally sound proposal that was adopted by that first-century governing body.—Acts 15:6-29.

<sup>3</sup> As a concerned spiritual shepherd, James 'knew the appearance of the flock.' (Proverbs 27:23) He realized that Christians were then facing severe trials. The thinking of some required readjustment, for they

1. Despite what do Jehovah's people serve him in faith and with "joy of heart"?
2. What is known about the writer of the letter of James?
3. What were some of the problems facing first-century Christians, and how can we get the greatest benefit from the letter of James?

were showing favoritism to the rich. For a number, worship was a mere formality. Some were causing harm with their unruly tongues. A worldly spirit was having damaging effects, and many were neither patient nor prayerful. In fact, spiritual sickness had befallen certain Christians. The letter of James addresses such matters in an upbuilding way, and his counsel is as practical today as it was in the first century C.E. We will benefit greatly if we consider this letter as one written to us personally.\*

## When We Experience Trials

<sup>4</sup> James shows us how to view trials. (James 1:1-4) Not mentioning his family tie with God's Son, he humbly calls himself "a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." James writes to "the twelve tribes" of spiritual Israel "scattered about," initially because of persecution. (Acts 8:1; 11:19; Galatians 6:16; 1 Peter 1:1) As Christians, we too are persecuted, and we "meet with various trials." But if we remember that trials endured strengthen our faith, we will "consider it all joy" when they befall us. If we maintain our integrity to God during trials, this will bring us lasting happiness.

\* During private or family study of this article and the two that follow it, you will find it especially beneficial to read each cited portion of the faith-strengthening letter of James.

4. How should we view trials?

<sup>5</sup> Our trials include adversities common to mankind. For example, poor health may plague us. God is not now performing miraculous cures, but he answers our prayers for the wisdom and fortitude needed to deal with illness. (Psalm 41:1-3) We also suffer for righteousness' sake as persecuted Witnesses of Jehovah. (2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 3:14) When we successfully endure such trials, our faith is proved, becoming one of "tested quality." And when our faith triumphs, this "works out endurance." Faith made stronger through trials will help us to endure future tests.

<sup>6</sup> "But," says James, "let endurance have its work complete." If we allow a trial to run its course without trying to end it quickly by unscriptural means, endurance will do the "work" of making us complete as Christians, not lacking in faith. Of course, if a trial exposes some weakness, we should seek Jehovah's help to overcome it. What if the trial is the temptation to engage in sexual immorality? Let us pray about that problem and then act in harmony with our prayers. We may need to change our place of employment or to take other steps to maintain integrity to God.—Genesis 39:7-9; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

### The Quest for Wisdom

<sup>7</sup> James shows us what to do if we do not know how to deal with a trial. (James 1:5-8) Jehovah will not reproach us for lacking wisdom and praying for it in faith. He will help us to view a trial properly and to endure it. Scriptures may be called to our attention by fellow believers or during Bible study. Events maneuvered through God's

5. What may our trials include, and what happens when we successfully endure them?

6. How does "endurance have its work complete," and what practical steps can be taken when we are under trial?

7. How may we be helped to deal with trials?



**When under trial, exercise faith in Jehovah's power to answer prayers**

providence may enable us to see what we should do. We may be guided by God's spirit. (Luke 11:13) To enjoy such benefits, naturally we must stick close to God and his people.—Proverbs 18:1.

<sup>8</sup> Jehovah grants us wisdom to cope with trials if we "keep on asking in faith, not doubting at all." A doubter "is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and blown about" unpredictably. If we were that unstable spiritually, 'we should not suppose that we would receive anything from Jehovah.' Let us not be "indecisive" and "unsteady" in prayer or in other ways. Instead, let us have faith in Jehovah, the Source of wisdom.—Proverbs 3:5, 6.

### Rich and Poor Can Exult

<sup>9</sup> Even if poverty is one of our trials, let us bear in mind that both rich and poor

8. Why will a doubter receive nothing from Jehovah?

9. Why do we have reason for exultation as Jehovah's worshippers?



**"Doers of the word"  
are proclaiming  
God's Kingdom  
worldwide**

Christians can exult. (James 1:9-11) Before becoming Jesus' followers, most anointed ones had little materially and were looked down upon by the world. (1 Corinthians 1:26) But they could exult over their "exaltation" to the standing of Kingdom heirs. (Romans 8:16, 17) Conversely, rich people who were once honored experience "humiliation" as Christ's followers because of being despised by the world. (John 7:47-52; 12:42, 43) As Jehovah's servants, however, all of us can exult because worldly wealth and high standing amount to nothing compared to the spiritual riches we enjoy. And how grateful we are that among us there is no place for pride as to social status!—Proverbs 10:22; Acts 10:34, 35.

<sup>10</sup> James helps us to see that our life does not depend on wealth and worldly achievement. As a flower's beauty cannot prevent it

10. How should a Christian view material wealth?

from dying in the sun's "burning heat," so a rich man's wealth cannot lengthen his life. (Psalm 49:6-9; Matthew 6:27) He may die while pursuing his "ways of life," perhaps in business. Hence, the important thing is to be "rich toward God" and to do all we can to promote Kingdom interests.—Luke 12:13-21; Matthew 6:33; 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

### **Happy Are Those Enduring Trial**

<sup>11</sup> Rich or poor, we can be happy only if we endure our trials. (James 1:12-15) If we endure trials with our faith intact, we can be pronounced happy, for there is joy in doing what is right in God's sight. By clinging to their faith unto death, spirit-begotten Christians receive "the crown of life," immortality in the heavens. (Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:50) If we have earthly hopes and maintain our faith in God, we can look forward to everlasting life on a paradise

11. What are the prospects for those who cling to their faith in the face of trials?

earth. (Luke 23:43; Romans 6:23) How good Jehovah is to all who exercise faith in him!

<sup>12</sup> Is it possible that Jehovah himself tries us with adversity? No, we should not say: "I am being tried by God." Jehovah is not trying to induce us to commit sin but is sure to help us and give us the strength needed to endure trials if we remain steadfast in faith. (Philippians 4:13) God is holy, so he does not place us in circumstances that would weaken our resistance to wrongdoing. If we get ourselves into an unholy situation and commit some sin, we should not blame him, "for with evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone." Though Jehovah may permit a trial to discipline us for our good, he does not try us with evil intent. (Hebrews 12:7-11) Satan may tempt us to do wrong, but God can deliver us from that wicked one.—Matthew 6:13.

<sup>13</sup> We need to be prayerful because a certain situation may give rise to a wrong desire that could induce us to sin. James says: "Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire." We cannot blame God for our sin if we have let our heart dwell on sinful desire. If we do not dismiss a wrong desire, 'it becomes fertile,' is nurtured in the heart, and "gives birth to sin." When sin is accomplished, it "brings forth death." Obviously, we need to guard our hearts and resist sinful inclinations. (Proverbs 4:23) Cain was warned that sin was about to overcome him, but he did not resist. (Genesis 4:4-8) So, then, what if we are beginning to pursue an unscriptural course? Surely we should be grateful if Christian elders try to readjust us so that we do not sin against God.—Galatians 6:1.

12. When experiencing adversity, why should we not say: "I am being tried by God"?

13. What can happen if we do not reject a wrong desire?

## God—The Source of Good Things

<sup>14</sup> We should remember that Jehovah is the Source, not of trials, but of good things. (James 1:16-18) James addresses fellow believers as "beloved brothers" and shows that God is the Giver of 'every good gift and perfect present.' Jehovah's spiritual and material gifts are "perfect," or complete, lacking nothing. They come "from above," from God's dwelling place in the heavens. (1 Kings 8:39) Jehovah is "the Father of the celestial lights"—the sun, the moon, and the stars. He also gives us spiritual light and truth. (Psalm 43:3; Jeremiah 31:35; 2 Corinthians 4:6) Unlike the sun that makes shadows change as it moves and is at its zenith only at high noon, God is always at his peak in providing what is good. He will surely equip us to face trials if we take full advantage of his spiritual provisions supplied through his Word and "the faithful and discreet slave."—Matthew 24:45.

<sup>15</sup> What has been one of God's finest gifts? The bringing forth of spiritual sons by holy spirit, working in conjunction with the good news, or "word of truth." Those experiencing a spiritual birth are "certain firstfruits," chosen from among mankind to be a heavenly "kingdom and priests." (Revelation 5:10; Ephesians 1:13, 14) James may have been thinking of barley firstfruits offered on Nisan 16, which was the date when Jesus was resurrected, and of the offering of two wheat loaves on the day of Pentecost, when the holy spirit was poured out. (Leviticus 23:4-11, 15-17) In that case, Jesus would be the firstfruits and his joint heirs "certain firstfruits." What if we have an earthly hope? Well, keeping it in mind will help us to cling to our faith in the Giver of "every good gift," who has made everlasting life possible under Kingdom rule.

14. In what sense can it be said that God's gifts are "perfect"?

15. What is one of Jehovah's finest gifts?

## Be a 'Doer of the Word'

<sup>16</sup> Whether we are experiencing trials of our faith right now or not, we must be “doers of the word.” (James 1:19-25) We need to be “swift about hearing” God’s word, being obedient doers of it. (John 8:47) On the other hand, let us be “slow about speaking,” carefully weighing our words. (Proverbs 15:28; 16:23) James may be urging us not to be quick to say that our trials originate with God. We are also counseled to be “slow about wrath; for man’s wrath does not work out God’s righteousness.” If angered by what someone says, let us ‘slow down’ so as to avoid a vindictive reply. (Ephesians 4:26, 27) A wrathful spirit that may cause us problems and become a trial for others cannot produce what faith in our righteous God requires of us. Besides, if we are “abundant in discernment,” we will be “slow to anger,” and our brothers and sisters will be drawn to us.—Proverbs 14:29.

<sup>17</sup> We surely need to be free of “all filthiness”—everything that disgusts God and promotes wrathfulness. Moreover, we must ‘put away that superfluous thing, badness.’ All of us should clear out of our life any uncleanness of flesh or spirit. (2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 1:9) Removal of

16. Why should we be ‘swift about hearing but slow about speaking and wrath’?

17. What is accomplished by removing badness from heart and mind?

### How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What will help us to endure trials?
- ☐ Despite trials, why can Christians exult?
- ☐ How can we be doers of the word?
- ☐ What does clean worship involve?

badness from heart and mind helped us to “accept with mildness the implanting of the word” of truth. (Acts 17:11, 12) No matter how long we have been Christians, we must keep on letting more Scriptural truth be implanted in us. Why? Because by God’s spirit, the implanted word produces “the new personality” that attains to salvation.—Ephesians 4:20-24.

<sup>18</sup> How do we show that the word is our guide? By being obedient “doers of the word, and not hearers only.” (Luke 11:28) “Doers” have faith that produces such works as zealous activity in the Christian ministry and regular participation in meetings of God’s people. (Romans 10:14, 15; Hebrews 10:24, 25) A mere hearer of the word “is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror.” He takes a look, then departs and forgets about what may be needed to correct his appearance. As “doers of the word,” we carefully study and obey God’s “perfect law,” which covers everything he requires of us. The freedom we thus enjoy is the very opposite of enslavement to sin and death, for it leads to life. So let us ‘persist in the perfect law,’ constantly scrutinizing and obeying it. And just think! As ‘doers of the work, not forgetful hearers,’ we have the joy resulting from God’s favor.—Psalm 19:7-11.

### Much More Than Formal Worshipers

<sup>19</sup> If we are to enjoy divine favor, we need to remember that true worship is not mere formality. (James 1:26, 27) We may think that we are acceptable ‘formal worshipers’ of Jehovah, but it is his estimation of each one of us that really counts. (1 Corinthians 4:4) One serious flaw may be failure to ‘bridle the tongue.’ We would be deceiving our-

18. How does one who is only a hearer of the word differ from one who is also a doer of it?

19, 20. (a) According to James 1:26, 27, what does clean worship require of us? (b) What are some examples of undefiled worship?

selves if we thought that God is pleased with our worship if we slander others, tell lies, or misuse the tongue in other ways. (Leviticus 19:16; Ephesians 4:25) Surely, we do not want our "form of worship" to be "futile" and unacceptable to God for any reason.

<sup>20</sup> Though James does not cite every aspect of clean worship, he says that it includes 'looking after orphans and widows in their tribulation.' (Galatians 2:10; 6:10; 1 John 3:18) The Christian congregation shows special interest in providing for widows. (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 5:8-10) Since God is the Protector of the widow and the fatherless, let us cooperate with Him by doing what we can to help them spiritually and materially. (Deuteronomy 10:17, 18) Clean worship also means "to keep oneself without

spot from the world," unrighteous human society lying in Satan's power. (John 17:16; 1 John 5:19) Let us therefore remain free of the world's godless conduct so that we may glorify Jehovah and be useful in his service. —2 Timothy 2:20-22.

<sup>21</sup> The counsel of James that we have considered thus far should help us to endure trials and cling to our faith. It ought to heighten our appreciation for the loving Giver of good gifts. And the words of James help us to practice clean worship. What else does he bring to our attention? What further steps can we take to prove that we have true faith in Jehovah?

21. In connection with the letter of James, what further questions merit our consideration?

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## FAITH MOVES US TO ACTION!

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*"You behold that [Abraham's] faith worked along with his works and by his works his faith was perfected."—JAMES 2:22.*

**M**ANY say that they have faith in God. Yet, mere professed faith is as lifeless as a corpse. "Faith, if it does not have works, is dead in itself," wrote the disciple James. He also said that God-fearing Abraham had faith that "worked along with his works." (James 2:17, 22) What significance do such words have for us?

<sup>2</sup> If we have true faith, we will not just believe what we hear at Christian meetings.

1, 2. How will we act if we have faith?

We will give evidence of faith because we are active Witnesses of Jehovah. Yes, faith will prompt us to apply God's Word in life and will move us to action.

### **Favoritism Not Compatible With Faith**

<sup>3</sup> If we have genuine faith in God and Christ, we will not show favoritism. (James 2:1-4) Some to whom James wrote were not displaying the impartiality required of true Christians. (Romans 2:11) Hence, James

3, 4. How should faith affect the way we treat others?

asks: "You are not holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, our glory, with acts of favoritism, are you?" If a rich unbeliever with gold rings and splendid garments came to a meeting as well as an unbelieving "poor man in filthy clothing," both of them should have been well received, but special attention was being shown to the wealthy. They were given seats "in a fine place," whereas poor unbelievers were told to stand or to sit on the floor at someone's feet.

<sup>4</sup> Jehovah provided the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ for rich and poor alike. (2 Corinthians 5:14) If we were to cater to the rich, therefore, we would be departing from the faith of Christ, who 'became poor that we might become rich through his poverty.' (2 Corinthians 8:9) Let us never judge people in such a way—with the wrong motive of honoring humans. God is not partial, but if we showed partiality, we would be "rendering wicked decisions." (Job 34:19) With a desire to please God, surely we will not succumb to the temptation to show favoritism or to 'admire personalities for the sake of our own benefit.'—Jude 4, 16.

<sup>5</sup> James identifies the truly rich and urges that love be shown to all impartially. (James 2:5-9) 'God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.' This is so because the poor are often more responsive to the good news. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29) As a class, the materially rich oppress others with regard to debts, wages, and legal actions. They speak evil of Christ and persecute us because we bear his name. But let it be our determination to obey "the kingly law," which requires neighbor love—being equally loving toward rich and poor. (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-40) Since God requires this, showing favoritism is "working a sin."

5. Who has God chosen to be "rich in faith," and how do the materially rich often act?

## 'Mercy Exults Over Judgment'

<sup>6</sup> If we unmercifully show favoritism, we are lawbreakers. (James 2:10-13) By taking a false step in this regard, we become offenders against all of God's laws. Israelites who did not commit adultery but who were thieves became transgressors of the Mosaic Law. As Christians, we are judged by "the law of a free people"—spiritual Israel in the new covenant, having its law in their hearts.—Jeremiah 31:31-33.

<sup>7</sup> If we claim to have faith but persist in showing favoritism, we are in danger. Those who are unloving and merciless will have their judgment without mercy. (Matthew 7:1, 2) James says: "Mercy exults triumphantly over judgment." If we accept the guidance of Jehovah's holy spirit by showing mercy in all our dealings, we will not be condemned when we are judged. Rather, we will experience mercy and will thus triumph over strict justice or adverse judgment.

## Faith Produces Fine Works

<sup>8</sup> Besides making us loving and merciful, faith produces other fine works. (James 2:14-26) Of course, professed faith that lacks works is not going to save us. True, we cannot earn a righteous standing with God by works of the Law. (Romans 4:2-5) James is talking about works motivated, not by a law code, but by faith and love. If we are moved by such qualities, we will not merely express kind wishes for a needy fellow worshiper. We will give material aid to an unclad or hungry brother or sister. James asks: 'If you tell a needy brother: "Go in peace, keep warm and well fed" but do not provide the

6. How would we be lawbreakers if we did not deal mercifully with others?

7. Why can those continuing to show favoritism not expect mercy from God?

8. What is the situation of a person who says he has faith but lacks works?

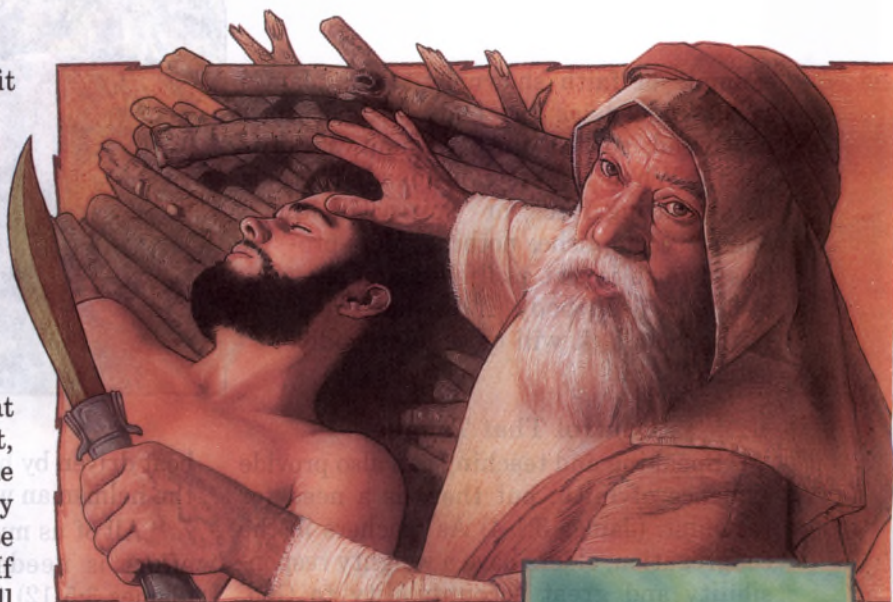
necessities, of what benefit is that?' None. (Job 31:16-22) Such "faith" is lifeless!

<sup>9</sup> We may be associating with God's people to some extent, but only wholehearted works can back up our claim that we have faith. It is fine if we have rejected the Trinity doctrine and believe that there is one true God. Yet, mere belief is not faith. "The demons believe," and they "shudder" fearfully because destruction awaits them. If we truly have faith, it will move us to produce such works as preaching the good news and providing food and clothing for needy fellow believers. James asks: "Do you care to know, O empty man [not filled with accurate knowledge of God], that faith apart from works is inactive?" Yes, faith calls for action.

<sup>10</sup> The faith of the godly patriarch Abraham moved him to action. As "the father of all those having faith," he was "declared righteous by works after he had offered up Isaac his son upon the altar." (Romans 4:11, 12; Genesis 22:1-14) What if Abraham had lacked faith that God could resurrect Isaac and fulfill His promise of a seed through him? Then Abraham would never have tried to offer up his son. (Hebrews 11:19) It was by Abraham's obedient works that "his faith was perfected," or made complete. Thereby, "the scripture [Genesis 15:6] was fulfilled which says: 'Abraham put faith in Jehovah, and it was counted to him as righteousness.'" Abraham's works in trying to

9. What shows that we have faith?

10. Why is Abraham called "the father of all those having faith"?



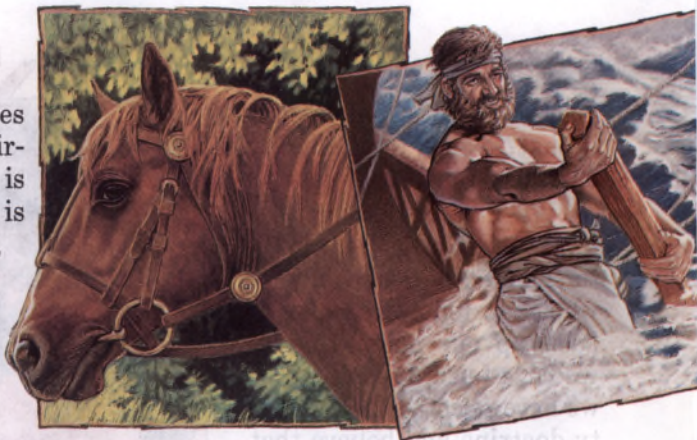
offer up Isaac confirmed God's earlier pronouncement that Abraham was righteous. By works of faith, he showed his love for God and came to be called "Jehovah's friend."

<sup>11</sup> A b r a h a m proved "that a man is to be declared righteous by works, and not by faith alone." That was also true of Rahab, a harlot in Jericho. She was "declared righteous by works, after she had received the [Israelite] messengers hospitably and sent them out by another way" so that they eluded their Canaanite enemies. Before meeting Israel's spies, she recognized Jehovah as the true God, and her subsequent words and abandonment of prostitution gave evidence of her faith. (Joshua 2:9-11; Hebrews 11:31) After this second

11. What evidence of faith do we have in the case of Rahab?



example of faith shown by works, James says: "Indeed, as the body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." When a person is dead, there is no animating force, or "spirit," in him, and he accomplishes nothing. Mere professed faith is just as lifeless and useless as a dead body. If we have real faith, though, it will move us to godly action.



### Control That Tongue!

<sup>12</sup> Speaking and teaching can also provide evidence of faith, but there is a need for restraint. (James 3:1-4) As teachers in the congregation, elders have a weighty responsibility and great accountability to God. Hence, they should humbly examine their motives and qualifications. Besides knowledge and ability, these men must have a deep love for God and for fellow believers. (Romans 12:3, 16; 1 Corinthians 13:3, 4) Elders must base their counsel on the Scriptures. If an elder were to err in his teaching and this resulted in problems for others, he would be judged adversely by God through Christ. Elders should therefore be humble and studious, faithfully adhering to God's Word.

<sup>13</sup> Even fine teachers—in fact, all of us—"stumble many times" because of imperfection. Stumbling in word is one of the most frequent and potentially damaging shortcomings. James says: "If anyone does not stumble in word, this one is a perfect man, able to bridle also his whole body." Unlike Jesus Christ, we do not have perfect tongue control. If we did, we could control the other members of our body. After all, bridles and bits make horses go where we direct, and by means of a small rudder, even a large

boat driven by hard winds can be steered as the helmsman wishes.

<sup>14</sup> All of us must honestly admit that real effort is needed to control the tongue. (James 3:5-12) Compared to a horse, a bridle is small; so is a rudder in comparison with a ship. And when compared with the human body, the tongue is small "and yet makes great brags." Since the Scriptures make it clear that boasting displeases God, let us seek his help to refrain from it. (Psalm 12:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 4:7) May we also restrain our tongue when provoked, remembering that it takes only a spark to set a forest aflame. As James indicates, "the tongue is a fire" with ability to cause great damage. (Proverbs 18:21) Why, an unruly tongue "is constituted a world of unrighteousness"! Every evil trait of this ungodly world is associated with the uncontrolled tongue. It is responsible for such damaging things as slander and false teaching. (Leviticus 19:16; 2 Peter 2:1) What do you think? Should not our faith move us to work hard at controlling our tongue?

<sup>15</sup> An unbridled tongue 'spots us up' completely. For instance, if we are caught lying repeatedly, we may become known as liars.

12. What should be done by elders in the congregation?

13. Why do we stumble in word?

14. How does James stress the need for effort in order to control the tongue?

15. What harm may be done by the unbridled tongue?



How, though, does an unruly tongue 'set the wheel of natural life aflame'? By making life like a vicious circle. A whole congregation may be upset by one uncontrolled tongue. James mentions "Gehenna," the Valley of Hinnom. Once used for child sacrifice, it became a dump for the disposal of Jerusalem's refuse by fire. (Jeremiah 7:31) So Gehenna is a symbol of annihilation. In a sense, Gehenna has lent its destructive power to the unruly tongue. If we do not bridle our tongue, we ourselves may become victims of the blaze we have started. (Matthew 5:22) We may even be expelled from the congregation for reviling someone.—1 Corinthians 5:11-13.

<sup>16</sup> As you may know from reading God's Word, Jehovah decreed that man should

16. In view of the damage that can be done by an unruly tongue, what should we do?

have animal creation in subjection. (Genesis 1:28) And all kinds of creatures have been tamed. For instance, trained falcons have been used in hunting. The 'creeping things' James mentions may include serpents controlled by snake charmers. (Psalm 58:4, 5) Man can even control whales, but as sinful humans we cannot fully tame the tongue. Nevertheless, we should avoid making abusive, cutting, or slanderous remarks. An unruly tongue can be a dangerous instrument filled with deadly poison. (Romans 3:13) Regrettably, the tongues of false teachers turned some early Christians away from God. So let us never allow ourselves to be overcome by venomous apostate expressions, whether spoken or written.—1 Timothy 1:18-20; 2 Peter 2:1-3.

<sup>17</sup> Faith in God and a desire to please him can protect us from apostasy and can prevent us from using the tongue inconsistently. Pointing to the inconsistency of some, James says that 'with the tongue we bless our Father, Jehovah, and curse men who have come into existence in God's likeness.' (Genesis 1:26) Jehovah is our Father in that he "gives to all persons life and breath and all things." (Acts 17:24, 25) He is also the Father of anointed Christians in a spiritual sense. All of us are "in the likeness of God" as to mental and moral qualities, including the love, justice, and wisdom that distinguish us from animals. So, then, how should we act if we have faith in Jehovah?

<sup>18</sup> If we were to curse men, that would mean that we would invoke, or call down, evil upon them. Since we are not divinely inspired prophets authorized to call down evil on anyone, such speech would be evidence of hatred that would make our

17, 18. What inconsistency is pointed out at James 3:9-12, and what should we do in this regard?

blessing of God vain. It is not proper for both "blessing and cursing" to come forth from the same mouth. (Luke 6:27, 28; Romans 12:14, 17-21; Jude 9) How sinful it would be to sing praises to God at meetings and later speak evil of fellow believers! Both sweet and bitter water cannot bubble forth from the same fountain. As "a fig tree cannot produce olives or a vine figs," salt water cannot produce sweet water. Something is spiritually wrong if we, who should speak what is good, persistently utter bitter words. If we have fallen into that practice, let us pray for Jehovah's help to stop speaking in such a way.—Psalm 39:1.



### Act With Wisdom From Above

<sup>19</sup> All of us need wisdom to say and do things befitting those who have faith. (James 3:13-18) If we have reverential fear of God, he grants us heavenly wisdom, the ability to use knowledge aright. (Proverbs 9:10; Hebrews 5:14) His Word teaches us how to display "a mildness that belongs to wisdom." And because we are mild, we promote congregational peace. (1 Corinthians 8:1, 2) Any who brag about being great teachers of fellow believers are 'lying against Christian truth,' which condemns their egotism. (Galatians 5:26) Their "wisdom" is "earthly"—characteristic of sinful humans alienated from God. It is "animal," being the product of fleshly inclinations. Why, it is even "demonic," for wicked spirits are proud! (1 Timothy 3:6) Let us therefore act with wisdom and humility so that we do nothing to create an atmosphere wherein such 'vile things' as slander and favoritism can flourish.

19. If we are guided by heavenly wisdom, how may we affect others?

<sup>20</sup> "Wisdom from above is first of all chaste," making us clean morally and spiritually. (2 Corinthians 7:11) It is "peaceable," moving us to pursue peace. (Hebrews 12:14) Heavenly wisdom makes us "reasonable," not dog-

matic and hard to deal with. (Philippians 4:5) Wisdom from above is "ready to obey," promoting obedience to divine teaching and cooperation with Jehovah's organization. (Romans 6:17) Wisdom from above also makes us merciful, compassionate. (Jude 22, 23) Being full of "good fruits," it prompts concern for others and actions in harmony with goodness, righteousness, and truth. (Ephesians 5:9) And as peacemakers, we enjoy "the fruit of righteousness" that thrives under peaceful conditions.

<sup>21</sup> Clearly, then, faith moves us to action. It makes us impartial, merciful, and active in fine works. Faith helps us to control the tongue and to act with heavenly wisdom. But that is not all we can learn from this letter. James has further counsel that can help us to conduct ourselves in a manner befitting those who have faith in Jehovah.

20. How would you describe heavenly wisdom?  
21. According to James 2:1-3:18, to what actions should our faith in God move us?

### How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What is wrong with showing favoritism?
- ☐ How are faith and works related?
- ☐ Why is it so important to control the tongue?
- ☐ What is heavenly wisdom like?

# FAITH MAKES US PATIENT AND PRAYERFUL

*"Exercise patience; make your hearts firm, because the presence of the Lord has drawn close."*—JAMES 5:8.

**J**ESUS CHRIST'S long-awaited "presence" is now a fact. (Matthew 24:3-14) More than ever before, all who profess to have faith in God and Christ have reason to reflect on these words of the disciple James: "Exercise patience, . . . brothers, until the presence of the Lord. Look! The farmer keeps waiting for the precious fruit of the earth, exercising patience over it until he gets the early rain and the late rain. You too exercise patience; make your hearts firm, because the presence of the Lord has drawn close."—James 5:7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Those to whom James wrote his inspired letter needed to exercise patience and resolve various problems. Many were acting contrary to what was expected of those professing to have faith in God. For instance, something needed to be done about certain desires that had developed in some hearts. Tranquillity needed to be restored among those early Christians. They also required counsel on being patient and prayerful. As we consider what James told them, let us see how we can apply his words in our lives.

1. Why should we reflect on James 5:7, 8?
2. What were some of the problems faced by those to whom James wrote?



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## Wrong Desires Destructive

<sup>3</sup> Peace was lacking among some professed Christians, and wrong desires were the root cause of this situation. (James 4: 1-3) Contentiousness was causing disruption, and some were unlovingly judging their brothers. This was happening because cravings for sensual pleasure were carrying on a conflict

in their body members. We ourselves may need to pray for help to resist fleshly cravings for prestige, power, and possessions so that we do nothing to disrupt the congregation's peace. (Romans 7:21-25; 1 Peter 2: 11) Among some first-century Christians, covetousness had developed to the point of a hateful, murderous spirit. Since God would not fulfill their wrong desires, they kept fighting in an effort to attain their goals. If we have similar wrong desires, we may ask but will not receive, since our holy God does not answer such prayers.—Lamentations 3: 44; 3 John 9, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Worldliness, envy, and pride existed among certain early Christians. (James 4:

3. What were the causes of congregational strife, and what can we learn from this?
4. Why does James call some "adulteresses," and how should his statement affect us?

4-6) James calls some “adulteresses” because they were friends of the world and thus guilty of spiritual adultery. (Ezekiel 16:15-19, 25-45) Surely, we do not want to become worldly in attitude, speech, and actions, for that would make us God’s enemies. His Word shows us that “a tendency to envy” is part of the bad inclination, or “spirit,” in sinful humans. (Genesis 8:21; Numbers 16:1-3; Psalm 106:16, 17; Ecclesiastes 4:4) So if we realize that we need to fight envy, pride, or some other bad inclination, let us seek God’s help by holy spirit. That force, supplied by God’s undeserved kindness, is greater than “a tendency to envy.” And whereas Jehovah opposes the proud, he will give us undeserved kindness if we fight sinful tendencies.

<sup>5</sup> How can we receive God’s undeserved kindness? (James 4:7-10) To enjoy undeserved kindness from Jehovah, we must obey him, accept his provisions, and submit to whatever he wills. (Romans 8:28) We must also “oppose,” or ‘stand against,’ the Devil. He will ‘flee from us’ if we remain firm as supporters of Jehovah’s universal sovereignty. We have the help of Jesus, who restrains the world’s evil agencies so that nothing can do us permanent harm. And

5. To enjoy God’s undeserved kindness, what requirements must we meet?

## In Our Next Issue

Young People With a Secure Future

Jehovah, a God “Ready to Forgive”

Rich Rewards for Sacred Service

never forget this: By prayer, obedience, and faith, we draw close to God, and he proves to be near us.—2 Chronicles 15:2.

<sup>6</sup> Why does James apply the term “sinners” to some professing faith in God? Because they were guilty of “wars” and murderous hatred—attitudes unacceptable for Christians. (Titus 3:3) Their “hands,” filled with bad deeds, required cleansing. They also needed to purify their “hearts,” the seat of motivation. (Matthew 15:18, 19) Those “indecisive ones” vacillated between friendship with God and friendship with the world. Warned by their bad example, let us exercise unceasing vigilance so that such things do not wreck our faith.—Romans 7:18-20.

<sup>7</sup> James tells his readers to “give way to misery and mourn and weep.” If they did manifest godly sadness, it would be evidence of repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:10, 11) Today, some who say that they have faith are seeking friendship with the world. If any of us are pursuing such a course, should we not mourn over our weak spiritual state and take immediate steps to correct matters? Making needed adjustments and receiving God’s forgiveness will produce a feeling of exultation because of a clean conscience and the joyful prospect of everlasting life.—Psalm 51:10-17; 1 John 2:15-17.

## Do Not Judge One Another

<sup>8</sup> It is sinful to speak against a fellow believer. (James 4:11, 12) Yet some are critical of fellow Christians, perhaps as a result of their own self-righteous attitude or because they want to exalt themselves by downgrading others. (Psalm 50:20; Proverbs 3:29)

6. Why does James call some Christians “sinners”?

7. Why does James tell some to “mourn and weep”?

8, 9. Why should we not speak against or judge one another?

The Greek term rendered 'speak against' denotes hostility and implies making an exaggerated or false accusation. This amounts to judging a brother adversely. How is this 'speaking against and judging God's law'? Well, the scribes and the Pharisees 'adroitly set aside God's commandment' and judged by their own standards. (Mark 7:1-13) Similarly, if we condemned a brother that Jehovah would not condemn, would we not be 'judging God's law' and sinfully imply that it is inadequate? And by unjustly criticizing our brother, we would not be fulfilling the law of love.—Romans 13:8-10.

<sup>9</sup> Let us remember this: "One there is that is lawgiver and judge"—Jehovah. His 'law is perfect,' not deficient. (Psalm 19:7; Isaiah 33:22) God alone has the right to set standards and rules for salvation. (Luke 12:5) So James asks: "Who are you to be judging your neighbor?" It is not our prerogative to judge and condemn others. (Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 14:4, 10) Reflecting on God's sovereignty and impartiality and our own sinfulness should help us to refrain from self-righteously judging others.

### **Avoid Boastful Self-Confidence**

<sup>10</sup> We should always take Jehovah and his law into account. (James 4:13-17) Disregarding God, the self-confident say: 'Today or tomorrow we will go to some city, spend a year there, do business, and make profits.' If we 'lay up treasure for ourselves but are not rich toward God,' our life may end tomorrow and we may have no opportunity to serve Jehovah. (Luke 12:16-21) As James says, we are like a morning mist "appearing for a little while and then disappearing." (1 Chronicles 29:15) Only by exercising faith in Jehovah can we hope for lasting joy and everlasting life.

10. Why should we take Jehovah into account in our daily lives?

<sup>11</sup> Rather than boastfully ignoring God, we ought to take this position: "If Jehovah wills, we shall live and also do this or that." Saying, "If Jehovah wills" indicates that we are trying to act in harmony with his will. It may be necessary to do business to support our family, to travel in the Kingdom work, and so forth. But let us not brag. "Such taking of pride is wicked" because it ignores dependence on God.—Psalm 37:5; Proverbs 21:4; Jeremiah 9:23, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Apparently to conclude his statements about self-assurance and boasting, James says: "If one knows how to do what is right and yet does not do it, it is a sin for him." Every Christian should humbly acknowledge his dependence on God. If he does not do so, "it is a sin for him." Of course, the same principle applies to any failure to do what faith in God requires of us.—Luke 12:47, 48.

### **Warning Regarding the Rich**

<sup>13</sup> Because some early Christians had become materialistic or were admiring the wealthy, James makes strong statements regarding certain rich men. (James 5:1-6) Worldly men using their riches wrongly would 'weep, howling over the miseries to come upon them' when God repaid them according to their deeds. In those days, the wealth of many people consisted chiefly of such things as garments, grain, and wine. (Joel 2:19; Matthew 11:8) Some of these can rot or "become moth-eaten," but James is stressing the worthlessness of wealth, not its perishability. Though gold and silver do not rust, if we were to hoard them, they would be as valueless as things that have rusted. "Rust" indicates that material

11. What does it mean to say, "If Jehovah wills"?

12. What is meant by the words of James 4:17?

13. What does James say about those misusing their riches?

riches have not been put to good use. Therefore, all of us should remember that “something like fire” is what those trusting in their material possessions “have stored up in the last days” when God’s anger comes upon them. Since we are living in “the time of the end,” such words have special meaning for us.—Daniel 12:4; Romans 2:5.

<sup>14</sup> The wealthy often defraud their harvesters, whose withheld wages ‘cry out’ for retribution. (Compare Genesis 4:9, 10.) Worldly rich men “have lived in luxury.” Overindulging in sensual pleasure, they build up fatty, unresponsive hearts and will still be doing this on the “day” set for their slaughter. They ‘condemn and murder the righteous one.’ James asks: “Is he not opposing you?” But another rendering is, “the righteous one; he is not opposing you.” In any case, we should not be partial to the rich. We must keep spiritual interests first in life.—Matthew 6:25-33.

### Faith Helps Us to Exercise Patience

<sup>15</sup> Having commented on oppressive rich ones of the world, James next encourages oppressed Christians to exercise patience. (James 5:7, 8) If believers bore their hardships patiently, they would be rewarded for

14. How do the rich often act, and what should we do about that?

15, 16. Why is it so important to exercise patience?

### How Would You Answer?

- ☐ Why did some early Christians need to change their attitude and conduct?
- ☐ What warning does James give the rich?
- ☐ Why should we exercise patience?
- ☐ Why should we pray regularly?

faithfulness during Christ’s presence, when judgment would come upon their oppressors. (Matthew 24:37-41) Those early Christians needed to be like the farmer who patiently waits for the early rain of autumn, when he can plant, and the late rain of springtime that results in fruitage. (Joel 2:23) We too need to exercise patience and make our hearts firm, especially since “the presence of the Lord” Jesus Christ is here!

<sup>16</sup> Why should we be patient? (James 5:9-12) Patience helps us not to groan or sigh when fellow believers vex us. If we “heave sighs against one another” with a bad spirit, we will be condemned by the Judge Jesus Christ. (John 5:22) Now that his “presence” has begun and he “is standing before the doors,” let us promote peace by being patient with our brothers, who face many tests of faith. Our own faith is strengthened when we remember that God rewarded Job because he patiently endured his trials. (Job 42:10-17) If we exercise faith and patience, we will see that “Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful.”—Micah 7:18, 19.

<sup>17</sup> If we are not patient, we may misuse the tongue when under stress. For example, we may rashly make oaths. “Stop swearing,” says James, warning against frivolous oath taking. Constantly affirming statements with oaths also seems hypocritical. Hence, we should simply speak the truth, letting our yes mean yes, and our no, no. (Matthew 5:33-37) Of course, James is not saying that it is wrong to take an oath to tell the truth in court.

### Faith and Our Prayers

<sup>18</sup> Prayer must play a major role in our life if we are to control our speech, exercise patience, and maintain a healthy faith in

17. Why does James say, “Stop swearing”?

18. Under what circumstances should we “carry on prayer” and “sing psalms”?



*Some early Christians needed to be more patient with fellow believers*

God. (James 5:13-20) Especially when under trial should we “carry on prayer.” If we are cheerful, let us “sing psalms,” as Jesus and his apostles did when he instituted the Memorial of his death. (Mark 14:26, footnote) At times, we may be filled with such gratitude to God that we sing praises even in the heart. (1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19) And what a joy it is to extol Jehovah in song at Christian meetings!

<sup>19</sup> We may not feel like singing if we are ailing spiritually, perhaps because of wrong conduct or a failure to feed regularly at Jehovah’s table. If we are in that state, let us humbly call for the elders so that they may ‘pray over us.’ (Proverbs 15:29) They will also ‘grease us with oil in Jehovah’s name.’

19. What should we do if we become spiritually sick, and why take such a step?

As soothing oil on a wound, their comforting words and Scriptural counsel will help to allay depression, doubt, fear. ‘The prayer of faith will make us well’ if it is backed up by our own faith. If the elders find that our spiritual sickness was caused by serious sin, they will kindly make clear our error and try to help us. (Psalm 141:5) And if we are repentant, we can have faith that God will hear their prayers and forgive us.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Openly confessing our sins to one another’ should serve as a restraint against sinning further. It should foster mutual compassion, a quality that will move us to “pray for one another.” We can have faith that this will be beneficial because prayer by ‘a righteous man’—one exercising faith and viewed as upright by God—

20. Why should we confess our sins and pray for one another?



*Christians need to be patient, loving, prayerful*

accomplishes much with Jehovah. (1 Peter 3:12) The prophet Elijah had weaknesses like ours, but his prayers were effective. He prayed, and it did not rain for three and a half years. When he prayed again, rain did fall.—1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 42-45; Luke 4:25.

<sup>21</sup> What if a member of the congregation is “misled from the truth,” deviating from right teaching and conduct? We may be able to turn him back from his error through Bible counsel, prayer, and other help. If we succeed, this keeps him under Christ’s ransom and saves him from spiritual death and condemnation to destruction. By helping the erring one, we cover a multitude of his sins. When the reprov’d sinner turns from his wrong course, repents, and seeks forgiveness, we will rejoice that we worked toward the covering over of his sins.—Psalm 32:1, 2; Jude 22, 23.

21. What may we be able to do if a fellow Christian is “misled from the truth”?

### Something for All of Us

<sup>22</sup> Clearly, the letter of James contains something beneficial for all of us. It shows us how to meet trials, counsels us against favoritism, and urges us to engage in upright works. James urges us to control the tongue, to resist worldly influence, and to promote peace. His words should also make us patient and prayerful.

<sup>23</sup> True, the letter of James was originally sent to anointed early Christians. Yet, all of us should let its counsel help us cling to our faith. James’ words can bolster faith that moves us to decisive action in God’s service. And this divinely inspired letter builds an enduring faith that makes us patient, prayerful Witnesses of Jehovah today, during “the presence of the Lord” Jesus Christ.

22, 23. How should we be affected by the words of James?

# THE MISHNAH

## and God's Law to Moses

“WE START with the impression that we join a conversation already long under way about topics we can never grasp . . . We . . . feel as if we are in a transit lounge at a distant airport. We understand the words people say, but we are baffled by their meanings and concerns, above all, by the urgency in their voices.” This is how Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner describes the feeling readers might have when first turning to the Mishnah. Neusner adds: “The Mishnah begins nowhere. It ends abruptly.”

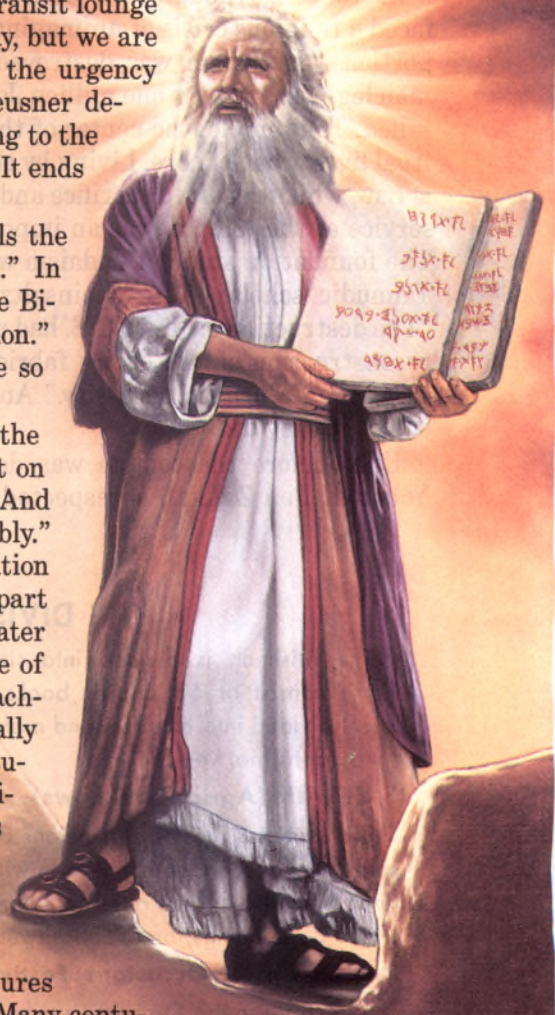
In *A History of Judaism*, Daniel Jeremy Silver calls the Mishnah “the constitutive text of rabbinic Judaism.” In fact, he further comments: “The *Mishnah* replaced the Bible as the core curriculum of continuing [Jewish] education.” Why would a book with such an obscure style become so important?

Part of the answer lies in this statement made in the Mishnah: “Moses received Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, Joshua to elders, and elders to prophets. And prophets handed it on to the men of the great assembly.” (Avot 1:1) The Mishnah claims to deal with information handed down to Moses at Mount Sinai—an unwritten part of God's Law to Israel. Men of the great assembly (later called the Sanhedrin) were viewed as part of a long line of wise scholars, or sages, who orally passed on certain teachings from generation to generation until these were finally recorded in the Mishnah. But is that factual? Who actually wrote the Mishnah, and why? Did its contents originate with Moses at Sinai? Does it have meaning for us today?

### Judaism Without a Temple

Belief in a divine oral law given in addition to the written Law of Moses was unknown when the Scriptures were being penned under inspiration.\* (Exodus 34:27) Many centuries later the Pharisees were the group within Judaism that developed and promoted this concept. During the first century C.E., the

\* For additional information, see pages 8-11 of the brochure *Will There Ever Be a World Without War?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



Sadducees and other Jews opposed this non-Biblical teaching. As long as the temple in Jerusalem was the center of Jewish worship, however, the issue of an oral law was secondary. Worship at the temple gave structure and a degree of stability to every Jew's existence.

In 70 C.E., though, the Jewish nation faced a religious crisis of unimaginable proportions. Jerusalem was destroyed by Roman legions, and over one million Jews were killed. The temple, the center of their spiritual lives, was no more. Living by the Mosaic Law, which required sacrifice and priestly service at the temple, was an impossibility. The foundation stone of Judaism was gone. Talmudic scholar Adin Steinsaltz writes: "The destruction . . . in 70 C.E. had made the reconstruction of the entire fabric of religious life an urgent necessity." And reconstruct it they did.

Even before the temple was destroyed, Yohanan Ben Zakkai, a respected disciple

of the Pharisaic leader Hillel, received permission from Vespasian (soon to be emperor) to move the spiritual center of Judaism and the Sanhedrin from Jerusalem to Yavneh. As Steinsaltz explains, after the destruction of Jerusalem, Yohanan Ben Zakkai "faced the challenge of establishing a new center for the people and helping them adjust to the new circumstances whereby religious ardor had to be diverted to another focal point now that the Temple had ceased to exist." That new focal point was the oral law.

With the temple in ruins, the Sadducees and other Jewish sects offered no compelling alternative. The Pharisees became the Jewish mainstream, absorbing the opposition. Emphasizing unity, the leading rabbis stopped calling themselves Pharisees, a term filled with sectarian and partisan implications. They became known simply as the rabbis, "the sages of Israel." These sages would create an edifice to house their concept of the oral law. It would be a spiritual

## THE DIVISIONS OF THE MISHNAH

The Mishnah is divided into six Orders. These consist of 63 smaller books, or tractates, divided into chapters and *mishnayot*, or paragraphs (not verses).

### 1. ZERAIM (Agricultural Laws)

These tractates include discussions on prayers said over food and in connection with agriculture. They also include rules on tithing, priestly portions, gleanings, and Sabbath years.

### 2. MOED (Holy Occasions, Festivals)

The tractates in this Order discuss laws relating to the Sabbath, the Day of Atonement, and other festivals.

### 3. NASHIM (Women, Marriage Law)

These are tractates discussing marriage and

divorce, vows, Nazirites, and cases of suspected adultery.

### 4. NEZIKIN (Damages and Civil Law)

The tractates in this Order cover subjects related to civil and property law, courts and penalties, the function of the Sanhedrin, idolatry, oaths, and Ethics of the Fathers (*Avot*).

### 5. KODASHIM (Sacrifices)

These tractates discuss regulations related to animal and grain offerings as well as dimensions of the temple.

### 6. TOHAROT (Purification Rituals)

This Order consists of tractates discussing ritual purity, bathing, washing of the hands, skin diseases, and impurity of different objects.

structure far less vulnerable to human attack than the temple.

### **Consolidation of the Oral Law**

Although the rabbinic academy at Yavneh (25 miles west of Jerusalem) was now the main center, other academies teaching the oral law began to spring up throughout Israel and even as far away as Babylon and Rome. However, this created a problem. Steinsaltz explains: "As long as all the sages were gathered together and the main work of scholarship was carried out by one group of men [in Jerusalem], the uniformity of tradition was preserved. But the proliferation of teachers and the establishment of separate schools created . . . a plethora of forms and methods of expression."

Teachers of the oral law were called Tannaim, a term derived from an Aramaic root meaning "to study," "to repeat," or "to teach." This emphasized their method of learning and teaching oral law by intense repetition and memorization. To facilitate memorization of oral traditions, each ruling or tradition was reduced to a brief, concise phrase. The fewer the words, the better. A stylized, poetic form was sought, and the phrases were often chanted, or sung. Yet, these rulings were disorganized, and they varied greatly from teacher to teacher.

The first rabbi to give specific form and structure to the many different oral traditions was Akiba ben Joseph (c. 50-135 C.E.). Concerning him, Steinsaltz writes: "His contemporaries compared his activity to the work of a laborer who goes out into the field and heaps into his basket whatever he finds at random, then returns home and arranges each species separately. Akiba had studied numerous disorganized subjects and classified them into distinct categories."

In the second century C.E.—over 60 years after Jerusalem's destruction—a second

major Jewish revolt against Rome was led by Bar Kokhba. Once more, rebellion brought disaster. Akiba and many of his disciples were among the nearly one million Jewish victims. Any hopes of rebuilding the temple were dashed as Roman Emperor Hadrian declared Jerusalem off limits to Jews, except on the anniversary of the temple's destruction.

The Tannaim who lived after Akiba had never seen the temple in Jerusalem. But the structured pattern of study in the traditions of the oral law became their "temple," or center of worship. The work begun by Akiba and his disciples in solidifying this structure of the oral law was taken up by the last of the Tannaim, Judah ha-Nasi.

### **The Makings of the Mishnah**

Judah ha-Nasi was a descendant of Hillel and Gamaliel.\* Born during the period of Bar Kokhba's revolt, he became the head of the Jewish community in Israel toward the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century C.E. The title ha-Nasi means "the prince," indicating the status he held in the eyes of his fellow Jews. He is often referred to simply as Rabbi. Judah ha-Nasi headed both his own academy and the Sanhedrin, first at Bet She'arim and later at Sepphoris in Galilee.

Realizing that future conflicts with Rome might endanger the very transmission of the oral law, Judah ha-Nasi determined to give it a structure that would ensure its preservation. He gathered at his academy the most outstanding scholars of his day. Each point and tradition of oral law was debated. The summations of these discussions were consolidated into incredibly succinct phrases, following a stringent pattern of poetic Hebrew prose.

\* See the article "Gamaliel—He Taught Saul of Tarsus," in *The Watchtower* of July 15, 1996.

These summations were organized into six major divisions, or Orders, according to main topics. Judah subdivided these into 63 sections, or tractates. The spiritual edifice was now complete. Up to this point, such traditions had always been transmitted orally. But as an added protection, the final revolutionary step was taken—that of putting everything down in writing. This impressive new written structure housing the oral law was called the Mishnah. The name Mishnah comes from the Hebrew root *sha-nah*’, meaning “to repeat,” “to study,” or “to teach.” It is the equivalent of the Aramaic *tena*’’, from which comes *tan-na-im*’, the term applied to teachers of the Mishnah.

The purpose of the Mishnah was not to set in place a definitive code. It dealt more with the exceptions, assuming that the reader knew the basic principles. Actually, it sum-

marized what was discussed and taught in the rabbinic academies during the period of Judah ha-Nasi. The Mishnah was meant to be an outline of the oral law for further debate, a skeletal form, or basic structure, on which to build.

Rather than revealing anything given to Moses at Mount Sinai, the Mishnah provides insight into the development of the oral law, a concept that began with the Pharisees. Information recorded in the Mishnah sheds some light on statements in the Christian Greek Scriptures and on certain discussions between Jesus Christ and the Pharisees. However, there is need for caution because ideas found in the Mishnah reflect Jewish viewpoints from the second century C.E. The Mishnah is the bridge between the second temple period and the Talmud.

## THE MISHNAH AND THE CHRISTIAN GREEK SCRIPTURES

**Matthew 12:1, 2:** “At that season Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath. His disciples got hungry and started to pluck heads of grain and to eat. At seeing this the Pharisees said to him: ‘Look! Your disciples are doing what it is not lawful to do on the sabbath.’” The Hebrew Scriptures do not forbid what Jesus’ disciples did. But in the Mishnah we find a list of 39 activities forbidden by the rabbis on the Sabbath.—Shabbat 7:2.

**Matthew 15:3:** “In reply [Jesus] said to them: ‘Why is it you also overstep the commandment of God because of your tradition?’” The Mishnah confirms this attitude. (Sanhedrin 11:3) We read: “Greater stringency applies to [the observance of] the words of the Scribes than to [the observance of] the words of the [written] Law. If a man said, ‘There is no obligation to wear phylacteries’ so that he transgresses the

words of the Law, he is not culpable; [but if he said], ‘There should be in them five partitions’, so that he adds to the words of the Scribes, he is culpable.”—*The Mishnah*, by Herbert Danby, page 400.

**Ephesians 2:14:** “He [Jesus] is our peace, he who made the two parties one and destroyed the wall in between that fenced them off.” The Mishnah says: “Inside the Temple Mount was a latticed railing (the *Soreg*), ten hand-breadths high.” (Middot 2:3) Gentiles were forbidden to pass beyond this point and to enter the inner courtyards. The apostle Paul may have alluded to this wall in a figurative way in writing to the Ephesians in 60 or 61 C.E., when it was still standing. The symbolic wall was the Law covenant, which had long separated Jews and Gentiles. On the basis of Christ’s death in 33 C.E., however, that wall was abolished.

# ONESIPHORUS

## A Courageous Comforter

**“KEEP** in mind those in prison bonds as though you have been bound with them, and those being ill-treated.” (Hebrews 13:3) When the apostle Paul wrote these words about 61 C.E., he himself had already experienced imprisonment on more than one occasion and was to do so again before his death as a martyr. (Acts 16:23, 24; 22:24; 23:35; 24:27; 2 Corinthians 6:5; 2 Timothy 2:9; Philemon 1) The urgency existed then, as it does now, for congregations to care for fellow believers undergoing trials of their faith.

One first-century disciple particularly attentive to that need was Onesiphorus. He visited Paul during his second imprisonment in Rome. Concerning him, the apostle wrote: “May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often brought me refreshment, and he did not become ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he happened to be in Rome, he diligently looked for me and found me.” (2 Timothy 1:16, 17) Have you ever taken time to ponder over what those few words really mean? Doing so likely will increase your appreciation for Onesiphorus. You will see that he was a courageous comforter.

### Paul’s Second Imprisonment

After being released from his first imprisonment, Paul was again in a Roman jail

but under different conditions. Friends previously had access to him in his own rented house, and he seemed confident that release was imminent. Now forsaken by the majority, martyrdom loomed.—Acts 28:30; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16; Philemon 22.



Paul was in prison on this occasion about 65 C.E. Approximately a year earlier—in July 64 C.E.—fire swept through Rome, causing extensive damage in 10 of the city’s 14 regions. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, Emperor Nero was unable to “banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. . . . Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.”

It was in an atmosphere like this and with similar prospects that Paul found himself in prison again. No wonder he was so grateful for the visits of his friend Onesiphorus! But let us look at the same situation from the standpoint of Onesiphorus.

### Visiting Paul the Prisoner

Apparently, Onesiphorus' family lived in Ephesus. (2 Timothy 1:18; 4:19) Whether Onesiphorus had come to the capital of the empire for his own business or specifically to visit Paul is not stated. In any case, the apostle remarked: 'When Onesiphorus happened to be in Rome, he often brought me refreshment.' (2 Timothy 1:16, 17) What kind of refreshment? Though Onesiphorus' assistance may well have included material help, his presence evidently also served as a tonic to strengthen and encourage Paul. In fact, some translations read: "He has often cheered my spirits," or "he has often comforted me."

Fulfilling a desire to visit a Christian prisoner in Rome at that time presented challenges. Unlike during the days of Paul's first imprisonment, the Roman Christians evidently had lost touch with him. In a large city like Rome, it was no easy task to find one obscure prisoner among the large number who must have been in bonds for various offenses. Hence, a diligent search was necessary. Scholar Giovanni Rostagno describes matters this way: "The difficulties may have been of diverse nature. Above all, uncommon prudence was needed in the search. Gathering information here and there and appearing to be anxious to discover the jail that held a fanatical old prisoner implicated in numerous crimes may have aroused undue suspicion."

Writer P. N. Harrison draws a vivid picture of the same situation, saying: "We seem to catch glimpses of one purposeful face in a drifting crowd, and follow with quickening interest this stranger from far coasts of the Aegean, as he threads the maze of unfamiliar streets, knocking at many doors, following up every clue, warned of the risks he is taking but not

to be turned from his quest; till in some obscure prison-house a known voice greets him, and he discovers Paul chained to a Roman soldier." If that place was anything like other Roman jails, it was probably a cold, dark, and filthy place, where chains and afflictions of all sorts abounded.

To be recognized as the friend of a prisoner like Paul was risky business. It was even more dangerous to keep on visiting him. To identify oneself openly as a Christian was to run the risk of arrest and death by torture. But Onesiphorus was not content to visit just once or twice. He was neither ashamed nor afraid to do so "often." Onesiphorus truly lived up to the meaning of his name, "Profit Bearer," providing courageous and loving assistance despite the dangers.

Why did Onesiphorus do all of this? Brian Rapske noted: "Prison was a place not only of physical suffering, but a place of profound anxiety for the stresses it brought to the prisoner. In such a context, the *physical presence and verbal encouragements* of helpers could be a great boost emotionally to the prisoner." Onesiphorus evidently realized that and courageously stuck by his friend. How much Paul must have appreciated such help!

### What Became of Onesiphorus?

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul sent greetings to the household of Onesiphorus and said of him: "May the Lord grant him to find mercy from Jehovah in that day." (2 Timothy 1:18; 4:19) Many think that the words "in that day" refer to God's day of judgment and thus conclude that Onesiphorus had died. If that were the case, perhaps "Onesiphorus had ventured into this dangerous quarter once too often, and paid . . . the penalty with his life," suggests



**Onesiphorus courageously comforted the imprisoned apostle Paul**

P. N. Harrison. Of course, Onesiphorus may simply have been away from home, or Paul may have included him in the greetings sent to his entire household.

Some believe that there is special significance in the statement: "May the Lord grant him to find mercy from Jehovah in that day." They feel that these words justify intercessory prayers in behalf of departed souls living and perhaps suffering in some spiritual realm. However, such an idea conflicts with the Scriptural teaching that the dead are not conscious of anything. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) Even if Onesiphorus had died, Paul was simply expressing a wish that his friend would find mercy from God. "That wish we are entitled to entertain for all," says R. F. Horton. "But to pray for the

dead, and to offer Masses for them, is a thought remote from the [apostle's] mind."

### **Let Us Be Loyal Comforters**

Whether Onesiphorus actually lost his life while assisting Paul or not, he certainly risked it to find the apostle and visit him in prison. And there can be no question that Paul appreciated the much needed support and encouragement he got from Onesiphorus.

When fellow Christians experience trial, persecution, or imprisonment, we may be in a position to comfort and encourage them. May we therefore pray in their behalf and lovingly do all we can to help them. (John 13:35; 1 Thessalonians 5:25) Like Onesiphorus, let us be courageous comforters.

# SLEEPLESS NIGHTS THAT WERE BENEFICIAL



**E**VEN kings have sleepless nights.

A powerful Persian ruler in the fifth century B.C.E., Ahasuerus, experienced one of them. Perhaps feeling that he had neglected some duty, he had the royal records read to him. He learned that a faithful servant, Mordecai, had thwarted an assassination plot but had not been rewarded.

Ahasuerus determined to correct this oversight immediately. The beneficial effects of his actions on God's people indicate that the king's insomnia was divinely induced.—Esther 6:1-10.

The congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in the South African coastal town of Hermanus has reason to remember this section of the Bible. They used to meet in a rented hall. For many years they had tried to purchase property to build their own Kingdom Hall. Eventually, in 1991, a prime site was offered by the Town Council.

However, some opposed the sale of this site to Jehovah's Witnesses. After a delay of several months, the congregation was informed that a three-year moratorium had been placed on the sale of property to churches, and the offer of land was withdrawn. In May 1993 the congregation wrote again, asking the council to reconsider their decision. They received a one-sentence letter in reply, stating that the moratorium was still binding.

In October of that year, one of the town councillors had a sleepless night. She passed the time paging through old council minutes to see if any matters needed attention. The letter written by the Witnesses asking the council to reconsider its decision caught her attention. Thus she decided to place the matter on the agenda for their next meeting. She wanted to point out that Jehovah's Witnesses had applied for land before the moratorium was placed on property for churches.

In due course the congregation was allocated the same property that had originally been offered to them in 1991! It is on the main road, easily accessible to congregation members and interested ones. They have built a fine Kingdom Hall, which was dedicated to Jehovah on October 5, 1996.

While the congregation regrets the councillor's inconvenience of a sleepless night, she may be consoled by the fact that even King Ahasuerus had one. And the outcome in both cases was beneficial. The congregation at Hermanus is certainly most grateful to have their own Kingdom Hall, a center for pure worship and theocratic training in this popular coastal town.—Hebrews 10:24, 25.