



The WATCHTOWER

Announcing
**JEHOVAH'S
KINGDOM**

MARCH 1, 1973

Semimonthly

RIGHTS OR DUTIES—WHICH?

IS CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE
SUCCEEDING IN AFRICA?

HOW DO YOU VIEW
MATERIAL POSSESSIONS?

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"YOU ARE MY WITNESSES," SAYS JEHOVAH.—Isa. 43:12

THE PURPOSE OF "THE WATCHTOWER"

Every watchtower has its purpose. It serves as an elevated place for a wide-awake person with sharp vision. It enables him to see far ahead into the distance and tell those below for whom he is a watchman what is drawing near, whether it is a danger against which to prepare or it is something good over which to be glad with strong faith and hope.

Because of having the name "The Watchtower" this magazine justly has to render a similar useful service to the people of all nations. This is an international magazine and makes no racial distinctions, for we are all facing a common world danger; we are all hoping for a common good.

Ever since "The Watchtower" began to be published in July of 1879 it has looked ahead into the future, always striving to aid its readers to advance in knowledge and to gain a clearer picture of the glorious new order of things that is in store for righteous mankind. No, "The Watchtower" is no inspired prophet, but it follows and explains a Book of prophecy the predictions in which have proved to be unerring and unfailing till now. "The Watchtower" is therefore under safe guidance. It may be read with confidence, for its statements may be checked against that prophetic Book.

Among the many nations of today there are hundreds of differing religions. Which one does this magazine present? Not the confused religions of Christendom, but the religion of the oldest sacred Book on earth. Which Book? The Sacred Bible of the Holy Scriptures, written by inspiration in the name of the Creator of heaven and earth, the only living and true God.

The sacred, nonpolitical purpose of "The Watchtower" is accordingly to encourage and promote study of the Holy Bible and to give our many readers the needed unsectarian help to understand that Book of true religion and infallible prophecy. Thus this magazine will be helping them to prove worthy of perfect life and happiness in God's promised new order under His everlasting kingdom of righteousness.

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"They will all be taught by Jehovah."—John 6:45; Isaiah 54:13

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'OH, WE all worship the same God!' How often is that expression heard when the subject comes up as to differences in religion, or when a Christian minister wants to tell others about God!

But is that statement accurate and true? There are many different religions. Do they all worship the same kind of God or does each one, instead, portray God with more or less differing characteristics?

The Christian witnesses of Jehovah believe and teach that God is a spirit, that he is unique, that there is none like Him. As Jesus said: "God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) Do you believe this is true of God? The Witnesses also believe that he is the Most High, above all others, that he has always existed, that he never had a beginning. "That people may know that you, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth." Yes, He is "the King of eternity." (Ps. 83:18; 1 Tim. 1:17) Do you believe this? The Witnesses believe that God is almighty, unlimited in power and wisdom; that he is flawless in justice, perfect in love and wholly unselfish. Do you believe this to be true of your God? You will if you believe in the God of the Holy Bible.—Gen. 17:1; Deut. 32:4; Rom. 11:33; 1 John 4:8.

But do the great majority of the members of the churches of Christendom be-

What Kind of GOD

Do You Worship?

lieve in this kind of God? Does your church teach the Trinity? Many church members find a description or definition of the Trinity very difficult to understand. In fact, some religious authorities discourage their clergy from trying to explain it to their flocks. This teaching is most completely enunciated in what is called the Athanasian Creed. Among other things, that creed defines the Trinity as "The Father Incomprehensible, the Son Incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost Incomprehensible. The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal and yet they are not Three Eternals but One Eternal. . . . So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet there are not Three AlUITIES but One Almighty. . . . In this Trinity none is afore or after Other. None is greater or less than Another." If you find this description of God hard to understand and to believe, why not ask

your clergyman if your church subscribes to this Athanasian Creed?

Would you like to know what the Bible says about God? Well, instead of teaching that God is composed of three persons, all equally incomprehensible, eternal, almighty, and so forth, the Bible plainly says: "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." (Deut. 6:4) Search if you will, there is no statement in either the Hebrew or the Christian Greek Scriptures that God consists of three persons and that he shares his eternalness and omnipotence with two others. Even as the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* admits: "The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not taught in the O[ld] T[estament]. . . . The mystery of the Holy Trinity was not revealed to the Chosen People of the OT." "One should not speak of Trinitarianism in the New Testament without serious qualification." In fact, this authority dates the dogma of "one God in three Persons" to the last quarter of the fourth century. "Among the Apostolic Fathers, there has been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective." —Vol. XIV, pp. 306, 295, 299.

Furthermore, in your search in the Scriptures you will find that Jesus, far from claiming equality with his Father, Jehovah God, stated: "The Father is greater than I am." Far from his being coeternal with his Father, we read that Jesus is "the firstborn of all creation," and "the beginning of the creation by God." Some argue that "firstborn" here merely means that Jesus is the chief one and not that he was actually born. But still, if he is the first or chief of *creation*, then he was created and he did have a beginning!

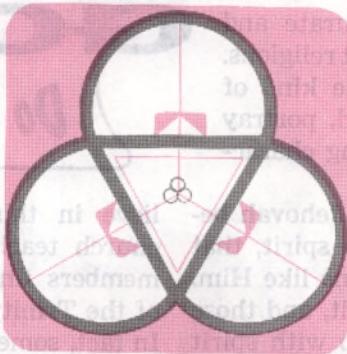
Surely simple logic tells us that the Father and Creator is older than the Son and the creation, does it not? And far from Jesus Christ's being almighty, when on earth he prayed to his Father for help. —John 14:28; Col. 1:15; Rev. 3:14; Heb. 5:7, 8.

Now consider another aspect of the God you worship. No doubt you believe that God is good. But does your church subscribe to the teaching that God punishes the wicked in an eternal torment of hellfire? As Billy Graham, currently America's most popular evangelist, once put it:

"The teaching of a literal hell is found in the creeds of all the leading churches. . . . God considered hell real enough that He sent his only Son to the world to save men from hell." Regarding such doctrine, he also said, "I grant that it is the hardest of all the teachings of Christianity to receive."

The current Roman Catholic view of hell is set out in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967, Vol. 6, p. 1005): "It is impossible to soften the severity of Jesus' warning against unrepented sin, and the sentimentalism that seeks to do so is a distortion of His teaching and that of the N[new] T[estament] as a whole. The chief characteristic of hell as depicted in the NT is its fire that is unquenchable . . . and everlasting. . . . Whatever may be implied by the terms 'unquenchable fire' and 'everlasting fire,' they should not be explained away as meaningless."

Now, what about these church creeds that depict God as torturing bad people in a purgatory or an unquenchable, everlasting hellfire? Is this the kind of God you



The Trinity—did you know that even some who teach it admit that it is not found in the Bible?

worship? What does the Bible say on this matter?

Surely if God is righteous and altogether just he will bless the good and punish the bad. But how does God punish the incorrigibly wicked? The Bible plainly tells us that "the wages sin pays is death," and death is the absence of life. You know that one would have to be alive and conscious of pain to suffer in a fiery hell. Contrariwise, the Bible says that those who do not believe the Son will "be destroyed," be wiped out of existence, annihilated.—Rom. 6:23; John 3:16.

Do you recall how God warned Adam that if he ate of the forbidden fruit he would die? No, God did not say he would be tormented. So upon his eating of that fruit Adam was sentenced, not to eternal torment, but to death: "In the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground . . . For dust you are and to dust you will return." This Adam did at the end of 930 years.—Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:19; 5:5.

You know that "God is love." The Bible says so. (1 John 4:8) It also states that God is merciful and delights in loving-kindness. (Mic. 7:18, 19) To punish persons forever in eternal torment is neither loving nor merciful, is it? Furthermore, the Bible tells us that God is perfect in justice. (Deut. 32:4) To torture a person for all eternity for having failed to get onto the narrow road that leads to life would not be justice. (Matt. 7:13, 14) Why, imperfect men make laws forbidding cruel and unusual punishments, even to animals. Are they more just than God? If your church teaches eternal torment, ask your clergyman this question, and see what he says.

The teaching of eternal torment impugns God's love, wisdom, justice and power and so contradicts the Bible. But God's Word vindicates these attributes of God. Adam and Eve were justly required to show appreciation for life and its blessings. By disobeying God they showed their lack of appreciation for God's blessings. Yet God showed his love by providing his Son to die so that all who had not sinned willfully, as did Adam, might have an opportunity for eternal life. (John 3:16) These blessings will be made available to humankind by means of a resurrection from the dead and by means of God's kingdom. By this arrangement Jehovah God at once magnifies his justice, his love, his wisdom and his power.—John 5:28, 29.

Yes, the Bible shows Jehovah God to be one Person (not three in one). It also shows him to be infinite in wisdom and power, perfect in justice, supremely unselfish, altogether loving. If this is the kind of God you worship you will be happy to know that there are more than one and a half million others who worship the same kind of God. They are known as Jehovah's witnesses.

Why not go to a nearby Kingdom Hall, if you are not already doing so? There you can join in studying the Bible with Jehovah's witnesses, who do not worship a God that is simply a creation of the minds of men, a mere figment of the imagination. Rather, they worship the One who is the Creator of the universe and whose loving qualities are so clearly described in the Bible. If this God of the Bible is your God, then join with those who are praising and serving Jehovah. In this way you can also enjoy the blessing that only this God can give—peace of mind with contentment now, and everlasting life in his new order soon to come!



After the Managua Earthquake

WHEN serious disaster strikes, helpless victims are very much dependent upon aid from others. Concerned about the homeless, the injured and the hungry, many people willingly respond to the obvious appeal of distressed fellowmen. Jehovah's Christian witnesses are no exception. They appreciate that assisting the afflicted is a part of true worship. (Jas. 1:27) Along with others, they work diligently to help those in dire need. The relief measures undertaken in behalf of earthquake victims in Nicaragua are an example of this.

As news of the terrible earthquake that recently devastated Managua, Nicaragua, reached neighboring countries, almost immediately Jehovah's witnesses in those lands had efforts under way to help their Christian brothers and other deserving ones. Soon cars and trucks loaded with food and clothing were heading for the branch office of the Watch Tower Society in Managua.

The Watch Tower Society's branch in Managua had served as a center for directing the preaching activity of more than 1,800 Witnesses in Nicaragua. Happily the building had suffered only slight damage during the earthquake and hence food, clothing and other items could be received and distributed from there.

Less than twenty-two hours after the first shock, relief supplies arrived from Jehovah's witnesses in Honduras. The next day, Sunday, L. E. Witherspoon, branch overseer in Nicaragua, called a meeting of missionaries serving in Managua to discuss relief distribution. Soon food, clothing and medicine began arriving from Jehovah's witnesses in Costa Rica and El Salvador. Water was brought in by truck from areas around Managua. That day hundreds were given needed help.

On Monday, December 25, other depots were established to distribute relief supplies to earthquake victims, and on Tuesday still more of such depots were set up in other towns. By that time the greater portion of Managua's population had left the city. Meanwhile tons of relief supplies had arrived from Jehovah's witnesses in Costa Rica, Honduras and El Salvador, and more was on the way. Monetary help was also being received from Witnesses in other lands.

A missionary from Honduras writes of the relief measures: "The brothers here and the ones from Costa Rica and El Salvador have been taking in food supplies by the tons. Although our brothers are poor, they have given from their hearts." She continues: "Tonight we spent the evening here in the branch [of the Watch Tower Society at Tegucigalpa] sacking potatoes, onions, and detergent into plastic bags for easy distribution."

In Managua itself, especially in the downtown area, the stench of bodies was getting stronger. Fires were breaking out. And there was considerable looting. It was deemed advisable to evacuate the branch office of the Society. This move was undertaken on Wednesday, December 27.

The relief work that had been directed from the branch office then began to be carried out from a new location about thirteen miles south of Managua. There Jehovah's witnesses set themselves to the task of making up food packages. Benches from the branch Kingdom Hall became worktables and storage shelves.

L. E. Witherspoon reports that the packages basically contained the following items: eight pounds of rice, four pounds of beans, one pound of cheese, one pound of lard, one pound of dried milk, three

pounds of dry corn, a half pound of coffee, two pounds of sugar, a large tin of sardines, two candles, two boxes of matches, one bar of soap and one package of soup mix along with the latest issues of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* The packages were made up in two sizes, one that could last a family of two to five for about five days, and another that could last a family of six to ten for the same period.

For many, leaving Managua meant a change in climate from hot to cool or even cold weather. So blankets were also supplied to those needing them.

On December 29 the relief work of Jehovah's witnesses was explained to the entire office staff of the Red Cross. They were greatly impressed and kept repeating over and over again: "That is what we should be doing. That is how we should do it." They were amazed to learn that Jehovah's witnesses had fourteen relief distribution points around the outskirts of Managua and a list of the names of all families receiving assistance.

The director of the Red Cross, Mr. Reinaldo Tapia Molina, wrote out an order for 1,000 pounds of rice and 2,100 pounds of beans to assist Jehovah's witnesses in their relief work. The next day governmental authorization was received for the release of the food requested in the order received from the Red Cross.

Later the Red Cross supplied about a ton and a half of food and ten tents. These tents were put to good use by those who had been sleeping out in the open. They were very much needed, as the dew had been so heavy that by the morning those sleeping under the stars had to wring out their sheets.

Since many of the missionaries of Jehovah's witnesses serving in Nicaragua

are North Americans, the help of the United States Embassy was sought. Through AID, an affiliate of Alliance for Progress, twenty tents as well as one hundred cots and blankets were received.

Also, the government of Nicaragua provided supplies that helped Jehovah's witnesses to give individual aid to earthquake victims.

Of course, much has been contributed by Jehovah's witnesses and their friends in Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador and elsewhere to assist with the relief work. This has been especially encouraging to those receiving help, as they are aware of the fact that many of their fellow believers in neighboring lands are quite poor.

Because of the aid received from various sources, each day Jehovah's witnesses in Nicaragua have been distributing one half to three quarters of a ton of food. Several days a week more than a ton was distributed. As of January 10, 1973, enough food had been made available for 100,000 meals.

In addition to distributing much-needed food supplies, Jehovah's witnesses in Nicaragua have also kept busy in bringing comfort from the Bible to those in distress. They feel as did the apostle Paul when he wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those in any sort of tribulation through the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God." (2 Cor. 1:3, 4) They also rejoice in the fact that Jehovah God has motivated the hearts of their Christian brothers in other lands to respond quickly with assistance in their time of physical distress.

RIGHTS OR DUTIES

-WHICH?

A BIG ISSUE on the minds of people of the world today is the establishment of their rights. Many feel that it is their right to do what they please regardless of others. As a result, the world, particularly the so-called "Christian" part, has come to the situation that was foretold in the Bible, that men would be 'self-assuming, haughty, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, headstrong.'—2 Tim. 3:1-4.

² This is the spirit of the world. It is "the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience." (Eph. 2:2) We know that it is all around us and is putting pressure on everybody. We should not think that the apostle Paul, in describing the bad conditions mentioned above, had reference to the world of persons who do not believe in God. No, he said that these disobedient ones would be "having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power." (2 Tim. 3:5) It is in *Christendom* that the Bible said these conditions would come about, and it has proved true. All persons having this bad spirit will eventually die.—Rev. 21:8.

³ So, if anyone follows this bad pattern he is under God's disfavor, whether he belongs to a church or not, or even if he has withdrawn from the religious systems of Christendom and has become one of Jehovah's witnesses. All who have the independent, self-assuming, headstrong spirit or are even infected with that spirit to a minor extent are in great danger.

1-3. (a) What is the attitude of people of the world today regarding rights? (b) About whom is the apostle Paul talking at 2 Timothy 3:1-5, and what will happen to all who have the spirit spoken of at Ephesians 2:2?

"My son, my law do not forget, and my commandments may your heart observe, because length of days and years of life and peace will be added to you."—Prov. 3:1, 2.

⁴ This spirit is reflected in the news we read, particularly concerning youths today. The riots in schools and colleges are an example. Students go so far as to take rifles and other deadly weapons into the schools. They destroy the property of the school to which they go to get an education. We read of youth riots carried out for no reason at all. They go into a town, tear up the stores and overturn cars of innocent individuals who are driving through—all for nothing.

⁵ These destructive actions stem from an attitude of self-determination, of independence from all laws and standards. To justify their actions they claim they are exercising their "rights." Such persons want to show they are not answerable to anyone. Even among mature adults the spirit of rebellious independence has taken hold. Thousands claim the right to a guaranteed income, but they do not want to work. They want the enjoyable things of life, but they do not want to produce anything. Among those serving the public, originally, gratuities or "tips" were given for ser-

4, 5. What has this spirit resulted in on the part of both youths and adults?

vices beyond that which was required. But now tips are demanded, regardless of the quality of service rendered.

⁶ So, in the fever about rights, duties are not considered. But just think how different things would be if each one felt the same way about duties as he does about rights. Today's situation would be reversed. Then a person would not have to worry at all about his rights. This would be because he and others were taking care of their duties.

⁷ In fact, to fight over rights actually divides. Attention to duties works for happiness and peace. It is not hard to envision how united a family would be where each one thought of his duties, the children toward the parents, the parents toward the children. There would be trust and consideration rather than suspicion and strife.

⁸ In the business world, if workmen realized that their employer had the right to expect them to give a full day's work and if the employer had consideration for the welfare of the workmen, recognizing his duty to pay an adequate wage, they would both be better off. And the customers would be happy, because they would be getting service. Business would be better and jobs more secure. But the world does not recognize this because of selfishness, emphasis on what each one can get, with no thought of others. This selfishness is so general and so ingrained that the world cannot be reformed.

THE CHRISTIAN'S VIEW

⁹ But how do Christians stand on the matter of rights and duties? They have a God-given right as well as a duty to worship God and carry out his commands, applying the principles of the Bible in their

6-8. Describe the difference in family life and in other activities that attention to duties instead of rights would bring.

9. How do Christians stand as to fighting for rights?

lives. (Matt. 4:10) They should stand firm for this right. (Matt. 22:21) It is not a personal or a man-created right, but a right from God that they have a duty to perform before him. (Matt. 28:18, 19) When they persist in exercising this right, God backs them up. But the Bible does not stress personal rights. It does say a lot about duties.—Eccl. 12:13; Luke 17:10.

¹⁰ What is the position of true Christians who have turned around from following this world's course and who exercise faith in the ransom sacrifice of Christ? The Bible says to them: "You do not belong to yourselves, for you were bought with a price. By all means, glorify God in the body of you people." (1 Cor. 6:19, 20) Hence, there is very little ground for these people to talk about rights to God, because he owns them by the blood of his Son. They have a *duty*. That duty is: "By all means, glorify God." We can glorify God by being peaceable, by being content, by being patient even if our rights are stepped on by someone else. We are glorifying God when we carry out our duties, not demanding what we conceive to be our personal rights, and not causing grief or upset to others in asserting such "rights." —Prov. 11:2.

¹¹ Christians, therefore, should not think, just because a certain practice is common in the world, that they may insist on such as being their right in the face of the Christian congregation and its mature thinking. Why should a Christian try to bring the world's spirit, or the things that represent it, such as extreme styles of dress, extreme music and so-called modern practices, into his life when he is part of the congregation? In fact, why should he try to bring these things into the congregation of God?

10-12. (a) What is the Christian's position before God as to rights and duties? (b) What should be the attitude of the Christian as to the practice of certain "modern" things?

¹² A person might say: 'That's being modern. We want to do what's modern and keep up with the world.' But think about it—the spirit of this world is deteriorating fast, is decaying; and we can expect things to get worse as time goes along. Each generation in the past thought that it was "modern" and ahead of the rest, but what happened to these generations and their ways? The Bible says: "There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes but that has not been washed from its own excrement."—Prov. 30:12.

¹³ Should we cause a stir in the congregation, or become independent-minded and withdraw even a little from full co-operation with the congregation now? Rather, as we see the storm clouds of the "great tribulation" getting darker, and the "climate" of this world more chilling, we should draw closer to the Christian organization, closer and closer together in the warmth of love. (Prov. 18:1) We should be extra careful of our attitude and our standing with God. The apostle Peter expresses this need very strongly when he says: "If the righteous man is being saved with difficulty, where will the ungodly man and the sinner make a showing?"—1 Pet. 4:18.

¹⁴ Moreover, what we may think is so important right now may be absolutely nothing in God's new order. Yes, even a year from now, the thing we may fight for as a right (some style, some practice, some type of music) may be completely out of date. Then we ourselves would not want it. So why would we want to bring it now into the congregation? Styles and patterns of the world pass out quickly and are forgotten. But God's congregation lasts forever. The Bible says: "The scene of this world is changing." (1 Cor. 7:31)

13. Rather than be independent-minded, what should we do now, and why?

14. Why is it futile to get excited about some style or pattern followed by this world?

It is changing now from bad to worse, but it will be completely replaced. (1 John 2:17) It is going completely out of style. Where will mod styles then be? the shaggy hair? the unkempt clothing? Where will the things be that we now might insist on as our right to do?

ANALYZING OUR MOTIVES

¹⁵ Jehovah loves all those who approach him in faith. He desires service and obedience from the heart. (Rom. 6:17) Accordingly it is the objective of the Christian congregation to make clear what Jehovah's will is, and to help all the congregation's members to understand why—to aid all to know Jehovah more fully. Therefore, it is very profitable for us to pay attention to the counsel that responsible ones in the congregation give on problems that arise.—Compare Exodus 18:15, 16.

¹⁶ If you are troubled over some question involving your rights, it is good to analyze just what your thinking and motives are and how they line up with God's way of thinking. To illustrate by example, we will select the matter of a man or a boy wearing long, poorly groomed hair. Perhaps you like that style and wear your hair that way, and one of the brothers has suggested that it would be appropriate to have your hair cut and wear it more neatly.

¹⁷ You could ask, 'Do I wear the style because I think it makes my appearance better, or is it because of the people with whom I associate? Are these people associates in the congregation, or in the outside world? If others in the congregation wear the style, is it the mature ones, the elders or ministerial servants, those zealous in their ministry who do so?' In think-

15. Why is it profitable for us to give attention to counsel that responsible ones in the congregation may give?

16-18. How may a person analyze his own attitude and motives in connection with doing something that may appear to be a right?

ing about this, keep in mind the apostle's admonition to "remember those who are taking the lead among you, who have spoken the word of God to you, and as you contemplate how their conduct turns out imitate their faith."—Heb. 13:7.

¹⁸ Then ask, 'With whom does my style classify me in the eyes of people in general? Would someone on whom I call identify me as a minister of Jehovah's witnesses?' Why would you feel strange among outside associates if you did not wear long hair? Do you fear what they might say? Do you feel that they expect you, as one of Jehovah's witnesses, to dress as they do? Or do you think they would respect you more if, as a minister, you dressed as they do?

¹⁹ If the responsible brothers in the congregation recommend that you change your style, or if others feel it is not befitting a minister, would you be willing to change? Perhaps you might think that they are mistaken, or perhaps out-of-date, and that there is no need to change just because others in the congregation are disturbed. Then, would you accept the pattern that Christ himself set?

²⁰ Of Jesus, the apostle Paul said: "For even the Christ did not please himself; but just as it is written: 'The reproaches of those who were reproaching you have fallen upon me.'" (Rom. 15:3) Christ did not demand his rights. It would have been much more convenient for him to take a different course. But, then, what help would he have been to us?—Matt. 26:53, 54; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15.

²¹ What if someone were to ask you to stop eating meat because some in the congregation were stumbled because of it? What? Give up a right so fundamental

19, 20. What example is it wise to follow if brothers in the congregation recommend that we make some change in a style or practice we are following?

21. How does the apostle Paul show that it is unchristian for a member of the congregation to insist on some practice that stumbles others?

as this? Yet the apostle Paul followed Christ's example when he wrote: "So, then, let us pursue the things making for peace and the things that are upbuilding to one another. Stop tearing down the work of God just for the sake of food. . . . It is well not to eat flesh or to drink wine or do anything over which your brother stumbles." Then Paul says to one whose conscience was not bothered by the eating of meat but who would abstain for the sake of the welfare of the congregation: "The faith that you have, have it in accord with yourself in the sight of God." —Rom. 14:19-22; compare 1 Corinthians 8:12, 13.

²² So it is better to give in and have the satisfaction of knowing within yourself that you are pleasing God even though you may not fully agree with others' opinions, even though you feel what you are now doing is all right. After all, if you wear some style that pleases you, who see it most? Who know what it really looks like on you and can compare your appearance with that of others? You do not see yourself, do you? No, it is others who see you from all angles. If your brothers feel your appearance gives the wrong impression to people, or misrepresents or casts a bad reflection on the message you bear, why not change, and be happy?

NOT STYLE, BUT SEPARATENESS FROM WORLDLY PRACTICES

²³ We can view the matter of style, or of dress, from another standpoint. Suppose that you, as a man, lived in Israelite times, under the Law, and did not like a beard. Perhaps you liked the way Egyptians looked, clean shaven. What would you do? Would you exercise your personal

22. Give other reasons why we should change a practice or style that our brothers feel is casting a false reflection on the good news of the Kingdom.

23. What was the situation in Israel for a man who preferred to be clean shaven instead of growing a beard?

right to shave? No, for you would not have such a right. You would have to wear a beard, because the Law commanded all males: "You must not cut your sidelocks short around, and you must not destroy the extremity of your beard."—Lev. 19:27; 21:5.

²⁴ Was this Law given because of style? No. It was to keep the Israelites from imitating the practice of some of the pagan nations around them. Israelites were to keep their beards trimmed, neat, well groomed, however. An untended beard or a shaved-off one betokened grief and mourning because of some calamity. (2 Sam. 19:24-28; Isa. 7:20) The hair was also periodically cut, unless one was under a Nazirite vow. In Ezekiel's prophecy the priests are commanded to clip their hair and not wear it loose.—Ezek. 44:15, 20.

²⁵ Also, God recognized that a style of clothing can classify one wrongly when he commanded that "no garb of an able-bodied man should be put upon a woman, neither should an able-bodied man wear the mantle of a woman; for anybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah your God." (Deut. 22:5) Why? Because it would be an inducement to immorality.

²⁶ So, while there are some styles of clothing that have similarity, such as women's slacks and men's trousers, yet there is usually a definite distinction in style or material. But when one wears clothing so that he or she is virtually indistinguishable from the opposite sex, this is bad in Jehovah's eyes. The same is true with clothing that is so tight or scanty that it is conducive to immorality and classifies the individual with those who have a reputation for detestable practices. If, then, you feel like insisting on a certain style

24. What was the reason for the law requiring Israelites to wear a beard?
25, 26. How does God's Word give us his view as to propriety in clothing styles?

of hair or dress, or some practice, ask yourself, 'Am I doing it to imitate worldly persons?' <sup>too gnomic bad soft guidan
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"NATURE ITSELF" TEACHES US

²⁷ There are no specific rules set out in the Bible, as, for instance, how long one's hair should be, or the length of a skirt. But the inspired apostle does set forth good guidelines that enable the sincere, dedicated Christian, and the congregation, to know when a style or custom is appropriate, proper. He says: "Does not *nature itself* teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him; but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? Because her hair is given her instead of a headdress."—1 Cor. 11:14, 15.

²⁸ Concerning these words of the apostle, Bible scholar Albert Barnes observed:

"The word *nature* . . . denotes evidently that sense of propriety which all men have, and which is expressed in any prevailing or universal custom. . . . It is such as is demanded by the natural sense of fitness among men. . . . The word in this place, therefore, does not mean the constitution of the sexes, . . . nor simple use and custom, . . . but it refers to a deep internal sense of what is proper and right."

And Greek scholar Dr. A. T. Robertson says:

"Here it means native sense of propriety (cf. Rom. 2:14) in addition to mere custom, but one that rests on the objective difference in the constitution of things."

²⁹ It is therefore not a matter of having to be told exactly what to do and what not to do, as by rules. If we are Christians and our hearts love that which is right, we *know* by nature, particularly by our trained conscience, whether a thing adds to or detracts from the glory of the good news we preach. We know whether we are

27, 28. (a) How does the apostle Paul give us a good guideline as to what is proper for a Christian, as to style? (b) What do certain Bible scholars say in regard to the word "nature"?

29. (a) Why does a Christian not need rules as to what to do and what not to do? (b) If, in some instance, a person does not know, what should he do?

building up or tearing down the reputation or the image of the congregation in the eyes of others. But, if anyone does not know, then he should let himself be directed by the good conscience of the Christian congregation. Let him accept the good counsel and rely on the good judgment of the responsible brothers.—Prov. 12:15.

³⁰ True Christians love one another, and those in responsible positions are under

30. (a) Under what obligation are all those with positions of responsibility in the congregation? (b) What is a guiding principle that will keep us safe? (c) Why should we be concerned with duties more than with rights?

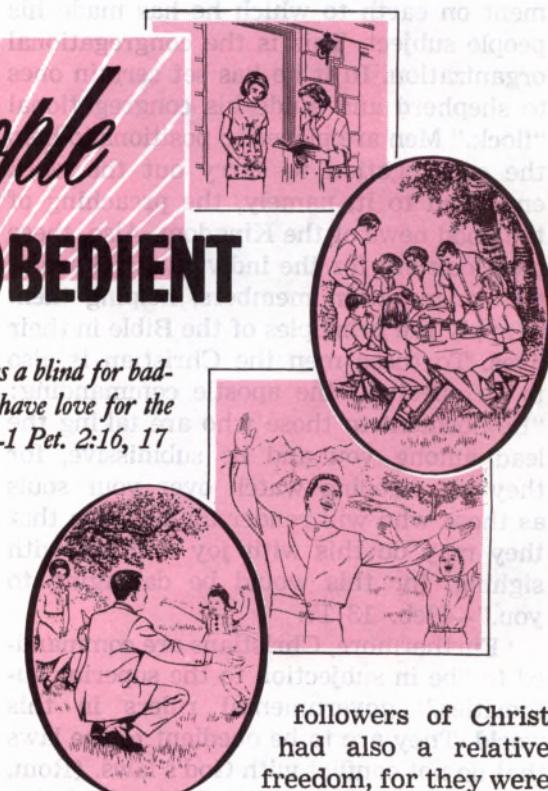
obligation to do only what is best for their brothers, whether it be in the example they set, or the counsel they give. And the actions of all of us should always be guided by the principle: Am I ‘adorning the teaching of our Savior, God, in all things’? If we take care of our duties, working whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men, Jehovah will reward us with blessings far greater than any “rights” that we may establish for ourselves, along with years of life and peace.—Titus 2:10; Col. 3:23, 24; Prov. 3:1, 2.

A Free People —BUT OBEDIENT

“Be as free people, and yet holding your freedom, not as a blind for badness, but as slaves of God. Honor men of all sorts, have love for the whole association of brothers, be in fear of God.”—1 Pet. 2:16, 17

“CHRIST set us free. Therefore stand fast, and do not let yourselves be confined again in a yoke of slavery.” Thus wrote the apostle Paul after describing the freedom of the sons of God, who were also sons of His free heavenly organization, “the Jerusalem above,” their “mother.” This “mother” organization, having the freedom of perfect relationship with God, was, nevertheless, represented as the ‘wife’ of Jehovah God. So, as such, her freedom was relative. She was subject to the headship of her great heavenly Husband. And as sons, Paul and his fellow

1. What freedom did the apostle Paul show that he and his fellow disciples had?



followers of Christ had also a relative freedom, for they were subject to their heavenly “Father” and “mother.” As children, they were bound to be obedient to ‘the discipline of their father and the law of their mother.’—Gal. 5:1; 4:26; Prov. 1:8.

² God's people are free today because they 'know the truth, and the truth has set them free.' (John 8:32) The freedom they have, however, is for good, not bad. They can practice to the full the fruits of the spirit, for "against such things there is no law." (Gal. 5:23) These fruits are all that is necessary for complete happiness; doing badness only brings bondage again to sin and death. In order to keep practicing that which is good and beneficial, they have to render obedience to the One who set them free, Jesus Christ.

A SUBJECTION THAT BRINGS GOOD

³ Also, God has provided an arrangement on earth to which he has made his people subject. This is the congregational organization. In it he has set certain ones to shepherd and guide his congregational "flock." Men are placed in positions to help the congregation to carry out the work entrusted to it, namely, the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom. Also, these men look out for the individual welfare of the congregation members, helping them to apply the principles of the Bible in their lives. To these men the Christian is also to be obedient, the apostle commanding: "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you."—Heb. 13:17.

⁴ Furthermore, Christians are commanded to "be in subjection to the superior authorities," governmental rulers in this world. They are to be obedient to the laws that do not conflict with God's laws. (Rom. 13:1; compare Acts 4:19; 5:29.) Christian

slaves are to be subject to their masters, this principle applying today to employees, who should exhibit "good fidelity to the full." (Titus 2:9, 10) Children are to obey their parents. (Eph. 6:1-3) All these commands do not restrict Christians from doing good and carrying out their Christian ministry, but, rather, through obedience to these laws they glorify God and advance the Kingdom interests.

⁵ Now, in addition to these various authorities to which the Christian must be subject, which subjection works to his good and his greater freedom and happiness, the apostle goes even farther, exhorting: "In showing honor to one another take the lead." (Rom. 12:10) In a way, then, all Christians are in subjection to all their brothers, for they must serve their brothers' interests ahead of their own.—Mark 10:44; 1 Pet. 5:5.

OBEDIENCE A DISTINGUISHING MARK

⁶ In what position does this put the Christian as compared with those who have the attitude of the world in general? His is the course of obedience, while theirs is one of disobedience. This is the key point that marks the difference. So, with what seriousness we should take the matter of obedience!

⁷ However, we may be tempted sometimes to do otherwise. We see all around us disobedience to every form of authority. We hear that kind of talk. We see injustices, and we may begin to feel that these disobedient persons are justified. We may begin to take up their "cause" and may even begin to think we see reasons to take up the fight in the Christian congregation. It may be that youths and others in the world feel they have reasons

2. Why are God's people free, and yet why is their freedom not absolute?

3. What subjection, requiring obedience, has God established in the Christian congregation?

4. Under what other laws of obedience has God placed the Christian, and are these a hindrance to the Christian ministry?

5. In what way are Christians in subjection to all their brothers?

6. What outstandingly marks the difference between the true Christian and the worldly person today?

7. How might we be tempted to take up some worldly "cause," but what should we keep in mind?

for rebelling against conditions in the world. True, there are injustices. Let worldly persons do what they like. But neither the youths among us nor any of God's people should be fighting the world's battles. And they certainly have no reason to rebel or be in the least disobedient to God's arrangement.

⁸ Consider the position of God's people now, as described in the Scriptures. Paul compares the situation of Israel under Moses with that of the Christian congregation, saying: "For you have not approached that which can be felt and which has been set aflame with fire, and a dark cloud and thick darkness and a tempest, and the blare of a trumpet and the voice of words; on hearing which voice the people implored that no word should be added to them. For the command was not bearable to them: 'And if a beast touches the mountain, it must be stoned.' Also, the display was so fearsome that Moses said: 'I am fearful and trembling.'" (Heb. 12:18-21) Even so, some thought that they had justification to show disobedience to Moses. Would you have joined such men and women if you had been present at that fearsome display at Mount Sinai?

⁹ Paul goes on to describe a more awe-inspiring scene: "But you have approached a Mount Zion and a city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, and myriads of angels, in general assembly, and the congregation of the firstborn who have been enrolled in the heavens, and God the Judge of all, and the spiritual lives of righteous ones who have been made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, which speaks in a better way than Abel's blood."—Heb. 12:22-24.

8. What would you say as to disobedience to Moses' words, in view of the scene at Mount Sinai?
9, 10. Why is it much more serious for the Christian to be disobedient?

¹⁰ Then Paul admonishes: "See that you do not beg off from him who is speaking. For if they did not escape who begged off from him who was giving divine warning upon earth, much more shall we not if we turn away from him who speaks from the heavens." "Let us continue to have undeserved kindness, through which we may acceptably render God sacred service with godly fear and awe."—Heb. 12: 25, 28.

HOW DO YOU ACCEPT COUNSEL?

¹¹ Do we believe that this is actually true, that Christians stand in such a fear-inspiring position? Then with what attitude should we listen to the spiritual admonition we constantly get? And how should we react if a situation should arise in which someone in authority, a brother, offers counsel? Should we take it as an insult or an affront, feeling, 'What right has he to talk like this to me?' or, 'I have a right to do (or not do) it; he has no authority to make me'?

¹² Why would such attitude be wrong? And why would it be equally wrong to appear to listen merely because we know we ought to respect the one talking to us, and even agree verbally, but actually letting the counsel go 'in one ear and out the other'? Because, although there are some things the congregation cannot command, they are things for the welfare of the entire congregation, *including you*, for your welfare is tied up with the congregation, if you want years of life and peace added to you.

¹³ Actually, what would a person be doing if he displayed the above-described attitude? He would be saying, in effect, that God is not directing his congrega-

11, 12. In what ways might we show disregard or disrespect for counsel given to us by a responsible brother, but why would we be thereby working against our best interests?

13. What is one saying, in effect, who disregards counsel given, and what Bible instruction should he seriously consider?

tion, that He is not teaching us the right way through his organization. It is showing lack of faith. Do any of us really want to say that? He should seriously consider the apostle's words at Hebrews 3:16-19; 4:11-13; 12:1.

NOT ALL FREEDOMS ARE RIGHTS

¹⁴ Let us consider a situation in which the congregation cannot *command* us to do or not do something. There are things we have *freedom* to do, in the sense that no one is likely to stop us. We have physical freedom, for example, to associate with anyone we wish, but we have no right as Christians to carry on association with the world. Bad associations are not advantageous to oneself or one's brothers in the congregation, neither do they build up. Of course, the congregation cannot enforce on an individual the consequences of violating the principle that "bad associations spoil useful habits," but he will, nevertheless, reap the harmful results, for God can and will enforce all his laws. "God is not one to be mocked."—1 Cor. 15:33; Gal. 6:7.

¹⁵ If we want to follow or imitate the world's fads, with "way-out" styles and its ways of doing things, we can do it, but does it build up? With whom are we associating? Mainly the entertainment world. It may seem to us that they are in the majority and that their voice represents the majority because they are the ones we see on TV and in movies. But who is among the foremost in propagating corruption? Again, the entertainment world. On stage and screen they present nudity, sexual intercourse, perversion, and try to make films more and more shocking, gruesome and revolting.

14. (a) What principle will enable us to know what things we may be physically free to do, yet lack the right to do? (b) If we override counsel from the congregation regarding associations, what are we going to run up against?

15. If we follow the "way-out" styles, with whom are we associating?

One movie advertised that each patron would be supplied with a "distress bag" in case he had to vomit during the picture.

¹⁶ Now, if an individual begins to go along in imitation of the entertainment crowd, or those who love the things they portray, how far is he going to go? Will he take off his clothes when they do? Will he do as patrons in a New York theater were invited to do, namely, come up on stage and join the action? Few will want to do that. But if a person goes partway following the pattern these people set, where will he stop? And the Christian who brings the least trace of their attitude into his life contaminates it. Therefore he has no right to bring such things into the congregation, but, rather, he has a DUTY to keep them out.

¹⁷ The apostle tells us the thing that determines whether we should follow a certain practice or not. He says: "Let each one keep seeking, not his own advantage, but that of the other person." Each can analyze his actions. If these truly help others spiritually, he is doing well.—1 Cor. 10:24.

ASSISTING THE CONGREGATION IN ITS FIGHT

¹⁸ In this time, when every feature and institution of this world's system of things is contaminated, corrupt and decaying away, the issue is, Will the congregation of God also be infiltrated and corrupted? Will it stand clean as the only organization in the world to glorify God's name and his righteous principles? This is a very serious question. It is directly connected with the great issue of God's sovereignty. Do not think for a minute that the Devil is not putting up the bitterest possible war

16. If a person begins to go along in imitating the worldly crowd, what question might be asked about him?

17. How can one tell whether a certain practice is good or not?

18. What is a very serious question at this time, and how are we connected with that question?

against the congregation. And do not think you are not in the fight, for he is fighting to contaminate YOU, the individual Christian.—Rev. 12:17.

¹⁹ God's congregation will stand, as the Bible foretold. (2 Tim. 2:19) God has put men in positions of responsibility to see that it is kept clean, and that the individual members of the congregation are protected by the help of these spiritual men. Therefore, when these men give counsel, act to reprove a sinning member, or even expel a rebellious one from the congregation, all of us should cooperate. We should rejoice that God has set up such a protective arrangement.

²⁰ We can cooperate with the congregation by 'keeping our minds fixed on the things above, not on the things upon the earth.' "The things upon the earth" are things that often appeal to us. We may at first have a hard time seeing the difference between the freedom we are allowed to have to do these things and the right to do them. But if we study, meditate and concentrate on "the things above," the things of God, we can see clearly what our attitude ought to be.
—Col. 3:2.

²¹ Then, we can also show loyalty to the congregation of God by supporting its fight to keep itself clean and to help by counsel or discipline those who err. Rather than cause a brother to feel that correction given to him was wrong, we can speak kindly with him, showing him where his course was unwise, reproving him, helping him to see how he can straighten out his path and be much happier. We can assist the elders in the congregation in their

19. What means has Jehovah provided to keep the congregation clean, and what does this call for on our part?

20. How can the counsel at Colossians 3:2 aid us to cooperate fully with the congregation?

21. How can we show loyalty to the congregation when a brother is corrected or reproved by those in responsible positions?

efforts to "readjust" him. (Gal. 6:1) We will avoid making that one feel justified. If we speak against the corrective action, we are thereby working against his interests. As the Scriptures say, we are 'hating our brother in our heart.'—Lev. 19:17.

DANGER OF BEING BROUGHT UNDER WRONG AUTHORITY

²² There is another way of viewing the question of how far our freedom as a Christian goes and where obedience to God comes in to limit it. Consider the apostle's words: "All things are lawful for me; but not all things are advantageous. All things are lawful for me; but I will not let myself be brought under authority by anything." The apostle mentions as an example the eating of food. Nothing could be more clearly established as right. But Paul points out that if the eating of certain foods creates an issue with others in the congregation, the Christian should be willing to give way. In the face of the Kingdom interests and compared to the interests of his brothers, it amounts to nothing. Paul says: "Foods for the belly, and the belly for foods; but God will bring both it and them to nothing."—1 Cor. 6:12, 13; 10:23.

²³ Food is something that is destroyed when eaten. It does not last. Also, the one given over merely to satisfying his fleshly appetite or desire will be destroyed in due time by God. So, really, what is that Christian doing who insists on a certain way despite the congregation's feelings or in the face of Biblical counsel to the contrary? He is being brought under subjection to wrong authority by his attitude, by his determination or insistence on doing the certain things he selfishly wants to do. He is acting disobediently toward God. To whom, therefore, is he rendering

22, 23. Explain the apostle's words at 1 Corinthians 6:12, 13.

obedience and service? To God's adversary. He is actually enslaved to a course that is not good, and his attitude will lead him into real trouble in his life if he continues.

²⁴ That is why Paul wrote to Timothy, an overseer in Ephesus, warning that "in the last days" men would become "headstrong," "lovers of themselves," "self-assuming," "not open to any agreement." Such things, Paul warned Timothy, would be manifest on a large scale among professed Christians of Christendom. But these conditions should not be allowed to creep into the true Christian congregation itself. So, if a person in the congregation is headstrong, he is in a worse position than the headstrong ones in the world, for the apostle Peter says that 'judgment starts with the house of God.' Such a person is more accountable to God than the one outside the congregation. He is in a *very dangerous position*.—2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 Pet. 4:17.

BEWARE OF BEING FOR A "CHANGE"

²⁵ There exists a danger to all, especially to younger persons, because there is a ferment everywhere for a "change." Many seeking changes are doubtless honest persons, seeing corruption and injustice and wanting something better, yet not knowing what it should be. But those who are informed about God's kingdom and who associate with God's congregation know about its theocratic structure; they know that it is in line with the principles of God's Word. These persons should realize that the world is thoroughly permeated by selfishness that is diametrically opposed to righteous principles, and it cannot be changed for the better. There is no reason

to attempt it. And they should also know that they should not try to change God's congregation according to their own private concepts, or according to the concepts of those pushing for changes in the world. To do so would be to bring the spirit of the world into the congregation, which must remain no part of this world.

²⁶ What is the result of the dangerous course of demanding a change, thinking that God's congregation is "archaic," or at least that it is not conforming itself sufficiently to modern ways and ideas? Perhaps this attitude will manifest itself in an attempt to establish certain personal "rights" in the congregation. Note what the wise man says to his son, in the book of Proverbs: "My son, fear Jehovah and the king. With those who are for a change, do not intermeddle. For their disaster will arise so suddenly, that who is aware of the extinction of those who are for a change?"—Prov. 24:21, 22.

²⁷ Jehovah loves those who are obedient to him. He loves the person who reads his Word, meditates on it, and applies its good counsel directly to himself, no matter how directly the counsel may hit him. What freedom Jehovah grants to those who are obedient to him! He will change the appearance of this earth by wiping out its polluters. In time all mankind will be delivered into "the glorious freedom of the children of God." The relationship of a loving father and obedient sons will be restored. Through his unmatched love for his obedient sons Jehovah will be able to pour out inexhaustible spiritual and material riches upon them to all eternity!—Rom. 8:21; Rev. 11:18.

24. To whom did Paul's words about the critical times in the "last days" apply, and how should this give us serious concern?

25. Why should Christians not join with those trying to change the world for the better?

26. How do the Scriptures warn of the danger to those who want to bring changes into the congregation according to their own ideas or those of the world?

27. What will be the outcome to those who exercise the freedom God gives them, at the same time recognizing the requirement of full obedience?

Heeding **DIVINE WARNING** *Is Wisdom*

JEHOVAH'S dealings with mankind have at all times reflected his high evaluation of human life. He did not act hastily to express adverse judgments but mercifully provided opportunities for peoples and nations to change their ways. (Jer. 18:6-10) Especially can this be noted in his treatment of the nation of Israel. Time and again Jehovah raised up prophets to encourage the unfaithful nation to abandon its bad course.—Isa. 55:6, 7; Ezek. 33:10, 11.

One of these prophets was Ezekiel, who began his prophetic work in 613 B.C.E. as an exile in Babylon. Ezekiel's position was like that of a watchman who had the responsibility of warning people in time of danger. Those failing to heed the warning would have to shoulder responsibility for their own death. Even if Ezekiel as a watchman were to fail in his duty, the lawlessness of the people made them deserving of death and so their death would have been no injustice. Ezekiel, however, would have been guilty of criminal negligence. (Ezek. 33:1-6) Impressing this on Ezekiel's mind, Jehovah declared:

"As regards you, O son of man, a watchman is what I have made you to the house of Israel, and at my mouth you must hear the word and give them warning from me. When I say to someone wicked, 'O wicked one, you will positively die!' but you actually do not speak out to warn the wicked one

from his way, he himself as a wicked one will die in his own error, but his blood I shall ask back at your own hand. But as regards you, in case you actually warn someone wicked from his way for him to turn back from it but he actually does not turn back from his way, he himself will die in his own error, whereas you yourself will certainly deliver your own soul."—Ezek. 33:7-9.

Those who respond to God's warning delivered through his servants have no reason to fear that their past record will be held against them. Jehovah God takes "delight, not in the death of the wicked one, but in that someone wicked turns back from his way and actually keeps living." (Ezek. 33:11) Of course, if righteous persons abandon a course of faithfulness, they will not be spared adverse judgment. Whether a person will die or continue living depends upon his standing at the time divine judgment is executed. Said Jehovah through Ezekiel:

"When I say to the wicked one: 'You will positively die,' and he actually turns back from his sin and carries on justice and righteousness, and the wicked one returns the very thing pledged, pays back the very things taken by robbery, and actually walks in the very statutes of life by not doing injustice, he will positively keep living. He will not die. None of his sins with which he has sinned will be remembered against him. Justice and righteousness are what he has carried on. He will positively keep living. When someone righteous turns back from his righteousness and actually does injustice, he must also die for them. And when someone wicked turns back from his wickedness and actually carries on justice and righteousness, . . . he himself will keep living." —Ezek. 33:14-16, 18, 19.

How merciful it is for Jehovah God to see to it that ample warning is given! In Ezekiel's time, however, there were Israelites who failed to appreciate God's boundless love and mercy. They said: "The way of Jehovah is not adjusted right." Yet, they were really the ones needing to adjust their thinking and ways. —Ezek. 33:17, 20.

Those not heeding God's warning through Ezekiel but persisting in contending that God's way was not adjusted right brought calamity upon themselves. The destruction of the rebellious city of Jerusalem after eighteen months of intensifying siege brought death to many. Ezekiel could not be blamed for this. He had given the warning to the disaster-threatened Israelites. So their blood was upon their own heads.

Because of his faithfulness as a watchman, Ezekiel did not have an adverse judgment expressed against himself. He continued living and received confirmation respecting the reliability of his prophetic warnings about Jerusalem. He reports:

"At length it occurred in the twelfth year,* in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month of our exile, that there came to me the escaped one from Jerusalem, saying: 'The city has been struck down!'"—Ezek. 33:21.

To an ordinary Jew or Israelite this news would have been heartbreak. But Jehovah God prepared Ezekiel in advance for it. Jehovah knew that the escapee was near the end of his flight and about to make report. So on the evening of the day of that one's arrival Jehovah spoke to Ezekiel from the standpoint that Jerusalem had already been destroyed and there were some survivors yet in the land of Judah. Ezekiel tells us:

"Now the very hand of Jehovah had come to be upon me in the evening [when the Jewish day began] before the coming of the escaped one, and He proceeded to open my mouth prior to that one's coming to me in the morning, and my mouth was opened and

* There are eight Hebrew manuscripts besides the Syriac Version and some manuscripts of the Greek *Septuagint Version* that read "eleventh year" instead of "twelfth year." This would mean that the fugitive from Jerusalem arrived during the latter half of December (Tebeth 5) in 607 B.C.E., or six months after Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians. (2 KI. 25:24) If the months are counted on a spring-to-spring basis and the year reckoned on an autumn-to-autumn basis, Tebeth 5 of the "twelfth year" would also fall during the latter half of December in 607 B.C.E.

I proved to be speechless no longer.† And the word of Jehovah began to occur to me, saying: 'Son of man, the inhabitants of these devastated places are saying even concerning the soil of Israel, "Abraham happened to be just one and yet he took possession of the land. And we are many; to us the land has been given as something to possess." Therefore say to them, "This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said: 'With the blood you keep eating, and your eyes you keep lifting to your dungy idols, and blood you keep pouring out. So should you possess the land? You have depended upon your sword. You have done a detestable thing, and you have defiled each one the wife of his companion. So should you possess the land?'"'"—Ezek. 33:22-26.

The judgment executed upon Jerusalem was indeed deserved. Not only did the people generally refuse to heed the warning, but those who survived in the land of Judah did not change their ways in acknowledgment of the severe discipline received. They still continued to eat animal flesh from which the blood had not been drained according to God's law; they still carried on false worship with detestable idols; they still committed the detestable act of adultery, violating even their neighbor's wife. It mattered not with Jehovah that they were many as compared with their ancestor, the patriarch Abraham, to whom the land had been promised by Jehovah. (Gen. 12:1-7) Because of their not turning away repentantly from their wicked ways, they did not deserve to keep possessing the land. (Jer. 42:1-44:25) Mere numbers did not count with Jehovah; obedience to his Law did!

Those unrepentant ones would not be left remaining in the God-given land. The land would be absolutely desolated of man and domestic animal, with no one even passing through it because of fear of its

† This muteness of Ezekiel was not literal. Ezekiel became speechless as regards his prophesying about doomed Jerusalem. The muteness began when Ezekiel was notified by inspiration that the siege of Jerusalem had begun, and ended when the destruction of the city was confirmed by a human eyewitness.

being haunted by demons. The land was to lie desolate in this manner for a full period of seventy years, in order that it might enjoy a sabbath period, to make up for all the sabbath years that the Jews had failed to keep. (2 Chron. 36:17-23; compare Daniel 9:1, 2; Jeremiah 9:11; 26:9; 32:43; 33:10-12; 34:22.) Jehovah said to Ezekiel:

"As I am alive, surely the ones who are in the devastated places will fall by the sword itself; and the one who is upon the surface of the field, to the wild beast I shall certainly give him for food; and those who are in the strong places and in the caves will die by the pestilence itself. And I shall actually make the land a desolate waste, even a desolation, and the pride of its strength must be made to cease and the mountains of Israel must be laid desolate, with no one passing through. And they will have to know that I am Jehovah when I make the land a desolate waste, even a desolation, on account of all their detestable things that they have done."

—Ezek. 33:27-29.

These survivors were not the only ones who failed to appreciate Jehovah's great love and mercy in having warning given. Ezekiel's fellow exiles did not take his prophesying seriously either. With reference to these exiles, Jehovah said:

"The sons of your people are speaking with one another about you beside the walls and in the entrances of the houses, and the one has spoken with the other, each one with his brother, saying, 'Come, please, and hear what the word is that is going forth from Jehovah.' And they will come in to you, like the coming in of people, and sit before you as my people; and they will certainly hear your words but these they will not do, for with their mouth they are expressing lustful desires and after their unjust gain is where their heart is going. And, look! you are to them like a song of sensuous loves, like one with a pretty voice and playing a stringed instrument well. And they will certainly hear your words, but there are none doing them. And when it comes true—look! it must come true—they will also have to know that a prophet himself had proved to be in the midst of them."—Ezek. 33:30-33.

Because of their not paying attention, those Jewish exiles were stunned when confirmation came that Jerusalem had been destroyed. Having persisted in unbelief, they were totally unprepared for this terrible shock. They were also forced to acknowledge that Ezekiel had indeed been a true prophet of Jehovah.

A LESSON TO BE TAKEN TO HEART

We today are living in a time much like that of Ezekiel. Though professing to be in a covenant relationship with God as was ancient Israel, members of Christendom's churches are conducting themselves like unfaithful Israel of old. The very conditions described by the apostle Paul at 2 Timothy 3:1-5 are clearly in evidence among those professing to serve God. We read:

"Know this, that in the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power."

Do you see these very things today? The fact that the foretold conditions mark the "last days" of the present wicked system of things indicates that humans are in grave danger. This period of time is foretold to culminate in a "great tribulation" that will bring the present ungodly system to its end. (Matt. 24:20-22; Rev. 7:1-3, 14) As Ezekiel of old was raised up as a watchman to issue a warning, so today Jehovah's Christian witnesses are sounding a warning about the calamity to befall Christendom as well as the rest of this bloodguilty system of things. How are you responding to that warning? Have you separated yourself

from the religious practices and organizations of Christendom? Are you seeking to conduct yourself in such a way that Jehovah God will see to it that you are preserved alive when practitioners of unrighteousness will come to their finish?

The unchangeable God Jehovah will no more spare Christendom and its adherents than he spared unfaithful Jerusalem. Like Jerusalem and the land of Judah, the place that Christendom has occupied in this worldly system of things will be completely desolated without any religious institutions remaining therein. The secular elements of today's worldwide system of things will look at the vacuum that Christendom and the other false religious systems have left. In view of what Jehovah's witnesses have long proclaimed world wide, those secular elements will have to come to the knowledge prescribed for them in the repeatedly stated formula: "They will have to know that I am Jehovah."

This being the case, surely you will not want to be found among those like Ezekiel's fellow exiles. However, many persons today are doing just that. Beside walls casting cooling shade, in the doorways of their homes or elsewhere, people talk about Jehovah's Christian witnesses and their work of calling on others from house to house. Many persons, even among those still associated with Christendom, pass around nice compliments about these witnesses. They may even come to the large public meetings of Jehovah's witnesses or arrange for a home Bible study to be carried on with them and invite neighbors or relatives to join them in the study. They like the tone and directness of the divine message and respectfully listen to it. But they leave the matter hanging in suspense; they do not take a positive stand for Jehovah as his devoted servants. They merely like to be enter-

tained with a Biblically supported message. Their concern is not to appear outright irreligious, open to the charge of being atheistic Communists.

They may be disturbed by the cry of Christendom that Jehovah's Christian witnesses are "false prophets"! Yet they may not be fully convinced that these are true spokesmen for Jehovah the Sovereign Lord. To let themselves come to that conclusion would oblige them to do something. This would mean for them to stop holding on to lustful desire and going wholeheartedly after unjust gain.

None of us should want to be like these indecisive, unresponsive ones. Better it is to know now, rather than too late, that there is an authentic prophetic class of Christians among us, and to accept and act upon the Bible message, "not as the word of men, but, just as it truthfully is, as the word of God." (1 Thess. 2:13) Those who wait undecided until what Jehovah's Christian witnesses have been proclaiming 'comes true' "will also have to know that a prophet himself had proved to be in the midst of them." (Ezek. 33:33) But such belated knowledge will not mean salvation for them, for it will find their hearts and their ways to be unchanged.

What is to be gained by hesitating and doubting to the end that Jehovah can raise up and has raised up a genuine "prophet" within our generation? Certainly it will gain for no one the divine favor and protection needed during the speedily approaching "great tribulation." If our course is to be that of wisdom and of faith, then, with Bible in hand, we will heed the warning of Jehovah's true watchman and will take refuge where Jehovah indicates in his Word. Then, when Jehovah's prophetic watchman gets the report that Christendom has been struck down, we, together with the faithful watchman, will continue to live.

Is CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Succeeding in Africa?



FOR several centuries now, the churches of Christendom have been sending missionaries to Africa, and over the years thousands have been baptized. The 1968 estimated church membership was 42,056,000, or one in eight of the total population of Africa. But what is the situation as to Christian marriage?

Studies in various countries south of the Sahara reveal that the African has persistently held on to the traditional forms of marriage. Considering the church wedding or any contractual marriage too Western, most Africans who are nominal Christians are not going to the churches to get married. Moreover, in recent years industrialization and changing social patterns also are having their impact on traditional marriage customs. Many, especially among the young, are not bothering even to marry in the tribal way.

TRIBAL VERSUS CHURCH MARRIAGE

In a study commissioned by the All Africa (Anglican) Archbishops' Conference and prepared by Adrian Hastings, it

is reported that in five years in one area of Kenya, there was a yearly average of ten Anglican church marriages, as compared to 4,000 baptisms. One diocese in Uganda had only fourteen church marriages to 92,604 baptisms. The report shows that this is the trend throughout Africa.

A number of factors influence the African to marry according to tribal custom instead of in the church. 'The paying of the bride price is usually necessary in any event, so why go to the extra expense of a church wedding?' he reasons.

Discussing this situation, J. Henry Okulla reported the following from Africa to *The Christian Century*: "Church marriages are known to be expensive, not only because large demands for money are made [by the parents of the girl in the form of a dowry], but also because of the Western wedding customs which have been adopted—expensive wedding gowns, large receptions at which beer and other alcoholic beverages are served. Many are the poorer for having gotten married. Some young persons therefore simply agree to start living together; only later do they legitimize their vows before the parents of the girl and in the eyes of society. But even when their marriage has become fully accepted by society, the church still refuses to accord them this recognition, and they and their children are refused the sacraments."

East African priest J. Labrèche recog-

nized another highly influential factor: "Africans want a fruitful marriage and they are not easily convinced to engage themselves for life before having a guarantee that they will have children. Concubinage becomes the natural means for testing." African custom is that the birth of a child puts a seal on the marriage. Before this the relationship is more of a "trial marriage," in many instances.

According to G. E. Currens and R. J. Payne, cleric spokesmen for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Liberia, "Marriage is not regarded as the initiating of a socially sanctioned union between a man and woman, but rather as the *culminating evidence* of the success of such a union."

It may start, as among the Taitas of Kenya, when a man, the "pater-elect," gives a token, *kifu*, to a girl's parents as evidence of his intent to secure final rights over the woman's childbearing capacities. As such he acquires the tacit approval of the bride's parents for the sexual relations that will lead to the realization of her reproductive powers. The actual establishment of the relationship as a marriage may come after the woman proves she is not barren.

CHURCH ACCOMMODATION TO TRIBAL CUSTOM

Faced with the strong resistance to what are considered Western or European marriage customs, many local clergymen have pressured the heads of their particular church to change church rules to accommodate their parishioners or new converts. The high command of their churches has been slow to make official changes that would allow baptized Africans to marry according to tribal custom and still remain in good standing. Yet the churches do not want to lose members.

The result has been that many churches

on the local scene have been tolerant when church members marry according to tribal custom rather than in the church. Little or no church discipline is imposed. Some churches have gone so far as to adopt a "Service of Blessing" to be used for those who have entered into so-called "trial marriages," even though this has no legality.

If new converts are already married according to tribal marriage, many churches agree to baptize them. Additional problems are presented if the African is a polygamist, having more than one wife. The Anglican Lambeth Conference of 1888 "was prepared in some cases to admit them [polygamists] to baptism and other Protestant churches from time to time did the same thing," according to the Hastings report. Nevertheless, the official position of most churches has remained against polygamy, although being prone to consider the secondary wives of polygamists more leniently.

Early in 1972 the Vatican yielded to pressure and issued new rules for the initiating of adults, calling for a category of "sympathizers" for those who practice polygamy. These converts are able to share in many activities of the church, although officially they must give up polygamy before baptism.

In contrast to the official position of some churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Liberia has been baptizing polygamists for over twenty years on the stipulation that no more wives were to be acquired. In justification of this policy, Currens and Payne contend, in their joint paper: "This policy is a vivid witness to the gracious God who meets men where they are and accepts them as they are, and then by His Spirit transforms their lives. It is grace-in-action to the African of this generation."

"THE VAST GREY AREA"

In the view of clerics Currens and Payne, "The real issue confronting the church is not the fact of plural marriage, but rather how to deal with the vast grey area of unresolved difficulties in the relationship between men and women who are unmarried or who are so-called monogamists."

Their report continues: "It is highly questionable in fact whether 90 percent of the Lutheran Church in Liberia is 'monogamous,' if by that is meant a marriage union in which the husband and wife are faithful to each other. What does exist among the majority of members are varying degrees of extra-marital liaisons—from casual adultery, or the temporary taking of a lover while the wife is nursing a child, to covert but established concubinage. Such relationships are sanctioned by tribal culture and almost universally practiced in the Westernized segment of society."

With what result? The same Lutheran report continues: "The church's policy in effect has been most fertile ground for the flourishing of deception and hypocrisy. . . . Is there not something seriously wrong when Christians resort to deception in order to stay within the church?"

WHAT IS WRONG?

Yes, there is no doubt about it, something is seriously wrong! There is a reaping of what has been sown. A hypocritical church produces hypocritical members. Rather than teaching the African converts deep respect for God and his principles that must be observed impartially the world around, compromise and accommodation have become the policy. The making of converts and the keeping of them at any price is the apparent objective. Seldom is a member excommunicated because of adultery or "trial mar-

riage." Polygamy is tolerated and excused.

Christendom has furnished no stabilizing force in marriage as social change sweeps the continent, setting increasing numbers morally adrift. Commenting on the sad results in his report on marriage in South Africa, D. W. T. Shropshire stated: "Our Native townships are full of men and women who are not married by either Christian rites or Native custom and are not subject to the discipline of either code."

WHERE CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE IS SUCCEEDING

Christendom has admittedly failed to help the African to adopt Christian standards in marriage. But does this mean that Christian marriage cannot be successful in Africa? No, for there is a big difference between what is taught or allowed in the churches of Christendom and what the Bible teaches and prompts genuine Christians to do.

Conclusive proof is offered in the lives of Jehovah's Christian witnesses, now numbering over one quarter of a million in Africa. They have learned God's standards as set forth in the Bible and are happily enjoying within their families the benefits and blessings that result. Africans are showing themselves quite capable of upholding God's lofty marital standards without the need for special concessions.

"Trial marriage" is rejected for what it is: fornication. Heeding the Bible's advice to marry "only in the Lord" gives assurance that one will have a fellow believer as a mate. (1 Cor. 7:39) Truly Christian parents do not make dowries unreasonable, if they are asked for at all. A chance is taken that barrenness will result, but if this does occur when children are wanted, the couple is comforted in knowing that God can correct such condition in his perfect new system. Meanwhile they can en-

joy to the full the producing of 'spiritual children' by helping others into the way of salvation.

True Christians in Africa have no hesitation in going to their Kingdom Halls for their marriage ceremonies and to receive good advice from an elder on marriage responsibilities and privileges. There is no charge for this service. Afterward they make sure their marriages are properly registered.

Love and respect help to keep the Christian couple devoted to God and to one another, letting no others come within this marriage bond to create jealousy or to sully the marriage bed. (1 Cor. 7:1-5) The marriage is elevated and takes on true dignity as the man is encouraged to assume his headship and 'love his wife as he does himself.' Christ becomes the model in the way he loves the congregation. The wife, in turn, is taught to show "deep respect for her husband." Together they make it their objective to train their children in the loving atmosphere of a Christian home.—Eph. 5:21-33; 6:1-4.

One who is now a Witness was formerly baptized a Catholic though still a polygamist and a practitioner of fetish religion. As one of Jehovah's witnesses, he is no longer a polygamist. Two of his former wives are also Witnesses now. One of them has since remarried and is serving as a full-time evangelizer. In his now jealousy-free home, this former polygamist declares: "My conscience is clear because I am following Jesus' counsel to have only one wife. I know that I am conforming to the Lord's arrangement for responsible Christians."

MOVED TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS

Sincere, God-fearing Africans by the thousands are making adjustments in their personal lives every year in order to meet the Bible's standards and to qualify for Christian baptism by Jehovah's witnesses.

If one is living in a "trial marriage" or if married according to tribal custom, assistance is given to have the marriage registered, impressing upon all concerned that the couple assumes full marital responsibilities and privileges.

If one is already a polygamist when learning God's truth, there is naturally an emotional struggle in mind and heart. There are economic factors, too, as such additional wives and children were useful formerly in planting and harvesting crops. But when a person truly loves God, this motivates him to put away all but the one that is truly his wife, the senior one. This he is willing to do even though he may have built up greater affection for a younger second wife, or perhaps the senior wife is not as interested in studying the Bible as one of the secondary wives.—Prov. 5:18.

Provision is made for all the secondary wives to be sent away, either to return to their parents' homes, if this is satisfactory, or to live in separate homes. Matters are handled honorably. Adequate provision is made for the care of the children too. And the fields are not neglected, for the Witnesses help one another according to the need, moving from farm to farm until the heavy work of planting and harvesting is done.

As they study the Bible sincere Africans do observe that polygamy was practiced in patriarchal times and not proscribed under the Mosaic law. However, rather than endeavoring to reach back to this pre-Christian time for a precedent to excuse polygamy or unscriptural divorce, true worshipers look closer to see what God's will is for Christians today.

Jesus said that the pre-Christian provisions for divorce on varied grounds were made 'because of the hardheartedness of the people.' If one argues for divorce on any ground, or for having more than one

wife as a polygamist, he is, in effect, saying to God, 'I would like for an allowance to be made in view of my hardheartedness.' Jesus upheld God's standard of monogamy that prevailed in Eden wherein only "two will be one flesh." This will be the standard in his new system of things; therefore, it is fitting now that this be the practice in the Christian congregation.—Matt. 19:3-8.

Christian marriage is succeeding in Africa. Despite the miserable failure of

Christendom to teach the African population how to live a Christian life and to resist the moral decay that is undermining marriage, Jehovah's Christian witnesses provide the proof that Christian marriage is successful. They are teaching their fellow Africans how to live happily in Christian marriage too. They are heeding the Bible's admonition: "Let marriage be honorable among all, and the marriage bed be without defilement, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers."—Heb. 13:4.

How Do You View MATERIAL POSSESSIONS?

CAN you imagine a house literally full of thousands of fine gifts of all kinds and varieties? Would you like to live there and receive many of those gifts from your father as head of that home?

Actually, you already live in such a home—this planet Earth—and Jehovah God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, has filled it with an amazing variety of good things. (Jas. 1:17) As the psalmist wrote: "How many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made. The earth is full of your productions."—Ps. 104:24.

Any father who really loves his children finds delight in giving them things and seeing their happiness over the gift. And

Helpful facts that young people want to know

this is true of God as our heavenly Father. (Compare Matthew 7:9-11.) He purposed that humans should enjoy to the full all the fine things the earth contains—foods, materials for clothing, gems, wood and metals with which to make an immense variety of articles, animals for man's interest and use in getting work done.

But, strangely enough, our getting full enjoyment from these material provisions—in fact, our getting full enjoyment from life itself—depends very much on our *not* making them the big thing in our lives. How can that be? It is because there are other things that are so much more valuable than material possessions.

You can probably remember how, when

you were quite small, you became very upset and maybe even 'threw a tantrum' when some other child wanted to play with a toy of yours. Looking back, that attitude probably seems foolish to you now. Your sense of values has improved. But it is easy to slip back into that childish way if we are not on guard. We need to keep reminding ourselves of what really matters in life.

You doubtless know some young people that give a lot of importance to material possessions. To some, for example, having a transistor radio or tape recorder, or a stereo outfit, certain special items of clothing, a camera, a motor scooter or, in wealthier lands, even their own car, is what they seem to prize the most. Some put far more interest in those things than they do in their schooling, their families or anything else. They may also tend to evaluate others, yourself included, by what these have in the way of such material possessions. Does this make sense?

Stop and think about it. Does your having or not having such material possessions really make any difference in what you are as a person? Are you a better person if you have them, or a worse person if you do not? Actually, the most valuable possessions, the ones that really determine your worth as a person and the ones that can bring you the most satisfaction and happiness, are of a *different kind*. Can you think of what some of these more valuable possessions would be?

POSSESSIONS BRINGING GREATER, MORE LASTING, HAPPINESS

What about *knowledge*? Compare the value, say, of knowing another language with owning a stereo outfit or a transistor radio. True, with those items you can enjoy hearing other people talk and sing—in your language. But with knowledge of a second language you yourself might be

in position to talk with as many as one hundred million more people on earth than you can with just the language you presently know. If you ever had opportunity to travel to other lands, such knowledge could add immensely to your enjoyment of the trip—far more than having along a transistor radio.

Similarly with getting knowledge of *how to do things*. To learn how to be a good cook or a capable seamstress or an able carpenter or to be good at making mechanical repairs—these could be of far greater future value to you in doing something worth while in your life, for yourself and for others, than having certain material possessions.

The most valuable knowledge, of course, is that of God's Word. With it you can bring comfort and hope to persons who are heartbroken and in despair, yes, in a way that music from a stereo set never could. You can, in fact, even *save lives* with knowledge of God's truth. What material possessions can you think of that would do that? No wonder the wise man urges young persons to make the purchase he recommends when saying: "Buy truth itself and do not sell it—wisdom and discipline and understanding. The father of a righteous one will without fail be joyful; the one becoming father to a wise one will also rejoice in him. Your father and your mother will rejoice, and she that gave birth to you will be joyful."—Prov. 23:23-25.

Think, too, how much more valuable a *good name* or *reputation* is than having material possessions. (Prov. 22:1) If you are known for being unselfish, honest, diligent, reliable and respectful, that can make you a welcome sight far more than any special kind of clothes could ever do. Such a reputation can cause you to be sought after as a valuable friend or as a work-

mate or employee. It can bring invitations from persons to visit them or to do things with them, to share their good things with them. Would this not solve any problem of loneliness far better than even a television set?

Really, so much of our happiness in life depends on having the assurance that we are appreciated, that we matter to others, that we contribute something to their lives that they would miss if we were not living. Being rich in fine qualities will cause you to be appreciated far more by the best of people than would your being rich in material possessions. As the book of wise sayings puts it: "The one loving purity of heart—for the charm of his lips the king will be his companion." "Anyone of little means who is walking in his integrity is better than the one crooked in his lips, and the one that is stupid. The desirable thing in earthling man is his loving-kindness; and one of little means is better than a lying man."—Prov. 22:11; 19:1, 22.

The young man Timothy had the privilege of being selected to accompany the apostle Paul on his missionary journeys. This was not because of Timothy's material possessions but because of his fine qualities, reported on by Christians in two cities of Asia Minor. (Acts 16:1-4) The experience that Timothy gained as a result was beyond price and qualified him later to take on special assignments himself as a man in whom the apostle could place great trust. That Timothy did not make material possessions the big thing in his life is seen from Paul's statement made when sending Timothy to the con-

gregation in Philippi in Macedonia: "I have no one else of a disposition like his who will genuinely care for the things pertaining to you. For all the others are seeking their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know the proof he [Timothy] gave of himself."—Phil. 2:19-23.

Are not genuine friends far

more valuable than material possessions? True, when one has certain material possessions they may seem to give a lot of "prestige" in youthful groups, and others may flock around to enjoy these, like flies flock around food. But when the food is gone, the flies go. And many so-called "friends" are the same. That was the way the prodigal son found it to be when his money ran out. (Luke 15:11-16) You might have a stereo set or even an automobile and this might attract other young people to you. But what if you lose that attractive possession or what if someone else gets a better, more modern set or a fancier automobile, how many of those "friends" will stay with you?

But true friends will appreciate you for what you *are* and not for what you have. "A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress." (Prov. 17:17; 18:24) More than this, Jehovah himself will be your friend if you make his service the big thing in your life, and "when Jehovah takes pleasure in the ways of a man he causes even his enemies themselves to be at peace with him."—Prov. 16:7.

Realize, too, that such things as knowledge, a fine personality and genuine friends are things that can neither be stolen nor do they wear out and lose their value with

THE NEXT ISSUE

- Approach to Jehovah or to the Demons—Which?
- You Benefit from Jehovah's Wisdom.
- What Kind of Ruler Does Mankind Need?

time and use. But people can steal or destroy your material possessions. God's Son wisely counseled therefore: "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt. 6:20, 21) If you have and maintain a good name with God, your future happiness is secure, certain, and you will in time, in his new order, be able to enjoy to the full all the treasure of good things this earth contains.

ENCOURAGING EXAMPLES

You have splendid examples in the Bible of persons who did not put material possessions first in their lives. Moses was one. Born a Hebrew but, by unusual circumstances, brought up in the house of Pharaoh by Pharaoh's daughter, he developed a right sense of values as a young man. When grown up, he "refused to be called the son of the daughter of Pharaoh, choosing to be ill-treated with the people of God rather than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin, because he esteemed the reproach of the Christ as riches greater than the treasures of Egypt; for he looked intently toward the payment of the reward." (Heb. 11:23-26) True, he gave up a lot in a material way. But he gained tremendous privileges in leading the nation of Israel out of Egypt and to the Promised Land, transmitting God's law to them and writing several books of the Bible. And even greater blessings await him in a resurrection in God's approaching new order. Who has not heard of Moses? All can benefit from his inspired writings in the Bible. But who today knows the rich Pharaoh of that time or his daughter? And what did they accomplish that really had lasting benefits and results?

The finest example, of course, is that of God's Son. As 2 Corinthians 8:9 says:

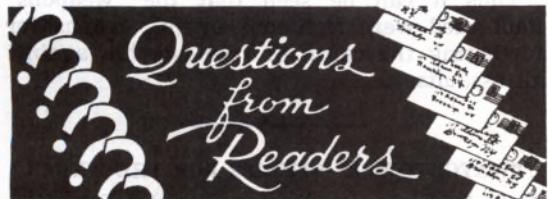
"For you know the undeserved kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich he became poor for your sakes, that you might become rich through his poverty." The apostle Paul and other disciples followed Jesus' fine example. Paul could speak of himself and his companions as "poor but making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things." (2 Cor. 6:10; compare Philippians 3:7, 8.) You have only to read the account of the Acts of the Apostles to appreciate what a rich and interesting life they had. As Jesus said, there truly is "more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) You will find that to be so if you prove it for yourself.

SHOW STRENGTH AND WISDOM

So, then, why let the present commercial systems with their high-powered advertising pressure you into building your life around material possessions? Why enrich them and in the end impoverish yourself as far as the really worthwhile things in life are concerned? Why not show real strength to resist the pull of materialism and show determination to get the most out of life by seeking things of greater value than material possessions?

This is especially vital now. Bible prophecies show that the present system, with all its commercialism, is nearing its end. Making too much of material things would be a trap for us, diverting our attention from the urgency of our times. We could find ourselves bogged down in this system and be swept away with it when God cleans it out and brings in his new order. As Jesus warned: "Keep your eyes open and guard against every sort of covetousness, because even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses."—Luke 12:15; consider the illustration he gave in verses 16-21.

Not that we should be without any possessions at all. But we do not want them to run our life. And we should be able to distinguish between possessions that will really contribute to genuine happiness and those that actually could hinder our gaining that goal.



- Is it proper for a Christian to have a pet sterilized or to have it "put to sleep"?—U.S.A.

There are no specific statements in the Holy Scriptures that rule out a Christian's sterilizing or taking the life of an animal.

According to the Mosaic law, a castrated animal was unfit for sacrifice. It stated: "[An animal] having the testicles squeezed or crushed or pulled off or cut off you must not present to Jehovah, and in your land you should not render them up." (Lev. 22:24) This law did not specifically prohibit castration, but it evidently did cause the Israelites to refrain from this practice.

Christians, however, do not offer animal sacrifices; they are not under the Mosaic law. (Rom. 6:14) Hence the command at Leviticus 22:24 would not prohibit them from sterilizing a pet. There are other factors that govern a Christian's decision regarding what he might do to or for his animals.

The Bible shows that Jehovah God gave man dominion over the animal creation. (Gen. 1:28) He may, therefore, use animals for food and clothing. He may also kill animals that are definitely injurious to his welfare. (Gen. 3:21; 9:3; Ex. 21:28, 29; 1 Sam. 17:34, 35) Man's rightful interests and welfare always take precedence.

So a Christian has the right to determine what he considers best respecting his animals, including pets. He can decide whether it would be in his or his family's best interests to have

Whatever possessions you have, then, make it your aim to use them for the good of others and especially to "honor Jehovah with your valuable things." (Prov. 3:9) For "valuable things will be of no benefit on the day of fury, but righteousness itself will deliver from death."—Prov. 11:4.

a pet sterilized or "put to sleep." He, of course, should recognize that a Christian does not cruelly mistreat animals. Proverbs 12:10 says: "The righteous one is caring for the soul of his domestic animal, but the mercies of the wicked ones are cruel." The person who is brutal with his animals, causing them needless suffering, shows disregard for God's creation; what he considers 'merciful treatment' is actually "cruel." The Christian, on the other hand, appreciates the needs of his animals and has feelings for their welfare. In the case of an animal that is suffering from serious disease or injury, or that cannot be properly cared for without imposing undesirable burdens, he may feel that it would be the wise and merciful course to put it to death. The Christian is responsible to make his own decision in this regard.

- What does 2 Corinthians 6:7 mean when it refers to "weapons of righteousness on the right hand and on the left"?—U.S.A.

Second Corinthians 6:7 is part of a discussion about how the apostle Paul and his fellow workers recommended themselves as God's ministers. One of the ways they did so was "through the weapons of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." This may allude to the fact that anciently the right hand was used to wield the sword and the left hand to hold the shield. In any event, assaulted from all sides, Paul and his associates were fully armed to wage spiritual warfare.

This spiritual warfare is described at 2 Corinthians 10:3-5: "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage warfare according to what we are in the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful by God for overturning strongly entrenched things. For we are overturning reasonings and every lofty thing raised up against the knowl-

edge of God." So that the Christian congregation at Corinth would not be led away from faithful devotion to Christ, Paul waged this spiritual warfare against false teachers and "superfine apostles."—2 Cor. 10:8-10; 11:12-14; 12:11.

As to the flesh, Paul and his fellow workers were imperfect men, with sinful inclinations. But they did not resort to weapons of the fallen flesh—cunning, deceit or trickery. (2 Cor. 11:3, 13; 12:16) They did not rely on human ability, wisdom and power. By avoiding extravagance of speech or display of human wisdom and its power to persuade, they could help others to build up faith through God's spirit and power. (1 Cor. 2:2-5) The chief weapon for overturning wrong reasonings was God's "word" or 'message.'—Heb. 4:12; Titus 1:9.

Deep love and concern for others prompted them to wage spiritual warfare. Their motivations were in no way fleshly. They did not seek honor, riches or influence. As Paul told the Corinthians: "If we have sown spiritual things to you out of weakness, we shall also reap a weak harvest; but if we have sown good things to you out of strength, we shall reap a corresponding strong harvest."—1 Cor. 4:15-16.

Second Corinthians 10:3 says: "We do not war against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against wickednesses, and against all that is unrighteousness." Paul adds: "We do not fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against wickednesses, and against all unrighteousness."—Eph. 6:12.

Paul's spiritual warfare was directed against the world rulers of this present darkness, against wickednesses, and against all unrighteousness. He did not fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against wickednesses, and against all that is unrighteousness.

things to you, is it something great if we shall reap things for the flesh from you? If other men partake of this authority over you, do we not much more so? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this authority, but we are bearing all things, in order that we might not offer any hindrance to the good news about the Christ." (1 Cor. 9:11, 12) "We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one."—2 Cor. 7:2.

Thus it can be seen that the "weapons" Paul used were righteous or just means for furthering the cause of true worship against all assaults.

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