

# THE WATCHTOWER

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ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

## Does God Really Care?



October 1, 2003

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THE PURPOSE OF THE WATCHTOWER is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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# MANY QUESTIONS Few Satisfying Answers

ON THE morning of All Saints' Day, November 1, 1755, a powerful earthquake struck the city of Lisbon while most of its citizens were in church. Thousands of buildings collapsed, and tens of thousands of people were killed.

Shortly after that tragedy, the French writer Voltaire published his *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne* (*Poem on the Lisbon Disaster*), in which he dismissed the claim that the catastrophe was divine retribution for the sins of the people. Asserting that such calamitous events were beyond human understanding or explanation, Voltaire wrote:

*Nature is mute, we question her in vain;  
We need a God who speaks  
to the human race.*

Voltaire, of course, was not the first one to bring up questions about God. Throughout human history, tragedies and disasters have raised questions in people's mind. Thousands of years ago, the patriarch Job, who had just lost all his children and who was in the throes of a terrible disease, asked: "Why does [God] give light to one having trouble, and life to those bitter of soul?" (Job 3:20) Today, many wonder how a good and loving God can seemingly remain passive in the face of so much suffering and injustice.



*The destruction of Lisbon in 1755 moved Voltaire to assert that such events were beyond human understanding*

Confronted with the reality of famine, war, sickness, and death, many reject outright the notion of a Creator who cares about mankind. One atheistic philosopher observed: "Nothing can excuse God for allowing the suffering of a child, . . . unless, of course, he does not exist." Major tragedies, such as the Holocaust during World War II, give rise to similar conclusions. Note this comment in a newsletter by a Jewish writer: "By far the simplest explanation for Auschwitz is that there is no God to intervene in human affairs." According to a 1997 survey conducted in France, a predominantly Catholic country, some 40 percent of the people doubt the existence of God because of genocides, such as the one that took place in Rwanda in 1994.

## An Obstacle to Faith?

Why does God not intervene to prevent bad things from happening? One Catholic chronicler contends that this question is "a



Many doubt the existence of God because of the tragic results of genocides, such as the one in Rwanda

serious obstacle to faith" for many. He asks: "Indeed, is it possible to believe in a God who stands by helplessly while millions of innocent people die and whole populations in the world are massacred and who does nothing to prevent it?"

An editorial in the Catholic newspaper *La Croix* likewise comments: "Whether it be tragedies from history, technological dramas, natural disasters, organized crimes, or the death of a loved one, in each case, horrified eyes look up to the sky. Where is God? They demand an answer. Is he not the Great Indifferent One, the Great Absent One?"

Pope John-Paul II dealt with this issue in his 1984 apostolic letter *Salvifici Doloris*. He wrote: "Whereas the exis-

tence of the world opens the eyes, as it were, of the human soul to the existence of God, to his wisdom, power and greatness, evil and suffering seem to obscure this image, sometimes in a radical way, especially in the daily drama of so many cases of undeserved suffering and of so many faults without proper punishment."

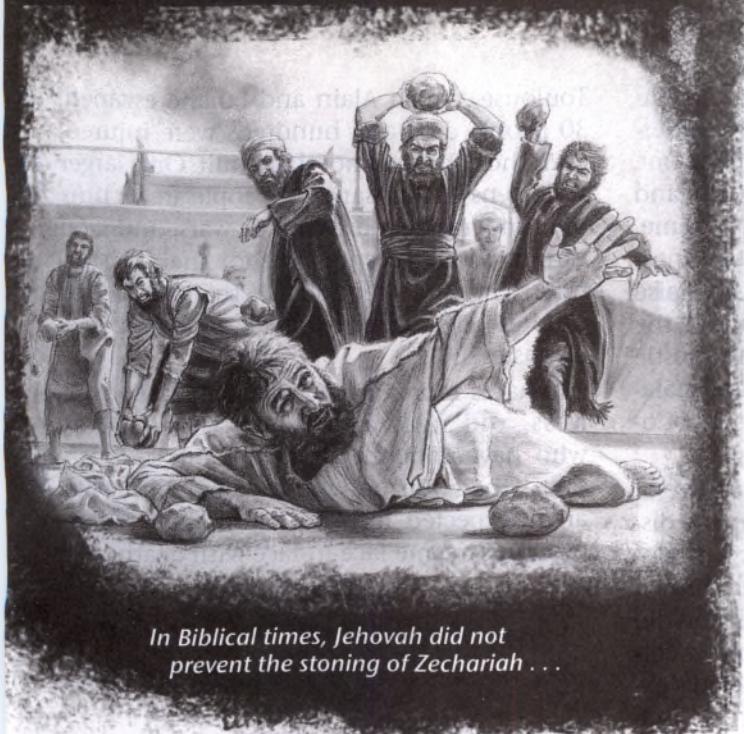
Is the existence of an all-loving and all-powerful God, as presented in the Bible, compatible with the prevalence of human suffering? Does he intervene to prevent individual or collective tragedies? Does he do anything for us today? Is there, to quote Voltaire, "a God who speaks to the human race" to answer these questions? Please read the next article for the answer.

## Divine Intervention WHAT CAN WE EXPECT?

IN THE eighth century B.C.E., 39-year-old King Hezekiah of Judah learned that he had a terminal illness. Devastated by the news, Hezekiah beseeched God in prayer to cure him. God responded through his prophet: "I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears. Here I am adding onto your days fifteen years."—Isaiah 38:1-5.

Why did God intervene on that particular occasion? Centuries earlier, God had promised righteous

King David: "Your house and your kingdom will certainly be steadfast to time indefinite before you; your very throne will become one firmly established to time indefinite." God also revealed that the Messiah would be born in David's line. (2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm



*In Biblical times, Jehovah did not prevent the stoning of Zechariah . . .*

89:20, 26-29; Isaiah 11:1  
When Hezekiah fell ill, he did not as yet have a son. Thus, the royal Davidic line was in danger of being broken. Divine intervention in Hezekiah's case served the specific purpose of preserving the lineage leading to the Messiah.

To fulfill his promises, Jehovah was motivated to intervene in behalf of his people on numerous occasions throughout the pre-Christian era. Moses declared in connection with the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt: "It was because of Jehovah's loving you, and because of his keeping the sworn statement that he had sworn to your forefathers,

that Jehovah brought you out with a strong hand."—Deuteronomy 7:8.

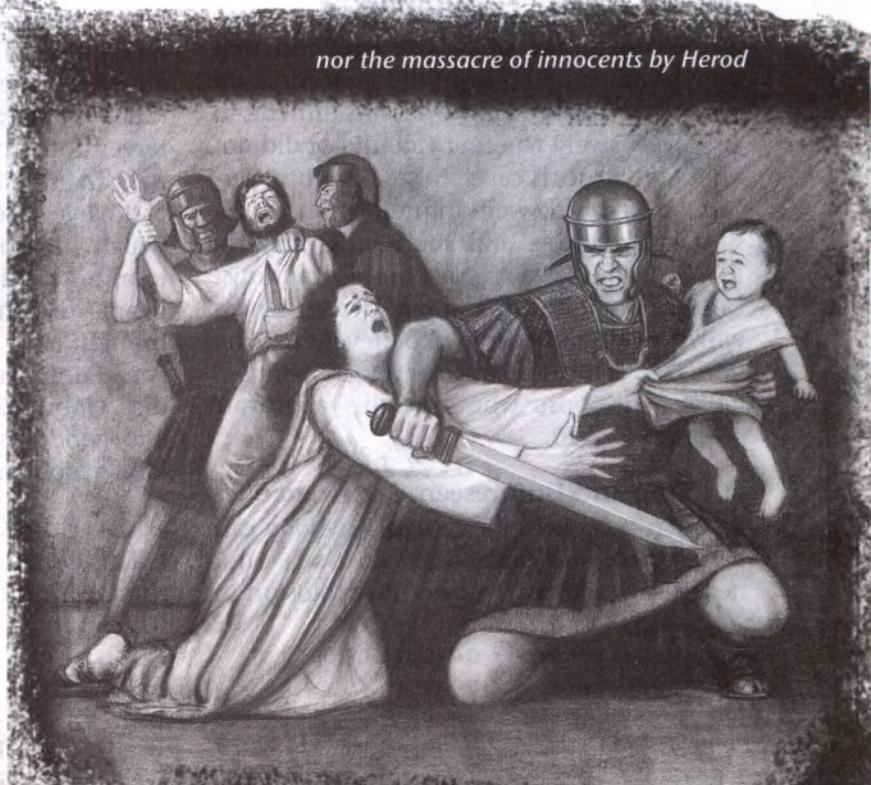
In the first century, divine intervention likewise served to further God's purposes. For example, on the road to Damascus, a Jew named Saul received a miraculous vision in order to stop him from persecuting Christ's disciples. The conversion of this man, who became the apostle Paul, played a vital role in the spreading of the good news among the nations.—Acts 9:1-16; Romans 11:13.

### **Intervention the Norm?**

Was divine intervention the rule or the exception? The Scriptures clearly show that it was by

no means the norm. Although God delivered the three young Hebrews from execution in a fiery furnace and the prophet Daniel from the lions' pit, he did not act to save other prophets from death. (2 Chronicles 24:20, 21; Daniel 3:21-27;

*nor the massacre of innocents by Herod*



6:16-22; Hebrews 11:37) Peter was miraculously delivered from the prison where Herod Agrippa I had confined him. Yet, this same king had the apostle James put to death, and God did not intervene to prevent this crime. (Acts 12:1-11) While God granted the apostles the power to cure the sick and even raise the dead, he did not consent to remove the "thorn in the flesh" that plagued the apostle Paul, which may have been a physical malady.—2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Acts 9:32-41; 1 Corinthians 12:28.

God did not intervene to prevent a wave of persecution perpetrated against Christ's disciples by the Roman Emperor Nero. Christians were tortured, burned alive, and thrown to wild animals. However, this opposition did not surprise the early Christians, and it certainly did not weaken their faith in God's existence. After all, Jesus had warned his disciples that they would be brought before the courts and that they should be ready to suffer and even die for their faith.—Matthew 10:17-22.

Just as he did in the past, today God is certainly able to deliver his servants from dangerous situations, and those who feel that they have benefited from his protection are not to be criticized. However, it is difficult to say conclusively whether God did or did not intervene in such cases. Several faithful servants of Jehovah were injured by an explosion in Toulouse, and thousands of faithful Christians died in Nazi and Communist camps or under other tragic circumstances without God's stepping in to prevent it. Why does God not systematically intervene in behalf of all those who have his approval?—Daniel 3:17, 18.

#### "Time and Unforeseen Occurrence"

When a catastrophe strikes, anybody can be affected, and faithfulness to God is not necessarily a factor. During the explosion in

Toulouse, which Alain and Liliane escaped, 30 people died and hundreds were injured, even though it was not their fault. On a larger scale, tens of thousands of people are victims of crime, reckless driving, or wars, and God cannot be held responsible for their misfortune. The Bible reminds us that "time and unforeseen occurrence befall" everyone.—Ecclesiastes 9:11.

What is more, humans are subject to sickness, old age, and death. Even some who have thought that God miraculously saved their life or who credited him with an unexpected recovery from their illness eventually came face-to-face with death. The

*"The former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart."*—Isaiah 65:17

removal of sickness and death and the 'wiping out of every tear' from human eyes are yet in the future.—Revelation 21:1-4.

For that to happen, something far more extensive and radical than an occasional intervention is needed. The Bible speaks of an event called "the great day of Jehovah." (Zephaniah 1:14) During this large-scale intervention, God will do away with all wickedness. Mankind will be offered the opportunity to live forever in perfect conditions, in which "the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart." (Isaiah 65:17) Even the dead will be brought back to life, thereby reversing what is certainly the greatest of all human tragedies. (John 5:28, 29) God in his infinite love and goodness will then have solved mankind's problems once and for all.

#### How God Intervenes Today

This does not mean, however, that God in the meantime simply observes indifferently



while creation agonizes. Today, God is holding out to all humans, regardless of their ethnic or social background, the opportunity of getting to know him and of developing a personal relationship with him. (1 Timothy 2:3, 4) Jesus described this process in these words: "No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him." (John 6:44) God draws honesthearted people to him by means of the Kingdom message proclaimed worldwide by his servants.

In addition, God takes direct action in the life of those who are willing to be guided by him. By means of his holy spirit, God is 'opening their hearts' to understand his will and to put into practice what he requires. (Acts 16:14) Yes, by providing the opportunity of getting to know him, his Word, and his purposes, God gives proof of his loving interest in each and every one of us.—John 17:3.

Finally, God helps his servants today, not by delivering them miraculously, but by giving them his holy spirit and "the power be-

*The time is at hand when suffering  
will be no more; even the dead will live again*

yond what is normal" to cope with whatever situation they may face. (2 Corinthians 4:7) The apostle Paul wrote: "For all things I have the strength by virtue of him [Jehovah God] who imparts power to me."—Philippians 4:13.

We thus have every reason to be grateful to God each day for life and for the hope that he extends to us of living forever in a world free of all suffering. "What shall I repay to Jehovah for all his benefits to me?" the psalmist asked. "The cup of grand salvation I shall take up, and on the name of Jehovah I shall call." (Psalm 116:12, 13) Regularly reading this magazine will help you to understand what God has done, is doing, and will yet do that can bring you happiness now and a solid hope for the future.—1 Timothy 4:8.

## "This Is a Revelation!"

DOROTA, a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses in Poland, accompanied her 14-year-old son on a routine visit to the school's clinic. During the examination, the doctor, Janina,\* asked Dorota about her son's duties at home.

"When I am not able to do it, my son prepares dinner for all six of us in the family," replied Dorota. "He also cleans the house and helps to make repairs around the home. He likes to read. He's a good student."

"That's incredible," said Janina. "I've been working here for 12 years, and I have never heard anything like this."

Sensing an opportunity to give a witness, Dorota explained: "Many parents today fail to give their children proper training. That is why their children often have low self-respect."

"How do you know all of this?" asked Janina. "Most parents do not have a clue about these things."

"The Bible is a precious source of such information," replied Dorota. "For example, according to Deuteronomy 6:6-9, educating our children begins with educating ourselves. Shouldn't we first instill in our own heart and mind the values we want to inculcate in our children?"

"This is incredible," Janina remarked. "This is incredible!" Then she asked Dorota how the Bible helped her in bringing up and teaching her children.

\* Not her given name.

"We study the Bible every week with our children," Dorota explained. "We use a book entitled *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*."<sup>\*</sup> She then went on to describe the book and mentioned some of the topics it covers.

"This is a revelation!" exclaimed Janina. "Could I have a look at that book?"

An hour later, Dorota returned with the book.

"What religion are you?" Janina inquired, as she examined the book.

"I am one of Jehovah's Witnesses."

"How do Jehovah's Witnesses treat those who are of another faith?"

"Just as I treat you—with respect," Dorota replied, adding: "Of course, we wish they would come to know the truth of the Bible."

"I feel so much better already," Janina confessed.

At the end of her visit, Dorota urged Janina to read the Bible. "It will give meaning to your life and help you in your work."

"You have really inspired me to do so," admitted Janina.

With tact and determination, Dorota turned a routine visit to the doctor's office into a fine witness.—1 Peter 3:15.

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



# PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE

*"Happy are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake."*

—MATTHEW 5:10.

**F**OR this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." (John 18:37) When Jesus said those words, he was before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea. Jesus was there neither of his own choice nor at the invitation of Pilate. Rather, he was there because the Jewish religious leaders falsely accused him of being a wrongdoer deserving of death.—John 18:29-31.

<sup>2</sup> Jesus knew full well that Pilate had the authority to release him or to put him to death. (John 19:10) But that did not hold him back from speaking boldly to Pilate about the Kingdom. Though Jesus' life was in danger, he seized the opportunity to bear witness to the highest governmental authority of the region. Despite that witness, Jesus was condemned and executed, dying an agonizing martyr's death on a torture stake.—Matthew 27:24-26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:24, 25; John 19:13-16.

## Witness or Martyr?

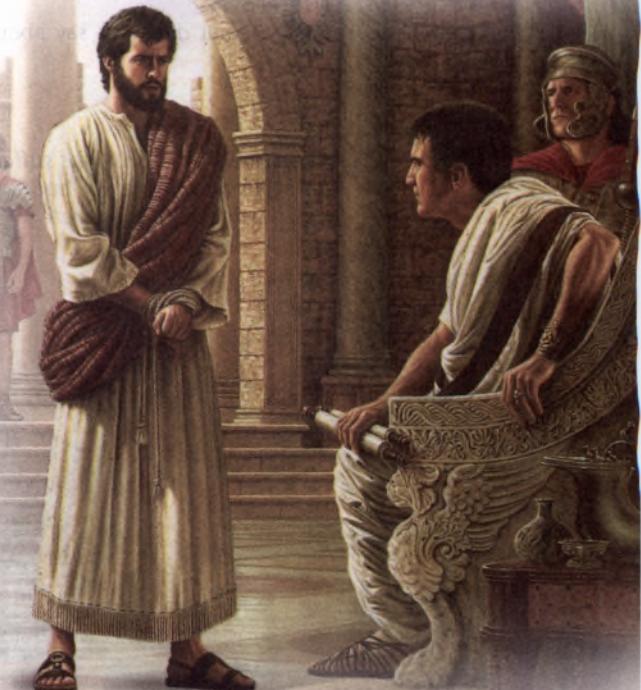
<sup>3</sup> To many people today, a martyr is more or less the equivalent of a fanatic, an extremist. Those who are willing to die for their belief, especially religious belief, often come under suspicion of being terrorists or at least of being a menace to society. However, the

1. Why was Jesus before Pontius Pilate, and what did Jesus say?
2. What action did Jesus take, leading to what outcome?
3. What did the word "martyr" mean in Bible times, but what does it mean today?

word martyr comes from a Greek term (*mar-tys*) that in Bible times meant "witness," a person who gives testimony, perhaps at a court hearing, to the truth of what he believes. It was only later that the expression came to mean "one who gives his life for bearing witness," or even bearing witness by giving one's life.

<sup>4</sup> Jesus was a martyr primarily in the earlier sense of the word. As he told Pilate, he came

4. Primarily in what sense was Jesus a martyr?



to "bear witness to the truth." His witnessing elicited very different reactions from people. Some among the common folk were deeply moved by what they heard and saw, and they put faith in Jesus. (John 2:23; 8:30) The crowds in general and the religious leaders in particular also reacted strongly—but negatively. Jesus pointed out to his unbelieving relatives: "The world has no reason to hate you, but it hates me, because I bear witness concerning it that its works are wicked." (John 7:7) For bearing witness to the truth, Jesus incurred the wrath of the nation's leaders, which led to his death. Indeed, he was "the faithful and true witness (*mar'tys*)."  
—Revelation 3:14.

#### "You Will Be Objects of Hatred"

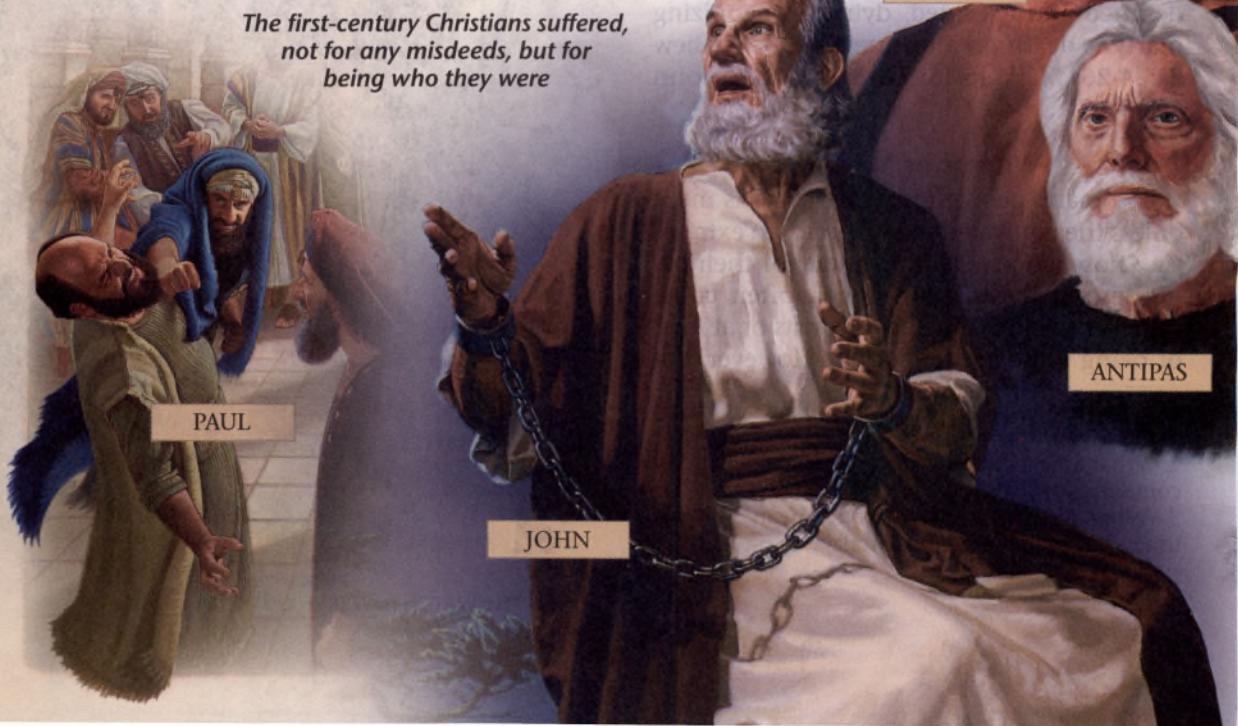
<sup>5</sup> Not only did Jesus himself suffer fierce persecution but he also forewarned his followers that the same would happen to them. Early in his ministry, Jesus told his listeners in his Sermon on the Mount: "Happy are those

5. Early in his ministry, what did Jesus say about persecution?

who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, since the kingdom of the heavens belongs to them. Happy are you when people reproach you and persecute you and lyingly say every sort of wicked thing against you for my sake. Rejoice and leap for joy, since your reward is great in the heavens."—Matthew 5: 10-12.

<sup>6</sup> Later, when sending out the 12 apostles, Jesus told them: "Be on your guard against men; for they will deliver you up to local courts, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. Why, you will be haled before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them and the nations." But religious authorities would not be the only ones to persecute the disciples. Jesus also said: "Brother

6. What warning did Jesus give when sending out the 12 apostles?



will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise up against parents and will have them put to death. And you will be objects of hatred by all people on account of my name; but he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved." (Matthew 10:17, 18, 21, 22) The history of the first-century Christians is a testimony to the truthfulness of those words.

### A Record of Faithful Endurance

<sup>7</sup> Soon after Jesus' death, Stephen became the first Christian to die for bearing witness to the truth. He was "full of graciousness and power [and] was performing great portents and signs among the people." His religious enemies "could not hold their own against the wisdom and the spirit with which he was speaking." (Acts 6:8, 10) Consumed with jealousy, they dragged Stephen before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court, where he faced his false accusers and gave a powerful witness. In the end, however, Stephen's enemies murdered this faithful witness.—Acts 7: 59, 60.

<sup>8</sup> Following the murder of Stephen, "great persecution arose against the congregation that was in Jerusalem; all except the apostles were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria." (Acts 8:1) Did persecution

7. What led to Stephen's becoming a martyr?
8. How did the disciples in Jerusalem react to the persecution that came upon them after Stephen's death?



put a stop to Christian witnessing? On the contrary, the account tells us that "those who had been scattered went through the land declaring the good news of the word." (Acts 8:4) They must have felt as the apostle Peter did when he stated earlier: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 5:29) In spite of the persecution, those faithful and courageous disciples stuck with the work of bearing witness to the truth, even though they knew that this would lead to more hardship.  
—Acts 11:19-21.

<sup>9</sup> Indeed, there was no letup as far as hardship was concerned. First, we learn that Saul—the man who approvingly witnessed the stoning of Stephen—"still breathing threat and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, in order that he might bring bound to Jerusalem any whom he found who belonged to The Way, both men and women." (Acts 9:1, 2) Then, in about the year 44 C.E., "Herod the king applied his hands to mistreating some of those of the congregation. He did away with James the brother of John by the sword."—Acts 12: 1, 2.

<sup>10</sup> The rest of the book of Acts contains an indelible record of the trials, imprisonment, and persecution endured by faithful ones like Paul, the former persecutor turned apostle, who likely suffered martyrdom at the hands of Roman Emperor Nero about 65 C.E. (2 Corinthians 11:23-27; 2 Timothy 4:6-8) Finally, in the book of Revelation, written toward the close of the first century, we find that the aged apostle John is imprisoned on the penal island of Patmos "for speaking about God and bearing witness to Jesus." Revelation also contains a reference to "Antipas, my witness,

9. What persecution continued to come upon Jesus' followers?
10. What record of persecution do we find in Acts and Revelation?

the faithful one, who was killed" in Pergamum.—Revelation 1:9; 2:13.

<sup>11</sup> All of this proved true Jesus' words to his disciples: "If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also." (John 15:20) The faithful early Christians were prepared to face the supreme test, death—by torture, by being thrown to wild beasts, or in any other manner—in order to carry out the commission from the Lord Jesus Christ: "You will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth."—Acts 1:8.

<sup>12</sup> Should anyone think that such cruel treatment of Jesus' followers happened only in the past, he would be sorely mistaken. Paul, who as we have seen endured his share of hardship, wrote: "All those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12) Regarding persecution, Peter said: "In fact, to this course you were called, because even Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely." (1 Peter 2:21) Down to these "last days" of this system of things, Jehovah's people continue to be objects of hatred and hostility. (2 Timothy 3:1) In every corner of the earth, under dictatorial regimes and in democratic lands, Jehovah's Witnesses have at one time or another suffered persecution, both individually and collectively.

### Why Hated and Persecuted?

<sup>13</sup> Even though most of us today enjoy relative freedom to preach and to meet together peacefully, we must take to heart the Bible's reminder that "the scene of this world is changing." (1 Corinthians 7:31) Things can

11. How did the course of the early Christians prove Jesus' words true with regard to persecution?
12. Why is persecution of Christians not just a matter of history?
13. What should modern-day servants of Jehovah bear in mind as far as persecution is concerned?

change so swiftly that unless we are prepared mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, we can easily stumble. What, then, can we do to protect ourselves? A powerful line of defense is to keep clearly in mind why peace-loving and law-abiding Christians are hated and persecuted.

<sup>14</sup> The apostle Peter commented on this matter in his first letter, which he wrote about 62-64 C.E., when Christians throughout the Roman Empire were undergoing trials and persecution. He said: "Beloved ones, do not be puzzled at the burning among you, which is happening to you for a trial, as though a strange thing were befalling you." To explain what he had in mind, Peter continued: "Let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a busybody in other people's matters. But if he suffers as a Christian, let him not feel shame, but let him keep on glorifying God in this name." Peter pointed out that they were suffering, not for committing any misdeeds, but for being who they were. Had they been wallowing in "the same low sink of debauchery" as the people around them, they would have been welcomed and embraced by them. As it was, they suffered because they endeavored to live up to their role as followers of Christ. The situation is the same for true Christians today.—1 Peter 4:4, 12, 15, 16.

<sup>15</sup> In many parts of the world, Jehovah's Witnesses are publicly praised for the unity and cooperation they display at their conventions and building projects, for their honesty and diligence, for their exemplary moral conduct and family life, and even for their wholesome appearance and demeanor.\* On

\* See *The Watchtower* of December 15, 1995, pages 27-9; April 15, 1994, pages 16-17; and *Awake!* of December 22, 1993, pages 6-13.

14. What did Peter point to as the reason why Christians were persecuted?
15. What contradiction is seen in the treatment of Jehovah's Witnesses today?

the other hand, their work is under ban or restriction in no less than 28 lands as of this writing, and many of the Witnesses suffer physical abuse and loss on account of their faith. Why such evident contradiction? And why does God allow it?

<sup>16</sup> First and foremost, we should keep in mind the words of Proverbs 27:11: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me." Yes, it is because of the age-old issue of universal sovereignty. In spite of the mountain of testimony provided by all those who have proved their integrity to Jehovah throughout the centuries, Satan has not stopped taunting Jehovah as he did in the days of the righteous man Job. (Job 1:9-11; 2:4, 5) No doubt, Satan has become even more frantic in his last-ditch effort to prove his claim, now that God's Kingdom is firmly established, with loyal subjects and representatives around the earth. Will these remain faithful to God regardless of what adversity and hardship may come upon them? This is a question that each servant of Jehovah must answer personally.—Revelation 12:12, 17.

<sup>17</sup> In telling his disciples about events that

16. What is the foremost reason that God permits his people to suffer persecution?
17. What did Jesus mean by the words "it will turn out to you for a witness"?

### Can You Explain?

- Primarily in what sense was Jesus a martyr?
- What effect did persecution have on first-century Christians?
- As explained by Peter, why were early Christians persecuted?
- For what reasons does Jehovah allow persecution to come upon his servants?

would take place during "the conclusion of the system of things," Jesus indicated another reason why Jehovah permits persecution to come upon his servants. He told them: "You [will be] haled before kings and governors for the sake of my name. It will turn out to you for a witness." (Matthew 24:3, 9; Luke 21:12, 13) Jesus himself bore witness before Herod and Pontius Pilate. The apostle Paul too was "haled before kings and governors." Directed by the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul sought to give a witness to the most powerful ruler of the day when he declared: "I appeal to Caesar!" (Acts 23:11; 25:8-12) Likewise today, challenging situations have often resulted in a fine witness being given both to officials and to the public.\*

<sup>18</sup> Finally, coping with trials and tribulations can benefit us personally. In what way? The disciple James reminded his fellow Christians: "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet with various trials, knowing as you do that this tested quality of your faith works out endurance." Yes, persecution can refine our faith and strengthen our endurance. Thus, we do not dread it, nor do we seek unscriptural means to evade or end it. Rather, we heed James' admonition: "Let endurance have its work complete, that you may be complete and sound in all respects, not lacking in anything."—James 1:2-4.

<sup>19</sup> Even though God's Word helps us to understand why God's faithful servants are persecuted and why Jehovah permits it, that does not necessarily make persecution easy to bear. What can fortify us to withstand it? What can we do when we are faced with persecution? We will consider these important matters in the next article.

\* See *Awake!* of January 8, 2003, pages 3-11.

18, 19. (a) How will coping with trials benefit us? (b) What questions will be considered in the next article?

# ENDURANCE UNDER TRIALS BRINGS PRAISE TO JEHOVAH

*"If, when you are doing good and you suffer, you endure it, this is a thing agreeable with God."—1 PETER 2:20.*

CHRISTIANS are dedicated to Jehovah and want to do his will. To live up to their dedication, they do their utmost to follow in the footsteps of their Exemplar, Jesus Christ, and to bear witness to the truth. (Matthew 16:24; John 18:37; 1 Peter 2:21) However, Jesus and other faithful ones gave their life and died as martyrs for their faith. Does this mean that all Christians can expect to die for their faith?

<sup>2</sup> As Christians, we are exhorted to be faithful until death, not necessarily to die for our faith. (2 Timothy 4:7; Revelation 2:10) This means that while we are willing to suffer—and, if necessary, to die—for our faith, we do not relish the thought of doing so. We take no delight in suffering and derive no pleasure from pain or humiliation. Since trials and persecution are to be expected, however, we need to consider carefully how we might act when such do come upon us.

## Faithful Under Test

<sup>3</sup> In the Bible, we find numerous accounts that show how servants of God in the past reacted when they faced situations that were life threatening. The different ways in which they responded provide guidance for Christians today if ever these have to face similar

1. Since true Christians are concerned about living up to their dedication, what question must be considered?
2. How do Christians view trials and suffering?
3. What Biblical examples of dealing with persecution can you relate? (See box "How They Dealt With Persecution," on the next page.)

challenges. Consider the accounts in the box "How They Dealt With Persecution," and see what you can learn from them.

<sup>4</sup> Although Jesus and other faithful servants of God reacted to persecution differently, depending on circumstances, it is clear that they did not needlessly jeopardize their life. When they found themselves in dangerous situations, they were courageous yet cautious. (Matthew 10:16, 23) Their objective was to advance the preaching work and to maintain their integrity to Jehovah. Their reactions in various situations provide examples for those Christians who today are faced with trials and persecution.

<sup>5</sup> In modern times, Jehovah's people have often found themselves under conditions of extreme hardship and deprivation because of wars, bans, or outright persecution. For example, in the 1960's, Jehovah's Witnesses in Malawi were bitterly persecuted. Their Kingdom Halls, homes, food supplies, and businesses—practically all that they owned—were destroyed. They were subjected to beatings and other harrowing experiences. How did the brothers react? Thousands had to flee their villages. Many found refuge in the bush, while others went into temporary exile in neighboring Mozambique. Though many faithful ones lost their life, others chose to flee from the danger zone, which was appar-

4. What can be said about the way Jesus and other faithful servants reacted when they were under trial?
5. What persecution arose in Malawi in the 1960's, and how did the Witnesses there react?

ently a reasonable course under such circumstances. In so doing, the brothers followed the precedent set by Jesus and Paul.

<sup>6</sup> Even though the Malawian brothers had to move away or go into hiding, they sought and followed theocratic direction and carried on their Christian activities underground as best they could. The result? A peak of 18,519 Kingdom publishers had been reached just before the ban in 1967. Though the ban was

6. What did the Malawian Witnesses not forsake in spite of fierce persecution?

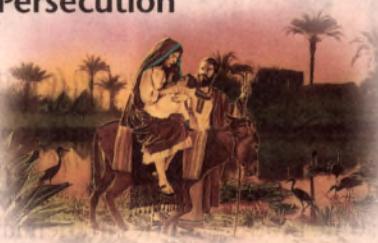
still in force and many had fled to Mozambique, by 1972 a new peak of 23,398 publishers was reported. They averaged more than 16 hours in the ministry each month. Without a doubt, their actions brought praise to Jehovah, and Jehovah's blessing was upon those faithful brothers through that most difficult time.\*

\* The events of the 1960's were but the first of a series of bitter and murderous persecution that the Witnesses in Malawi had to endure over nearly three decades. For a complete account, see *1999 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, pages 171-212.

## How They Dealt With Persecution

- Before Herod's soldiers arrived in Bethlehem to kill all male infants two years of age and under, by angelic direction Joseph and Mary took the infant Jesus and fled to Egypt.

—Matthew 2:13-16.



- Numerous times during Jesus' ministry, his enemies sought to kill him because of his powerful witness. Jesus eluded them on each occasion.—Matthew 21:45, 46; Luke 4:28-30; John 8:57-59.

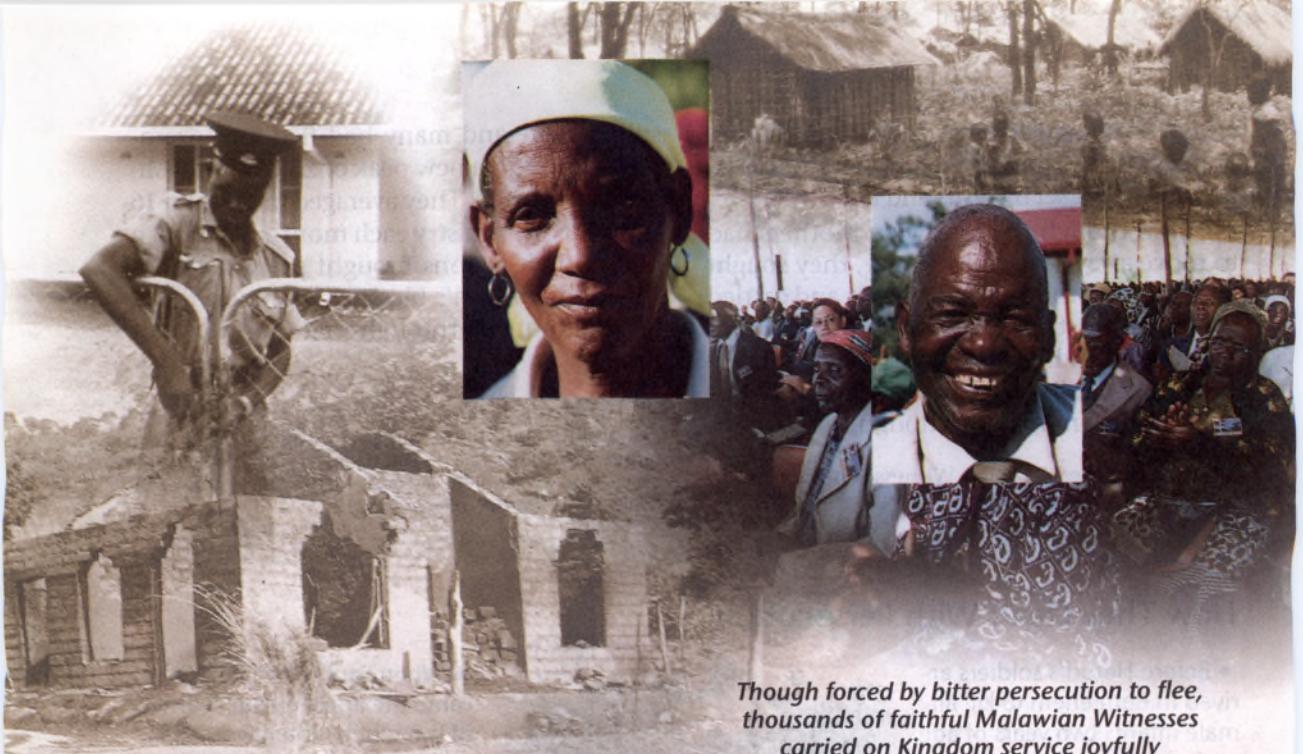
- When soldiers and officers came to the garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, he openly identified himself, twice telling them: "I am he." He even stopped his followers from putting up any resistance and let the mob take him away.—John 18:3-12.

- In Jerusalem, Peter and others were arrested, flogged, and ordered to stop speaking about Jesus. Yet, upon being released they "went their way . . . , and every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus."—Acts 5:40-42.

- When Saul, who later became the apostle Paul, learned of the plot by the Jews in Damascus to do away with him, the brothers put him in a basket and lowered him through an opening in the city wall by night, and he escaped.—Acts 9:22-25.

- Years later, Paul chose to appeal to Caesar, even though both Governor Festus and King Agrippa found "nothing deserving death or bonds" in him.—Acts 25:10-12, 24-27; 26:30-32.





*Though forced by bitter persecution to flee, thousands of faithful Malawian Witnesses carried on Kingdom service joyfully*

<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, in countries where opposition is causing problems, some brothers may decide not to leave, even though they are able to do so. Moving away may solve certain problems, but it would probably create other challenges. For instance, would they be able to maintain contact with the Christian brotherhood and not be isolated spiritually? Would they be able to keep up their spiritual routine as they struggle to reestablish themselves, perhaps in a more affluent country or in one that provides more opportunities for material advancement?—1 Timothy 6:9.

<sup>8</sup> Others choose not to move away because they are concerned about the spiritual welfare of their brothers. They choose to stay and face the situation in order to keep preaching in their home territory and to be a source of encouragement to fellow worshipers. (Philippians 1:14) By making such a choice, some

7, 8. For what reasons do some choose not to flee, even though opposition is causing problems?

have even been able to contribute to legal victories in their land.\*

<sup>9</sup> To stay or to move—that certainly is a personal decision. Such decisions, of course, should be made only after we prayerfully seek Jehovah's direction. No matter what course we may choose, however, we must bear in mind the apostle Paul's words: "Each of us will render an account for himself to God." (Romans 14:12) As we noted earlier, what Jehovah requires is that each of his servants remain faithful under any and all circumstances. Some of his servants are facing trials and persecution today; others may do so later. All will be tested in one way or another, and no one should expect to be exempt. (John 15:19, 20) As dedicated servants of Je-

\* See the article "High Court Upholds True Worship in 'the Land of Ararat,'" in the April 1, 2003, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 11-14.

9. What factors must a person consider when deciding whether to stay or to move on account of persecution?

hovah, we cannot sidestep the universal issue involving the sanctification of Jehovah's name and the vindication of his sovereignty.  
—Ezekiel 38:23; Matthew 6:9, 10.

### "Return Evil for Evil to No One"

<sup>10</sup> Another important principle that we can learn from the way Jesus and the apostles reacted under pressure is never to retaliate against our persecutors. Nowhere in the Bible do we find any suggestion that Jesus or his followers organized themselves into some kind of resistance movement or resorted to force in order to fight against their persecutors. On the contrary, "return evil for evil to no one," the apostle Paul counseled Christians. "Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay,' says Jehovah." Moreover, "do not let yourself be conquered by the evil, but keep conquering the evil with the good." —Romans 12:17-21; Psalm 37:1-4; Proverbs 20:22.

<sup>11</sup> The early Christians took that counsel to heart. In his book *The Early Church and the World*, historian Cecil J. Cadoux describes the Christians' attitude toward the State during the period of 30-70 C.E. He writes: "We have no direct evidence that an effort was ever made on the part of the Christians of this period to withstand persecution by force. The furthest they go in this direction is to lash their rulers with spirited censure or to baffle them by flight. The normal Christian response to persecution, however, did not go beyond a temperate but firm refusal to obey such orders of the government as were felt to conflict with obedience to Christ."

<sup>12</sup> Is such a seemingly passive course really

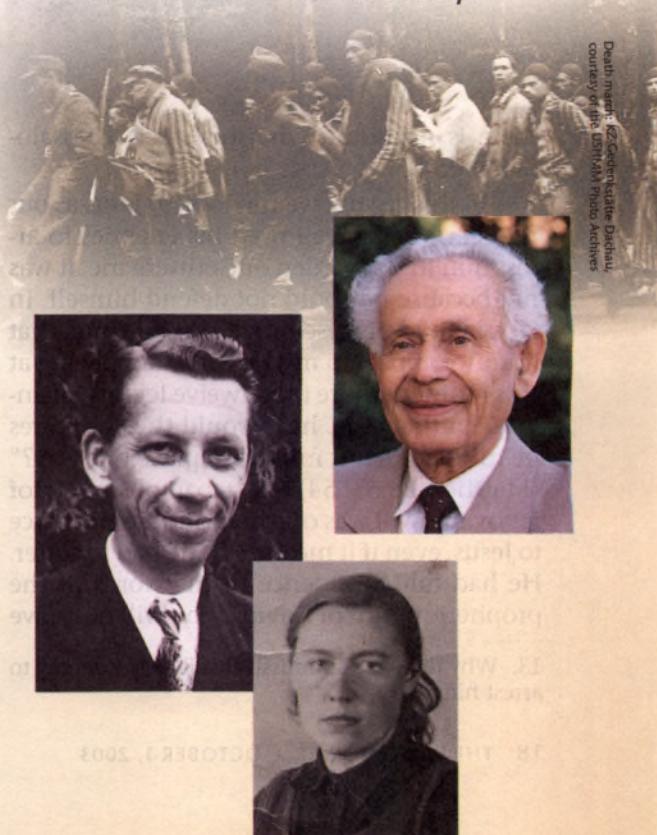
10. What important precedent did Jesus and the apostles set for us in dealing with pressures and opposition?

11. What does one historian say about the early Christians' attitude toward the State?

12. Why is it better to endure suffering than to retaliate?

practical? Would not any who react that way be easy prey for those bent on stamping them out? Would it not be prudent to defend oneself? From a human point of view, that may appear to be the case. As servants of Jehovah, however, we are confident that following Jehovah's direction in all matters is the best course. We keep in mind Peter's words: "If, when you are doing good and you suffer, you endure it, this is a thing agreeable with God." (1 Peter 2:20) We are confident that Jehovah is well aware of the situation and will not allow matters to go on indefinitely. How can we be sure of that? To his captive people in Babylon, Jehovah declared: "He that is touching you is touching my eyeball." (Zechariah 2:8) How long will anyone permit his eyeball to be touched? Jehovah will provide relief at the proper time. Of that,

*The joy of sanctifying Jehovah's name sustained these faithful ones through the Nazi death march and concentration camps*



Death march. KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau  
Courtesy of the USHMM Photo Archives



***Trials and pressures can take many forms***

my soul in Sheol. You will not allow your loyal one to see the pit." (Psalm 16:10) Years later the apostle Paul said about Jesus: "For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."—Hebrews 12:2.

**The Joy of Sanctifying Jehovah's Name**

<sup>14</sup> What was the joy that sustained Jesus through the severest test imaginable? Of all of Jehovah's servants, Jesus, God's beloved Son, was surely the foremost target of Satan. So Jesus' maintaining his integrity under test would be the ultimate reply to Satan's taunt against Jehovah. (Proverbs 27:11) Can you imagine the joy and satisfaction that Jesus must have felt upon his being resurrected? How happy he must have been, realizing that

there is no doubt whatsoever.—2 Thessalonians 1:5-8.

<sup>13</sup> In this regard, we can look to Jesus as our model. When he allowed his enemies to arrest him in the garden of Gethsemane, it was not because he could not defend himself. In fact, he told his disciples: "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father to supply me at this moment more than twelve legions of angels? In that case, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that it must take place this way?" (Matthew 26:53, 54) The accomplishment of Jehovah's will was of paramount importance to Jesus, even if it meant that he had to suffer. He had full confidence in the words of the prophetic psalm of David: "You will not leave

13. Why did Jesus submissively allow the enemy to arrest him?

14. What was the joy that sustained Jesus through all his trials?

he had fulfilled the role he had been given to play as a perfect man in the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty and the sanctification of His name! Additionally, being seated "at the right hand of the throne of God" is unquestionably a wonderful honor and the greatest source of joy for Jesus.—Psalm 110:1, 2; 1 Timothy 6:15, 16.

<sup>15</sup> For Christians, it is likewise a joy to have a share in sanctifying Jehovah's name by enduring trials and persecution, following the example of Jesus. A case in point was the experience of the Witnesses who suffered in the infamous Sachsenhausen concentration camp and survived their grueling death march at the end of World War II. During the march, thousands of prisoners died from exposure, disease, or hunger or were brutally executed right alongside the road by SS guards. The Witnesses, all 230 of them, survived by sticking closely together and helping one another at the risk of their own life.

<sup>16</sup> What gave these Witnesses the strength to endure such fiendish persecution? As soon as they reached safety, they expressed their joy and gratitude to Jehovah in a document entitled "The resolution of 230 of Jehovah's witnesses from six nationalities, gathered in a forest near Schwerin in Mecklenburg." In it, they stated: "A long hard period of testing lies behind us and those who have been preserved, snatched as it were from the fiery furnace, do not even have the smell of fire on them. (See Daniel 3:27.) To the contrary, they are full of strength and power from Jehovah and are eagerly awaiting new commands from the King to further Theocratic interests."\*

\* For the full text of this resolution, see the 1974 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, pages 208-9. A first-person account by a survivor of the march can be found in the January 1, 1998, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 25-9.

15, 16. What fiendish persecution did the Witnesses in Sachsenhausen endure, and what gave them the strength to do so?

<sup>17</sup> Like those 230 faithful ones, we too may have our faith tested, even though we have not yet "resisted as far as blood." (Hebrews 12:4) But a test can take many forms. It may be ridicule by classmates, or it may be peer pressure to commit immorality and other wrongs. In addition, the resolve to abstain from blood, to marry only in the Lord, or to bring up children in the faith in a divided household can sometimes result in severe pressures and trials.—Acts 15:29; 1 Corinthians 7:39; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Peter 3:1, 2.

<sup>18</sup> No matter what test may come upon us, however, we know that we suffer because we put first Jehovah and his Kingdom, and we count it a real privilege and joy to do so. We draw courage from Peter's reassuring words: "If you are being reproached for the name of Christ, you are happy, because the spirit of glory, even the spirit of God, is resting upon you." (1 Peter 4:14) In the power of Jehovah's spirit, we have the strength to bear up under even the most difficult trials, all to his glory and praise.—2 Corinthians 4:7; Ephesians 3:16; Philippians 4:13.

17. What forms of tests are God's people facing now?

18. What assurance do we have that we can endure even the most extraordinary trial?

### Can You Explain?

- How do Christians view suffering and persecution?
- What can we learn from the way Jesus and other faithful ones reacted when under trial?
- Why is it wise not to retaliate when we are persecuted?
- What joy sustained Jesus through his trials, and what can we learn from this?

# Appreciating the Purpose of DISCIPLINE

**W**HAT comes to mind when you hear the word "discipline"? One dictionary defines discipline as "the practice of making people obey rules or standards of behaviour, and punishing them when they do not." Although this is by no means the only accepted definition, many people today ascribe a similarly negative connotation to anything that has to do with discipline.

The Bible, however, presents discipline in a different light. "The discipline of Jehovah, O my son, do not reject," wrote wise King Solomon. (Proverbs 3:11) These words refer, not to discipline in general, but to "the discipline of Jehovah," that is, discipline based on God's lofty principles. Only such discipline is spiritually productive and beneficial—even desirable. In contrast, discipline that is based on human thinking that is in conflict with Jehovah's lofty principles is often abusive and hurtful. That explains why many have a negative attitude toward discipline.

Why are we urged to accept Jehovah's discipline? In the Scriptures, divine discipline is described as an expression of God's love for his human creatures. Thus, Solomon went on to say: "The one whom Jehovah loves he reproves, even as a father does a son in whom he finds pleasure."—Proverbs 3:12.

## Discipline or Punishment—Which?

Discipline as expressed in the Bible has many aspects—guidance, instruction, training, reproof, correction, and even punishment. However, in each case, Jehovah's disci-

pline is motivated by love, and its goal is to benefit the recipient. Jehovah's corrective discipline is never for the sole purpose of punishment.

Conversely, God's acts of punishment are not always aimed at correcting or educating the recipient. For example, from the very day Adam and Eve sinned, they began to suffer the consequences of their disobedience. Jehovah expelled them from the paradisaic garden of Eden, and they succumbed to the effects of imperfection, sickness, and old age. After hundreds of years of painful existence, they perished forever. All of this was indeed divine punishment, but it was not corrective discipline. Willful and unrepentant, Adam and Eve were beyond correction.

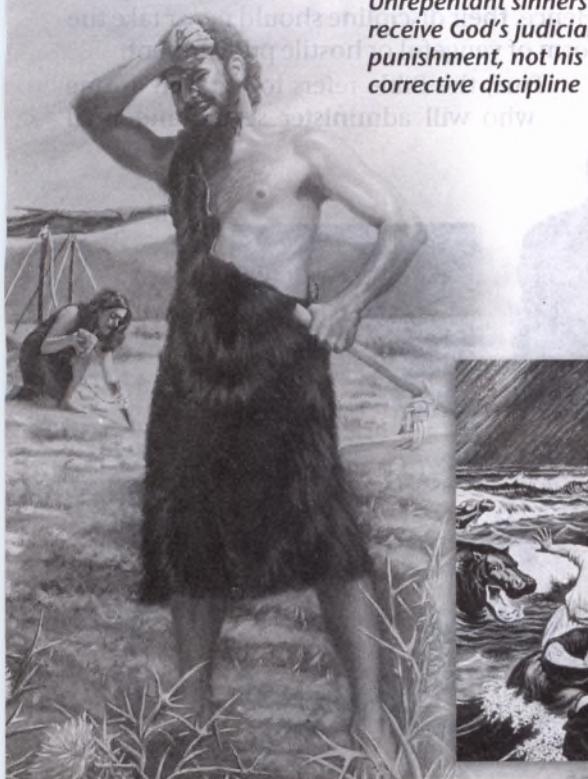
Other accounts of Jehovah's acts of punishment include the Flood in Noah's day, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the elimination of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. These actions by Jehovah were not intended to provide guidance, instruction, or training for the recipients. Regarding such acts of punishment by God, the apostle Peter wrote: "He did not hold back from punishing an ancient world, but kept Noah, a preacher of righteousness, safe with seven others when he brought a deluge upon a world of ungodly people; and by reducing the cities Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them, setting a pattern for ungodly persons of things to come."—2 Peter 2:5, 6.

In what sense were these acts of punishment "setting a pattern for ungodly persons of things to come"? In Paul's letter to

the Thessalonians, he points to our day as the time when God, through his Son, Jesus Christ, will bring "vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news." Paul adds: "These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction." (2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9) Obviously, such punishment is not designed to teach or refine those receiving it. However, when Jehovah invites his worshippers to accept his discipline, he is not referring to the punishment of unrepentant sinners.

It is significant that the Bible does not describe Jehovah primarily as a punisher. Rather, he is most often described as a loving teacher and a patient trainer. (Job 36:22; Psalm 71:17; Isaiah 54:13) Yes, godly discipline that is administered as a corrective measure is always accompanied by love and patience. By understanding the purpose of discipline, Christians are in a better position to accept and to administer discipline with the right attitude.

*Unrepentant sinners receive God's judicial punishment, not his corrective discipline*



## The Discipline of Loving Parents

Within the family circle and within the Christian congregation, there is a need for all to understand the purpose of discipline. This is especially true of those who are in positions of authority, such as parents. Proverbs 13:24 states: "The one holding back his rod is hating his son, but the one loving him is he that does look for him with discipline."

How are parents to administer discipline? The Bible explains: "You, fathers, do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) This admonition is reiterated in these words: "You fathers, do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted."—Colossians 3:21.

Christian parents who understand the purpose of discipline will not act harshly. The principle stated at 2 Timothy 2:24 can be applied to the manner in which parents administer discipline. Paul wrote: "A slave of the Lord does not need to fight, but needs to be gentle toward all, qualified to teach." Hysterical bursts of anger, screaming, and insulting or derogatory statements hardly qualify as loving discipline and have no place in a Christian's life.—Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8.

Parental correction involves far more than an act of punishment administered quickly and decisively. Most children need repeated

admonition before they correct their thinking. Thus, parents must spend time, exercise patience, and give much thought to the manner in which they administer discipline. They must keep in mind that children are to be brought up in the "discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." This means a course of training that lasts for years.

### **Christian Shepherds Discipline With Mildness**

The same principles apply to Christian elders. As loving shepherds, they endeavor to build up the flock by providing instruction, direction, and reproof when needed. In so doing, they bear in mind the real purpose of discipline. (Ephesians 4:11, 12) If they focused only on administering punishment, they would simply penalize the erring one and leave it at that. Divine discipline involves much more. Motivated by love, elders follow up and follow through on their counsel. Because they are genuinely concerned, they often schedule several sessions of encouragement and training.

According to the admonition found at 2 Timothy 2:25, 26, even when dealing with

those who do not readily accept discipline, elders are to instruct "with mildness." The scripture then states the purpose of discipline: "Perhaps God may give them repentance leading to an accurate knowledge of truth, and they may come back to their proper senses out from the snare of the Devil."

At times, it is necessary to disfellowship unrepentant wrongdoers from the congregation. (1 Timothy 1:18-20) Even such drastic action should be considered discipline, not merely punishment. From time to time, elders endeavor to visit disfellowshipped individuals who are not actively engaged in wrongdoing. During such visits, elders act in harmony with the real purpose of discipline by outlining the steps needed for a person to return to the Christian congregation.

### **Jehovah Is the Perfect Judge**

Parents, Christian shepherds, and others who have the Scriptural authority to administer discipline should take such a responsibility seriously. They must not presume to judge others as permanently incorrigible. Hence, their discipline should never take the form of vengeful or hostile punishment.

True, the Bible refers to Jehovah as one who will administer severe and final



*Motivated by love, elders  
spend time doing research  
and helping erring ones*





*Parents patiently and lovingly administer "the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah"*



punishment. In fact, the Scriptures say that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31) But no human should ever try to compare himself to Jehovah in this or any other regard. And no one should have reason to feel that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a parent or a certain elder in the congregation.

Jehovah has the ability to achieve perfect balance when administering discipline. Humans do not. God can read the heart and determine when someone is beyond correction and thus is in line for decisive and final punishment. Humans, on the other hand, are unable to render such a judgment. For that reason, when there is a need to administer discipline, those in a position of authority should always do it with the purpose of correcting.

#### **Accepting Jehovah's Discipline**

We all need Jehovah's discipline. (Proverbs 8:33) In fact, we should long for discipline that is based on God's Word. As we study God's Word, we can accept the discipline that comes directly from Jehovah through

the Scriptures. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) At times, however, we will receive discipline from fellow Christians. Realizing the spirit in which such discipline is administered will help us to accept it willingly.

The apostle Paul acknowledged: "True, no discipline seems for the present to be joyous, but grievous." Then he added: "Yet afterward to those who have been trained by it it yields peaceable fruit, namely, righteousness." (Hebrews 12:11) Jehovah's discipline is a manifestation of his deep love for us. Whether we receive or administer discipline, let us keep in mind the purpose of divine discipline and heed the Bible's wise counsel: "Take hold on discipline; do not let go. Safeguard it, for it itself is your life." —Proverbs 4:13.



## JEHOVAH DRAWS HUMBLE ONES TO THE TRUTH

AS TOLD BY  
**ASANO KOSHINO**

In 1949, only a few years after the end of World War II, a tall, friendly foreigner visited the family that I was working for in Kobe City. He was the very first missionary of Jehovah's Witnesses to come to Japan.

His visit opened the way for me to be drawn to Bible truth.

But let me first tell you about my background.

I WAS born in 1926 in a small village in northern Okayama Prefecture. I was the fifth of eight children. Father was a devout believer in the god of the local Shinto shrine. So we children enjoyed celebrations and family reunions at religious festivals throughout the year.

As I grew up, I had many questions about life, but I was most concerned about death. Tradition required that people die at home and children be at the deathbed of family members. I felt extremely sad when my grandmother died and when my brother died

before he was even a year old. It was dreadful for me to contemplate the death of my parents. 'Is this really all there is? Could there be anything more to life?' I was anxious to know.

In 1937, when I was in the sixth grade of elementary school, the Sino-Japanese War began. Men were drafted and sent to the battlefield in China. Schoolchildren saw their fathers or brothers off, shouting "banzai!" (long live) to the emperor. People were convinced of victory for Japan, the divine nation, and its emperor, a living god.

Before long, families began to receive death notices from the front. The bereaved families were inconsolable. Hatred was growing in their hearts, and they rejoiced when heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy. But at the same time, I thought, 'The people on the enemy side must suffer just as much as we do when their loved ones die.' By the time I graduated from elementary school, the war was expanding deep into China.

### Encounter With a Foreigner

As farmers, our family had always been poor, but my father allowed me to pursue education as long as no expense was involved. Thus, in 1941, I entered a girls' school in Okayama City, about 60 miles away. The school was designed to provide education for girls to become good wives and mothers, and it assigned the students to live with wealthy families in the city as housekeeping apprentices. In the morning the students learned by working in these homes, and in the afternoon they went to school.

After the entrance ceremony was over, my teacher, dressed in a kimono, took me to a big house. But for some reason the lady of the house did not accept me. "Shall we then go to Mrs. Koda's house?" the teacher asked. She took me to a western-style house and rang the doorbell. After a while, a tall silver-haired lady came out. I was stunned! She was not Japanese, and I had never seen a Westerner in my life. The teacher introduced me to Mrs. Maud Koda and quickly left. Dragging my bags along, I nervously stepped into the house. I later learned that Mrs. Maud Koda was an American who was married to a Japanese man who had studied in the United States. She taught English at commercial schools.

A busy life began the very next morning. Mrs. Koda's husband suffered from epilepsy, and I had to help care for him. Since I did not understand English at all, I became a little



With Maud Koda and her husband.

I am at front left

worried. I was relieved when Mrs. Koda spoke to me in Japanese. Daily, I overheard them speaking to each other in English, and gradually my ears became attuned to that language. I liked the pleasant atmosphere in the home.

I was impressed by Maud's devotion to her sickly husband. He loved reading the Bible. I learned later that the couple had obtained a Japanese edition of the book *The Divine Plan of the Ages* at a secondhand bookstore and had been subscribers to the English edition of *The Watchtower* for a number of years.

One day I was given a Bible as a gift. I was happy because that was the first time in my life I had my own Bible. I read it on my way to and from school but understood little of it. Since I was raised a Japanese Shintoist, Jesus Christ seemed very remote to me. Little did I realize that this was the beginning of what would eventually lead me to embrace Bible truth, which would answer my questions about life and death.

### Three Sad Events

Two years of apprenticeship soon came to an end, and I had to bid farewell to the family.

After I finished school, I joined a girls' voluntary brigade and took part in producing navy uniforms. Air raids by American B-29 bombers began, and on August 6, 1945, an atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. A few days later, I received a telegram, and I learned that Mother was seriously ill. I got on the first train home. As I got off the train, a relative met me and told me that Mother had passed away. She died on August 11. What I had feared for years had come true! She would never again talk to me or smile at me.

On August 15, the defeat of Japan became a reality. So I had to face three sad events, all in the short span of ten days: the first atom bomb explosion, Mother's death, and the historical defeat of Japan. At least it was comforting to know that people would no longer be dying in the war. With a void in my heart, I left the factory and returned to my country home.

#### Drawn to the Truth

One day, I unexpectedly received a letter from Maud Koda in Okayama. She asked if I could come and help her with the household chores, as she was to open an English school. I wondered what I should do, but I accepted her invitation. A few years later, I moved to Kobe with the Kodas.

In the early summer of 1949, a tall, friendly gentleman visited the Koda family. His name was Donald Haslett, and he had come from Tokyo to Kobe to look for a home for missionaries in Kobe. He was the very first missionary of Jehovah's Witnesses to come to Japan. A house was found, and in November 1949, several missionaries arrived in Kobe. One day, five of them came to visit the Kodas. Two of them, Lloyd Barry and Percy Iszlaub, talked in English for about ten minutes each to those who had gathered at the house. Maud was known as a Christian sister to the missionaries and was apparently en-

couraged by the association. It was then that I was motivated to learn English.

With the help of the zealous missionaries, I gradually came to understand basic Bible truths. I found the answers to the questions I had had from my childhood. Yes, the Bible holds out the hope of living forever on a paradise earth and the promise of a resurrection of "all those in the memorial tombs." (John 5:28, 29; Revelation 21:1, 4) I was grateful to Jehovah for making such a hope possible by means of the ransom sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ.

#### Happy Theocratic Activities

From December 30, 1949, to January 1, 1950, the first theocratic assembly in Japan was held at the Kobe missionary home. I went with Maud. The large house was formerly owned by a Nazi and had a commanding view of the Inland Sea and Awaji Island. With limited knowledge of the Bible, I understood little of what was said. Yet, I was deeply impressed by the missionaries, who mingled freely with the Japanese people. A total of 101 were in attendance for the public talk at this assembly.

Soon after that, I decided to participate in the field ministry. It took courage for me to go from house to house, as I was shy by nature. One morning, Brother Lloyd Barry came to our house to take me out in the ministry. He started at the house right next to Sister Koda's. I was practically hiding behind him while listening to his presentation. When I went out the second time, I worked with two other missionaries. An elderly Japanese woman invited us in, listened, and later served us each a glass of milk. She agreed to a home Bible study and eventually became a baptized Christian. It was encouraging to see her progress.

In April 1951, Brother Nathan H. Knorr, from Brooklyn headquarters, made his first

visit to Japan. About 700 people came to the public discourse he gave at the Kyoritsu Auditorium in Kanda, Tokyo. At this special meeting, all in attendance rejoiced at the release of the Japanese edition of *The Watchtower*. The following month, Brother Knorr visited Kobe, and at the special meeting there, I was baptized in symbol of my dedication to Jehovah.

About a year later, I was encouraged to enter the full-time ministry, the pioneer service. There were only a few pioneers in Japan at the time, and I wondered how I could support myself. I also thought about what would become of my prospects for marriage. But then I came to realize that serving Jehovah should come first in life, so I joined the pioneer ranks in 1952. Happily, I was able to work part-time for Sister Koda while pioneering.

About that time, my brother, whom I thought had been killed in the war, returned home with his family from Taiwan. My family had never shown interest in Christianity, but with pioneer zeal, I started sending our magazines and booklets to them. Later, my brother moved to Kobe with his family because of his work. "Have you read the magazines?" I asked my sister-in-law. To my surprise, she replied, "They are interesting magazines." She began to study the Bible with one of the missionaries, and my younger sister who lived with them joined her in her study. In time, both of them became baptized Christians.

#### **Impressed by International Brotherhood**

Not long after, I was stunned to receive an invitation to attend the 22nd class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. Brother Tsutomu Fukase and I were the first from Japan to be invited to the school. In 1953, before the class started, we were able to attend the New World Society Assembly held at Yan-



*With missionaries from Japan  
at Yankee Stadium in 1953. I am at far left*

kee Stadium in New York. I was greatly impressed by the international brotherhood of Jehovah's people.

On the fifth day of the convention, the Japanese delegates, mostly missionaries, were to wear kimonos. Since the kimono that I had shipped beforehand had not arrived in time, I borrowed one that belonged to Sister Knorr. During the session it started to rain, and I was worried that the kimono might get wet. Just then, someone gently put a raincoat over me from behind. "Do you know who he is?" asked one sister standing next to me. I later learned that it was Brother Frederick W. Franz, a member of the Governing Body. How I sensed the warmth of Jehovah's organization!

The 22nd class of Gilead was truly an international one, consisting of 120 students from 37 countries. Though there were some language barriers, we fully enjoyed the international brotherhood. On a snowy day in February 1954, I graduated and received an assignment back to Japan. A classmate, Inger Brandt, a Swedish sister, was to be my partner in Nagoya City. There, we joined the group of missionaries who had been evacuated from

Korea because of the war. The few years I spent in the missionary service were very precious to me.

### Joyful Service as a Couple

In September 1957, I was invited to serve at Tokyo Bethel. A two-story wooden house served as the Japan branch office. In the branch, there were only four members, including Brother Barry, the branch overseer. The rest of the family were missionaries. I was assigned to do translation and proofreading, plus cleaning, laundry, cooking, and so on.

The work in Japan was expanding, and more brothers were invited to Bethel. One of them became an overseer in the congregation with which I was associated. In 1966 that brother, Junji Koshino, and I were married. After we got married, Junji was assigned to the circuit work. It was a joy to get to know so many brothers and sisters as we traveled to different congregations. Since I was assigned to do some translation, I did it at the home where we stayed for the week. While travel-

ing, we had to carry the heavy dictionaries, besides our suitcase and other bags.

We enjoyed the circuit work for over four years and saw the organization continue to expand. The branch moved to Numazu, and years later to Ebina, where the present branch facilities are located. Junji and I have long been enjoying Bethel service, now working with a family of some 600 members. In May 2002, friends at Bethel kindly celebrated my 50 years of full-time service.

### Blessed to See Increase

When I started serving Jehovah back in 1950, there were only a handful of publishers in Japan. Now there are over 210,000 Kingdom publishers. Truly, thousands of sheep-like ones have been drawn to Jehovah, just as I was.

The four missionary brothers and the sister who visited us at Sister Koda's house back in 1949, as well as Sister Maud Koda, have all faithfully finished their life course. So have my brother, who was a ministerial servant, and my sister-in-law, who enjoyed pioneer service for about 15 years. What will the future prospects be for my parents, whose death I had feared in my childhood? The Bible's promise of the resurrection gives me hope and comfort.—Acts 24:15.

As I look back, I feel that my encounter with Maud in 1941 was a turning point in my life. Had I not met her at that time and had I not responded to her invitation to work for her again after the war, I would probably have settled on our farm in the remote village and not had any contact with the missionaries in those early days. How very grateful I am to Jehovah for drawing me to the truth by means of Maud and the early missionaries!

*At Bethel with my husband, Junji*



## Questions From Readers

### What is baptism for the dead?

In writing about the heavenly resurrection, the apostle Paul penned a most intriguing passage. In the *King James Version*, we read: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" And *The New Jerusalem Bible* renders this passage: "What are people up to who have themselves baptised on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, what is the point of being baptised on their behalf?"—1 Corinthians 15:29.

Was Paul here suggesting that living people be baptized on behalf of those who died in an unbaptized state? So it might seem from these and some other Bible translations. However, a closer examination of both the Scriptures and the original Greek used by Paul suggests another conclusion. Paul meant that anointed Christians are baptized, or immersed, into a course of life that will lead to a death of integrity like that of Christ. Afterward, they would be raised to spirit life as he was.

The Scriptures support this explanation. In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote: "Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3) In his letter to the Philippians, Paul spoke of himself, saying: "Sharing in [Christ's]

sufferings, submitting myself to a death like his, to see if I may by any means attain to the earlier resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10, 11) Paul was pointing out that the life of an anointed follower of Christ involves a course of integrity-keeping under test, a daily facing of death, and finally a death of integrity, followed by the heavenly resurrection.

It is noteworthy that these and other scriptures that directly mention death in connection with baptized ones refer to *living* individuals who had been baptized and not to those who had died. Paul also told fellow anointed Christians: "You were buried with him in his baptism, and by relationship with him you were also raised up together through your faith in the operation of God, who raised him up from the dead."—Colossians 2:12.

The Greek preposition *hy-per'*, translated "for" or "on behalf of" in various Bible versions at 1 Corinthians 15:29, can also mean "for the purpose of." In harmony with other Bible texts, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* therefore correctly renders this verse: "What will they do who are being baptized for the purpose of being dead ones? If the dead are not to be raised up at all, why are they also being baptized for the purpose of being such?"

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

How Can You Make Wise Decisions?

To Win the Prize, Exercise Self-Control!

Jacob—He Appreciated Spiritual Values





## A STORY THAT INSPIRES FAITH AND COURAGE

# Jehovah's Witnesses in Ukraine

JUST as Christians in the first century experienced persecution, so have God's people today. (Matthew 10:22; John 15:20) In few places has the persecution been more sustained or intense than in Ukraine, where the Kingdom-preaching work was under ban for 52 years.

The 2002 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* told the story of God's people in that land. It is a story of faith, courage, and strength in the face of bitter adversity. Following are some comments of appreciation that were received by the Ukraine branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses:

"I've completed reading the 2002 *Yearbook*. I couldn't help but cry while reading about

your activity in Ukraine. I wish to let you know how much encouragement I have received from your zealous example and strong faith. I am proud to belong to the same spiritual family as you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!"  
—Andrée, France.

"No words can describe how grateful I am to you and to Jehovah for the 2002 *Yearbook*. Tears rolled down my face as I read the many experiences of brothers who spent their best years in jails and concentration camps. I admire their

courage. Although I have been a Witness for 27 years, I can still learn from those brothers and sisters. They strengthened my faith in our heavenly Father, Jehovah."—Vera, former Yugoslavia.

"I am writing this letter with joy because of your good example of endurance and faithfulness during all those years of opposition. Your total confidence in Jehovah and your determination to remain faithful bring you honor. In addition, your humility in the face of tests reinforces my conviction that Jehovah does not leave his people. Because of your good example of courage, tenacity, and perseverance, we can accept our little problems more calmly."—Tuteirihia, French Polynesia.

"After reading the *Yearbook*, I had to write to you. I was so deeply touched by all the beautiful experiences. I felt proud to be a member of such a loyal, united organization, led by a loving, caring Father, who gives us strength at the right moment. I was saddened that so many beautiful servants of Jehovah suffered so much and even lost their life. But I also felt joy because as a result of their courage and zeal, so many people learned the truth and came to know our loving Father."  
—Colette, Netherlands.

"My wife and I just had to write to you to say that our hearts were touched as we read the account about Ukraine in the *Yearbook*. You faithful brothers have set an outstanding example of endurance under prolonged and great hardship. In line with





the words of Proverbs 27:11, how happy Jehovah must be to know that so many faithful brothers from Ukraine have kept unbreakable integrity despite all of the Devil's wicked acts."—Alan, Australia.

"Tears came to my eyes when I read about the brothers in Ukraine. They endured so many things—years of prisons, tortures, oppression, and family separation. I want to tell all the brothers who still serve in your congregations that I love and respect them very much. I am just delighted with their courage and steadfastness. I know the source of their power, Jehovah's spirit. Jehovah is close to us, and he wants to help us."—Sergei, Russia.

"I read the *2002 Yearbook*, and I cried. Many sisters and brothers in our congregation have talked about you. You are a real treasure. I am so happy to be part of such a large spiritual family."—Yeonhee, South Korea.

"I am deeply moved by the record of your faith, endurance, and unyielding love for Jehovah and his Kingdom. Sometimes we fail to appreciate the freedom we enjoy and the abundance of spiritual food that Jehovah provides for us. However, this hasn't been the case with you. Your example of faith helps us to realize that if we have a close relationship with our God, he will give us the strength to deal with all kinds of tests."—Paulo, Brazil.

"I had the privilege to read about your experiences in

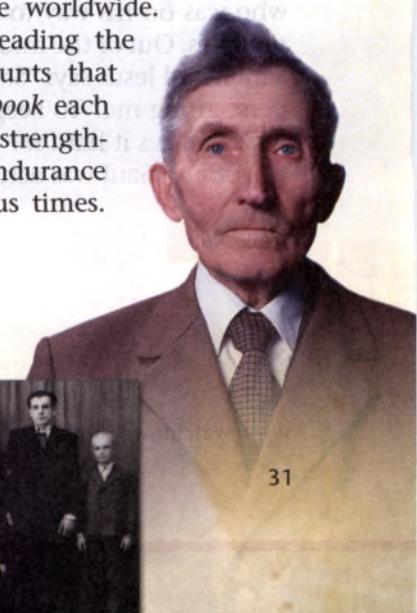


the *2002 Yearbook*. They moved me deeply, especially the touching experience of Sister Lydia Kuras. I felt a close bond with this sister."—Nidia, Costa Rica.

"Today I finished reading the *2002 Yearbook*. As I read it, my faith in Jehovah was strengthened. Something I will never forget is the account of when seeds of doubt were planted regarding those taking the lead. It taught me never to doubt the brothers who are taking the lead. Thank you very much! This spiritual food is good for the heart and prepares us for the time when our faith may be put to the test."—Leticia, United States.

"We are thankful for the excellent *Yearbook*. Many publishers were reading for the first time about the activity of our brothers in Ukraine. The brothers here were strengthened. Many, especially among the young ones, have increased their service activity. Some have started to serve as regular or auxiliary pioneers. All were encouraged by stories of brothers and sisters who served Jehovah during the ban."—A congregation service committee, Ukraine.

The faithfulness of our brothers in Ukraine has indeed been a source of encouragement to Jehovah's people worldwide. In fact, regularly reading the heartwarming accounts that appear in the *Yearbook* each year is a fine way to strengthen our faith and endurance in these momentous times.  
—Hebrews 12:1.





L. Chapons/Illustrierte Familien-Bibel  
nach der deutschen Übersetzung  
Dr. Martin Luthers

# Are You “Kicking Against the Goads”?

**I**N BIBLE times, an oxgoad—a long rod, usually tipped with a sharp metal spike—was used for driving and guiding draft animals. If the animal stubbornly resisted the prickings of the goad by pushing against it, what was the result? Rather than gaining relief, it only inflicted pain on itself.

The resurrected Jesus Christ spoke of goads when he appeared to a man named Saul, who was on his way to arrest some of Jesus' disciples. Out of the midst of a blinding light, Saul heard Jesus say: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? To keep kicking against the goads makes it hard for you." By maltreating Christians, Saul was actually fighting against

God, pursuing a course that could only harm himself.—Acts 26:14.

Could we also unintentionally be "kicking against the goads"? The Bible likens "the words of the wise ones" to oxgoads that prod us to move forward in the right direction. (Ecclesiastes 12:11) The inspired counsel in God's Word can motivate and guide us correctly—if we let it. (2 Timothy 3:16) Resisting its proddings can only harm us.

Saul took Jesus' words to heart, changed his course, and came to be the beloved Christian apostle Paul. Our heeding divine counsel will likewise bring us eternal blessings.  
—Proverbs 3:1-6.