



**MID-WEEK
MEETING FILE**

JULY 8-13, 2013

OUR KINGDOM MINISTRY

JULY 2013

WEEK STARTING JULY 8

Song 43 and Prayer

□ Congregation Bible Study:

jr chap. 11 ¶15-21 (30 min.)

□ Theocratic Ministry School:

Bible reading: Acts 15-17 (10 min.)

No. 1: Acts 16:16-34 (4 min. or less)

No. 2: Why Can a Christian Be Happy When Persecuted?—Matt. 5:11, 12 (5 min.)

No. 3: When the Apostle Paul Said That Christians Would Be “Caught Up” to Be With the Lord, What Subject Was Being Discussed?—*rs* p. 312 ¶1-2 (5 min.)

□ Service Meeting:

Song 75

10 min: Methods of Preaching the Good News—Directing Interested Ones to Jehovah’s Organization. Talk based on the *Organized* book, page 99, paragraph 2, to page 100, paragraph 1. Invite audience to comment on how they have used the *Jehovah’s Will* brochure to direct their students to the organization.

10 min: Test Jehovah Out, and Receive a Blessing Until There Is No More Want (Mal. 3:10) Interview two or three regular pioneers. What do they enjoy most about pioneering? How has pioneering helped them spiritually? Invite them to relate any outstanding experiences they have enjoyed. Conclude by inviting publishers to consider joining the regular pioneer ranks in September.

10 min: “Take as a Pattern the Prophets—Joel.” Questions and answers.

Song 54 and Prayer

Take as a Pattern the Prophets—Joel

¹ Who was the prophet Joel? He reveals only that he was “the son of Pethuel.” (Joel 1:1) This humble prophet emphasized Je-

1. How can we imitate Joel’s humility as we preach?

hovah’s message, not his own role as the messenger. Likewise, in our ministry, rather than seeking personal praise or recognition, we direct attention to Jehovah and the Bible. (1 Cor. 9:16; 2 Cor. 3:5) In addition, we find strength in the message we declare. What aspects of Joel’s prophecy can infuse us with zeal and hope today?

² **“The Day of Jehovah Is Near.” (Joel 1:15):** Although these words were written millenniums ago, we are living in the time of their final fulfillment. Deteriorating world conditions and the indifference and ridicule that we encounter in our territory are positive proofs that the last days of this wicked system of things have arrived. (2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Pet. 3:3, 4) When we contemplate the nearness of the end, we have every reason to give the ministry priority in our lives.—2 Pet. 3:11, 12.

³ **“Jehovah Will Be a Refuge for His People.” (Joel 3:16):** The rocking described in this verse could apply only to Jehovah’s execution of judgment during the great tribulation. We take comfort in knowing that Jehovah will deliver his faithful servants during that time. (Rev. 7:9, 14) As we engage in the preaching work and experience how Jehovah sustains and strengthens us, we build faith and endurance that will help us during the coming great tribulation.

⁴ Although Joel’s message has been described by some as one of gloom, it offers God’s people the glorious hope of deliverance. (Joel 2:32) Let us, then, face the future with confidence and zealously proclaim the good news of God’s Kingdom as we heed the words of Joel 2:23: “Be joyful and rejoice in Jehovah your God.”

2. What should the nearness of Jehovah’s day motivate us to do?

3. Why is the ministry especially important as we approach the great tribulation?

4. Why can we be joyful and face the future with confidence?

43 *Stay Awake, Stand Firm, Grow Mighty* (1 Corinthians 16:13)

1. Stay awake, stand firm, grow mighty,
Be determined to endure.
Carry on as men of courage,
For the victory is sure.
We obey Christ Jesus' clear command,
Under him we firmly take our stand.

(CHORUS)

*Stay awake, stand firm, and grow mighty!
Carry on right to the end!*

2. Stay awake, and keep your senses,
Always ready to obey.
Stay alert to Christ's direction
Through his faithful slave today.
Heed the counsel of the older men,
Who protect his sheep and truth defend.

(Chorus)

3. Stay awake, remain united
As the good news we defend.
Though our enemies will fight it,
We will preach until the end.
Join the shout of praise throughout the land.
Look! Jehovah's day is soon at hand!

(Chorus)

(See also Matt. 24:13; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:8.)

“THIS IS WHAT JEHOVAH HAS SAID”

¹⁵ Imagine the joy of a literal shepherd whose hard work and long hours are rewarded by the birth of healthy lambs! He knows, though, that to thrive, those lambs will need attention. The shepherd has to ensure that they get proper nourishment. Lambs are born with long tails that may drag in manure and dirt. The shepherd wants his animals to remain clean and healthy, so he may shorten their tails, doing so skillfully to avoid causing unnecessary pain. Spiritual shepherds too give loving attention to the sheep, the members of their congregation. (John 21:16, 17) The elders are also overjoyed to see interested ones taking steps to become true Christians. Christian overseers want all the sheep, young and old, to be healthy and properly fed, so they do not let up in giving them attention, intervening when needed. This work certainly includes reminding their brothers of “what Jehovah has said,” that is, what the Scriptures teach.—Jer. 2: 2, 5; 7:5-7; 10:2; Titus 1:9.

¹⁶ Jeremiah needed boldness to announce God’s message. So do congregation overseers, particularly in cases where they must speak up to protect their brothers. It may be, for example, that a spiritual shepherd sees the need to intervene to prevent a ‘newborn lamb’ or even an older “sheep” from getting befouled by the dirt of Satan’s world. The one in danger may not even be seeking counsel. Still, could a conscientious shepherd just stand by observing as a member of his flock walks into trouble? Of course not! Nor would he treat such a situation lightly, pretending that all is well when obviously it is not and could result in a fellow servant’s losing his or her peace with Jehovah.—Jer. 8:11.

15, 16. Why do both literal and spiritual flocks need attention?

¹⁷ If an unwary sheep were to be induced to wander away from the flock, an alert shepherd would be quick to direct it back to safety. (*Read Jeremiah 50:6, 7.*) Similarly, on occasion an overseer might have to reason firmly but lovingly with ones who are wandering into dangerous situations. For instance, he might note that an engaged couple are spending time together without a chaperone in places where their passions might overwhelm them. A kind and understanding elder could help the couple to avoid such compromising circumstances. While being careful to avoid accusing them, he might highlight possibilities that could lead to conduct that Jehovah hates. As Jeremiah did, faithful elders condemn what God condemns. In this they imitate Jehovah, who, though not harsh, pleaded with his people through his prophet: “Do not do, *please*, this detestable sort of thing that I have hated.” (Jer. 5:7; 25:4, 5; 35:15; 44:4) Do you truly appreciate the concern that loving shepherds show for the flock?

¹⁸ Of course, not all those whom Jeremiah counseled listened to him. But some did. For example, when Baruch, Jeremiah’s companion and secretary, needed vigorous counsel, Jeremiah willingly gave it. (Jer. 45:5) With what result? Baruch enjoyed God’s favor and survived Jerusalem’s destruction. Likewise today, positive results in helping fellow believers can encourage congregation elders to ‘continue applying themselves’ to lifesaving ‘exhortation and teaching.’—1 Tim. 4:13, 16.

17. When and how might a shepherd have to give special attention to individual sheep?

18. What encouraging results are obtained by the efforts of spiritual shepherds?

DISCIPLINE "TO THE PROPER DEGREE"

¹⁹ Another role of overseers today is that of spiritual judges. On rare occasions, elders may have to deal with those who are willful sinners, wanting to lead them to repentance. Jehovah kindly but straightforwardly encouraged wrongdoers to leave their bad ways. (Jer. 4:14) If a person in the congregation will not abandon a sinful course, however, overseers must act to protect the flock from a potentially corrupting influence. As the Scriptures direct, they may have to expel the wrongdoer. Jehovah expects elders to uphold divine justice in such circumstances. Good King Josiah was exemplary in doing so. "He pleaded the legal claim of the afflicted one and the poor one." He was imitating God's love of justice. Thus, Jehovah could ask regarding Josiah's actions: "Was not that a case of knowing me?" Because Josiah executed justice and righteousness, "it went well with him." Do you not feel more secure when the elders in your congregation strive to imitate Josiah's example?—Jer. 22:11, 15, 16.



19, 20. Elders have what responsibility in dealing with wrongdoers?

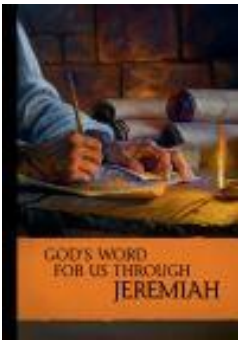
²⁰ Be confident that Jehovah disciplines wrongdoers "to the proper degree." (Jer. 46:28) Accordingly, depending on the circumstances and the attitude manifested, the elders may have to counsel, exhort, or reprove fellow believers. And it may even be necessary to disfellowship an unrepentant wrongdoer. In that case, elders do not pray publicly for one who is expelled and is pursuing a sinful course; it would be pointless to do so.* (Jer. 7:9, 16) They will, however, imitate God by showing the disfellowshipped person how he can return to God's favor. (*Read Jeremiah 33:6-8.*) Although disfellowshipping may be painful, we can be sure that God's standards are righteous and just and the best for all.—Lam. 1:18.

²¹ When congregation shepherds identify and apply the inspired divine standards, the flock will be nourished, healthy, and well-protected. (Ps. 23:1-6) What Jeremiah tells us about attitudes and motives, both those that are appropriate and those that are not, can be useful to Christian overseers as they fulfill the serious responsibility of caring for God's sheep. Hence, each of us can ask, 'Will I continue to show appreciation for Jehovah's arrangement to teach, guide, and protect his people by supporting shepherds who "actually shepherd" the flock "with knowledge and insight"?'—Jer. 3:15; 23:4.

* See *The Watchtower* of December 1, 2001, pages 30-31.

21. What should be the condition of God's flock, and how can you contribute to such?

***In what circumstances do overseers have to act boldly?
What does Jehovah expect of Christian elders when they
act as judges?***



Paragraph 15

(John 21:16, 17) Again he said to him, a second time: "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him: "Yes, Lord, you know I have affection for you." He said to him: "Shepherd my little sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time: "Simon son of John, do you have affection for me?" Peter became grieved that he said to him the third time: "Do you have affection for me?" So he said to him: "Lord, you know all things; you are aware that I have affection for you." Jesus said to him: "Feed my little sheep.

(Jeremiah 2:2) "Go, and you must call out in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, 'This is what Jehovah has said: "I well remember, on your part, the loving-kindness of your youth, the love during your being engaged to marry, your walking after me in the wilderness, in a land not sown with seed.

(Jeremiah 2:5) This is what Jehovah has said: "What have YOUR fathers found in me that was unjust, so that they have become far off from me, and they kept walking after the vain idol and becoming vain themselves?"

(Jeremiah 7:5-7) For if YOU will positively make YOUR ways and YOUR dealings good, if YOU will positively carry out justice between a man and his companion, ⁶ if no alien resident, no fatherless boy and no widow YOU will oppress, and innocent blood YOU will not shed in this place, and after other gods YOU will not walk for calamity to yourselves, ⁷ I, in turn, shall certainly keep YOU residing in this place, in the land that I gave to YOUR forefathers, from time indefinite even to time indefinite.""

(Jeremiah 10:2) This is what Jehovah has said: "Do not learn the way of the nations at all, and do not be struck with terror even at the signs of the heavens, because the nations are struck with terror at them.

(Titus 1:9) holding firmly to the faithful word as respects his [art of] teaching, that he may be able both to exhort by the teaching that is healthful and to reprove those who contradict.

Paragraph 16

(Jeremiah 8:11) And they try to heal the breakdown of the daughter of my people lightly, saying: "There is peace! There is peace!" when there is no peace.

Paragraph 17

(Jeremiah 50:6, 7) A flock of perishing creatures my people has become. Their own shepherds have caused them to wander about. On the mountains they have led them away. From mountain to hill they have gone. They have forgotten their resting-place. ⁷ All those finding them have eaten them up, and their own adversaries have said, 'We shall not become guilty, due to the fact that they have sinned against Jehovah the abiding place of righteousness and the hope of their forefathers, Jehovah.'"

(Jeremiah 5:7) How can I forgive you for this very thing? Your own sons have left me, and they keep swearing by what is no God. And I kept satisfying them, but they continued committing adultery, and to the house of a prostitute woman they go in troops.

(Jeremiah 25:4, 5) And Jehovah sent to YOU all his servants the prophets, rising up early and sending [them], but YOU did not listen, neither did YOU incline YOUR ear to listen, ⁵ they saying, 'Turn back, please, every one from his bad way and from the badness of YOUR dealings, and continue dwelling upon the ground that Jehovah gave to YOU and to YOUR forefathers from long ago and to a long time to come.

(Jeremiah 35:15) And I kept sending to YOU all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending [them], saying, 'Turn back, please, each one from his bad way, and make YOUR dealings good, and do not walk after other gods to serve them. And keep dwelling on the ground that I have given to YOU and to YOUR forefathers.' But YOU did not incline YOUR ear, nor did YOU listen to me.

(Jeremiah 44:4) And I kept sending to YOU all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending, saying: "Do not do, please, this detestable sort of thing that I have hated."

Paragraph 18

(Jeremiah 45:5) But as for you, you keep seeking great things for yourself. Do not keep on seeking." "For here I am bringing in a calamity upon all flesh,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'and I will give you your soul as a spoil in all the places to which you may go.'"

(1 Timothy 4:13) While I am coming, continue applying yourself to public reading, to exhortation, to teaching.

(1 Timothy 4:16) Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

Paragraph 19

(Jeremiah 4:14) Wash your heart clean of sheer badness, O Jerusalem, in order that you may be saved. How long will your erroneous thoughts lodge within you?

(Jeremiah 22:11) For this is what Jehovah has said concerning Shal'lum the son of Jo-si'ah, the king of Judah who is reigning instead of Jo-si'ah his father, who has gone forth from this place, 'He will return there no more.

(Jeremiah 22:15, 16) Will you continue reigning because you are competing by use of cedar? As for your father, did he not eat and drink and execute justice and righteousness? In that case it went well with him. ¹⁶ He pleaded the legal claim of the afflicted one and the poor one. In that case it went well. 'Was not that a case of knowing me?' is the utterance of Jehovah.

Paragraph 20

(Jeremiah 46:28) As for you, do not be afraid, O my servant Jacob,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'for I am with you. For I shall make an extermination among all the nations to which I have dispersed you, but with you I shall make no extermination. Yet I shall have to chastise you to the proper degree, and I shall absolutely not leave you unpunished.'"

(Jeremiah 7:9) Can there be stealing, murdering and committing adultery and swearing falsely and making sacrificial smoke to Ba'al and walking after other gods whom YOU had not known,

(Jeremiah 7:16) "And as for you, do not pray in behalf of this people, neither raise in their behalf an entreating cry or a prayer nor beseech me, for I shall not be listening to you.

(Jeremiah 33:6-8) 'Here I am bringing up for her a recuperation and health; and I will heal them and reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth. ⁷ And I will bring back the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel, and I will build them just as at the start. ⁸ And I will purify them from all their error with which they have sinned against me, and I will forgive all their errors with which they have sinned against me and with which they have transgressed against me.

(Lamentations 1:18) Jehovah is righteous, for it is against his mouth that I have rebelled. Listen, now, all YOU peoples, and see my pain. My own virgins and my own young men have gone into captivity.

Paragraph 21

(Psalm 23:1-6) Jehovah is my Shepherd. I shall lack nothing. ² In grassy pastures he makes me lie down; By well-watered resting-places he conducts me. ³ My soul he refreshes. He leads me in the tracks of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴ Even though I walk in the valley of deep shadow, I fear nothing bad, For you are with me; Your rod and your staff are the things that comfort me. ⁵ You arrange before me a table in front of those showing hostility to me. With oil you have greased my head; My cup is well filled. ⁶ Surely goodness and loving-kindness themselves will pursue me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of Jehovah to the length of days.

(Jeremiah 3:15) And I will give YOU shepherds in agreement with my heart, and they will certainly feed YOU with knowledge and insight.

(Jeremiah 23:4) And I will raise up over them shepherds who will actually shepherd them; and they will be afraid no more, neither will they be struck with any terror, and none will be missing," is the utterance of Jehovah.

whose temple was before the city, brought bulls and garlands to the gates and was desiring to offer sacrifices^a with the crowds.

14 However, when the apostles Bar'na-bas and Paul heard of it, they ripped their outer garments and leaped out into the crowd, crying out **15** and saying: "Men, why are YOU doing these things? We also are humans^b having the same infirmities^c as YOU do, and are declaring the good news to YOU, for YOU to turn from these vain^d things to the living God,^e who made the heaven^f and the earth and the sea and all the things in them. **16** In the past generations he permitted all the nations to go on in their ways,^g **17** although, indeed, he did not leave himself without witness in that he did good,^h giving YOU rainsⁱ from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling YOUR hearts to the full with food and good cheer."^j **18** And yet by saying these things they scarcely restrained the crowds from sacrificing to them.

19 But Jews arrived from Antioch and I-co'ni-um and persuaded the crowds,^k and they stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, imagining he was dead.^l **20** However, when the disciples surrounded him, he rose up and entered into the city. And on the next day he left with Bar'na-bas for Der'be.^m **21** And after declaring the good news to that city and making quite a few disciples,ⁿ they returned to Lys'-tra and to I-co'ni-um and to Antioch, **22** strengthening the souls of the disciples,^o encouraging them to remain in the faith and saying: "We must enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations."^p **23** Moreover, they appointed older men^q for them in each congregation and, offering prayer with fastings,^r they committed them to

CHAP. 14

a Da 2:46
b Ac 10:26
c Jas 5:17
d De 32:21
1Sa 12:21
Jer 10:15
e 1Th 1:9
f Ge 1:1
Ex 20:11
Ps 33:6
Ps 146:6
Ac 4:24
g De 18:14
Ac 17:30
h Ac 17:27
Ro 1:20
i Ps 65:10
Ps 147:8
Jer 5:24
Mt 5:45
j Ps 145:16
k Ac 17:13
l 2Co 6:9
2Co 11:25
2Ti 3:11
m Ac 16:1
n Mt 28:19
o Ac 11:23
p Mt 10:38
Joh 15:19
Ro 8:17
1Th 3:4
q Tit 1:5
r Ac 13:3

Second Col.

a Ac 20:32
b Ac 13:13
c Ac 13:1
d 1Co 15:10
e Ac 15:4
Ac 21:19
f Ac 11:18
1Co 16:9

CHAP. 15

g Ga 2:12
h Ga 5:2
i Ge 17:10
Ex 12:48
Le 12:3
j Ac 11:30
Ac 16:4
Ga 2:1
k Ro 15:24
1Co 16:6
l Ac 13:4
Ac 14:27
m Ac 11:18
n Ac 21:17
o Ac 21:19
p Ac 11:2
q Ex 12:48

Jehovah^a in whom they had become believers.

24 And they went through Pisid'i-a and came into Pam·phyl'i-a,^b **25** and, after speaking the word in Perga, they went down to At-ta-li'a. **26** And from there they sailed off for Antioch,^c where they had been entrusted to the undeserved kindness of God for the work they had fully performed.^d

27 When they had arrived and had gathered the congregation together, they proceeded to relate^e the many things God had done by means of them, and that he had opened to the nations the door to faith.^f **28** So they spent not a little time with the disciples.

15 And certain men came down from Ju-de'a^g and began to teach the brothers: "Unless YOU get circumcised^h according to the custom of Moses,ⁱ YOU cannot be saved." **2** But when there had occurred no little dissension and disputing by Paul and Bar'na-bas with them, they arranged for Paul and Bar'na-bas and some others of them to go up to the apostles and older men in Jerusalem^j regarding this dispute.

3 Accordingly, after being conducted partway by the congregation,^k these men continued on their way through both Phoeni'cia and Sa-mar'i-a, relating in detail the conversion of people of the nations,^l and they were causing great joy to all the brothers.^m **4** On arriving in Jerusalem they were kindly receivedⁿ by the congregation and the apostles and the older men, and they recounted the many things God had done by means of them.^o **5** Yet, some of those of the sect of the Pharisees that had believed rose up from their seats and said: "It is necessary to circumcise them^p and charge them to observe the law of Moses."^q

6 And the apostles and the older men gathered together to see about this affair.^a 7 Now when much disputing^b had taken place, Peter rose and said to them: "Men, brothers, you well know that from early days God made the choice among you that through my mouth people of the nations should hear the word of the good news and believe;^c 8 and God, who knows the heart,^d bore witness by giving them the holy spirit,^e just as he did to us also. 9 And he made no distinction at all between us and them,^f but purified their hearts by faith.^g 10 Now, therefore, why are you making a test of God by imposing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke^h that neither our forefathers nor we were capable of bearing?ⁱ 11 On the contrary, we trust to get saved through the undeserved kindness^j of the Lord Jesus in the same way as those people also."^k

12 At that the entire multitude became silent, and they began to listen to Bar'na·bas and Paul relate the many signs and portents that God did through them among the nations.^l 13 After they quit speaking, James answered, saying: "Men, brothers, hear me.^m 14 Sym'e-onⁿ has related thoroughly how God for the first time turned his attention to the nations to take out of them a people for his name.^o 15 And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 16 'After these things I shall return and rebuild the booth of David that is fallen down; and I shall rebuild its ruins and erect it again,^p 17 in order that those who remain of the men may earnestly seek Jehovah, together with people of all the nations, people who are called by my name, says Jehovah, who is doing these things,^q 18 known from of old.'^r 19 Hence my de-

CHAP. 15

a Pr 13:10
Pr 15:22
b Mr 9:16
Ac 15:2
c Ac 10:34
Ac 11:17
d 1Ch 28:9
Jer 11:20
Ac 1:24
e Ac 10:44
Ac 11:15
f Ga 3:28
g Ga 2:16
1Pe 1:22
h Ga 5:1
i Ga 3:10
j Isa 53:11
Joh 1:17
Ga 2:16
k Mt 20:28
l Ro 15:19
m Ac 12:17
n Ac 11:13
2Pe 1:1
o Isa 55:5
1Pe 2:9
p Am 9:11
q Am 9:12
LXX
r Isa 45:21

Second Col.

a Ac 15:10
b Ge 35:2
Ex 20:3
Eze 20:30
1Co 8:7
1Co 10:14
c 1Co 6:9
Col 3:5
1Th 4:3
d Le 17:13
e Ge 9:4
Le 3:17
Le 7:26
Le 17:10
Le 19:26
De 12:23
De 15:23
1Sa 14:32
f Ac 13:15
2Co 3:15
g Ac 1:23
h Ac 11:26
i Ga 1:21
j Ac 15:1
k Ga 2:4
Tit 1:10
l Ac 1:14
m 2Pe 3:15
n Ac 13:50
1Co 15:30
2Co 11:23
Php 2:29
o 1Th 1:1
1Pe 5:12
p Ac 16:4
q Joh 16:13
Ac 5:32
r Mt 23:4
s Ge 35:2
Ex 20:3
Ex 34:15
Eze 20:30
1Co 8:1
1Co 10:14

cision is not to trouble those from the nations who are turning to God,^a 20 but to write them to abstain from things polluted by idols^b and from fornication^c and from what is strangled^d and from blood.^e 21 For from ancient times Moses has had in city after city those who preach him, because he is read aloud in the synagogues on every sabbath."^f

22 Then the apostles and the older men together with the whole congregation favored sending chosen men from among them to Antioch along with Paul and Bar'na·bas, namely, Judas who was called Bar'sab·bas^g and Silas, leading men among the brothers; 23 and by their hand they wrote:

"The apostles and the older men, brothers, to those brothers in Antioch^h and Syria and Cili'ciaⁱ who are from the nations: Greetings! 24 Since we have heard that some from among us have caused you trouble with speeches,^j trying to subvert your souls, although we did not give them any instructions,^k 25 we have come to a unanimous accord^l and have favored choosing men to send to you together with our loved ones, Bar'na·bas and Paul,^m 26 men that have delivered up their souls for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.ⁿ 27 We are therefore dispatching Judas and Silas,^o that they also may report the same things by word.^p 28 For the holy spirit^q and we ourselves have favored adding no further burden^r to you, except these necessary things, 29 to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols^s and from blood^t and from things strangled^u and from fornication.^v If you carefully keep yourselves from these things,^w you will prosper. Good health to you!"

t Ge 9:4; Le 3:17; Le 7:26; Le 17:10; De 12:16; De 12:23; 1Sa 14:32; u Le 17:13; v Ge 39:9; 1Co 6:9; Eph 5:5; Col 3:5; 1Th 4:3; 1Pe 4:3; w Ac 21:25.

30 Accordingly, when these men were let go, they went down to Antioch, and they gathered the multitude together and handed them the letter.^a

31 After reading it, they rejoiced over the encouragement.^b **32** And Judas and Silas, since they themselves were also prophets,^c encouraged the brothers with many a discourse and strengthened them.^d

33 So, when they had passed some time, they were let go in peace^e by the brothers to those who had sent them out. **34** —

35 However, Paul and Bar'na-bas continued spending time in Antioch^f teaching and declaring, with many others also, the good news of the word of Jehovah.^g

36 Now after some days Paul said to Bar'na-bas: "Above all things, let us return and visit the brothers in every one of the cities in which we published the word of Jehovah to see how they are."^h **37** For his part, Bar'na-bas was determined to take along also John, who was called Mark.ⁱ **38** But Paul did not think it proper to be taking this one along with them, seeing that he had departed from them from Pam-phyli'a^j and had not gone with them to the work. **39** At this there occurred a sharp burst of anger, so that they separated from each other; and Bar'na-bas^k took Mark along and sailed away to Cyprus.^l **40** Paul selected Silas^m and went off after he had been entrusted by the brothers to the undeserved kindness of Jehovah.ⁿ **41** But he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the congregations.^o

16 So he arrived at Der'be and also at Lys'tra.^p And, look! a certain disciple was there by the name of Timothy,^q the son of a believing Jewish woman but of a Greek father, **2** and he

CHAP. 15

a Ac 11:26

b Pr 15:30

c Ac 11:27
Ac 13:1

d Ac 13:15
Ac 18:23

e 1Co 16:11

f Ac 13:1

g 2Co 11:7

h 2Co 11:28

i Col 4:10
2Ti 4:11

j Ac 13:13

k Ac 4:36
Ac 13:4

l Ac 11:20

m Ac 15:27

n Ac 14:26
Eph 3:7

o Ac 16:5

CHAP. 16

p Ac 14:6
2Ti 3:11

q Ac 19:22
Ro 16:21
1Co 4:17
1Th 3:2
1Ti 1:2

Second Col.

a 1Co 9:20

b Ac 15:28

c Ac 15:41

d Ac 18:23
Ga 4:13

e 1Pe 1:1

f 2Co 2:12
2Ti 4:13

g Job 33:15
Ac 9:10
2Co 12:1

h 2Co 1:16
2Co 2:13

i Php 1:1
1Th 2:2

j Ac 20:6

was well reported on by the brothers in Lys'tra and I-co'ni-um. **3** Paul expressed the desire for this man to go out with him, and he took him and circumcised^a him because of the Jews that were in those places, for one and all knew that his father was a Greek. **4** Now as they traveled on through the cities they would deliver to those there for observance the decrees that had been decided upon by the apostles and older men who were in Jerusalem.^b **5** Therefore, indeed, the congregations continued to be made firm in the faith^c and to increase in number from day to day.

6 Moreover, they went through Phryg'i-a and the country of Ga-la'ti-a,^d because they were forbidden by the holy spirit to speak the word in the district of Asia. **7** Further, when getting down to Mys'i-a they made efforts to go into Bi-thyn'i-a,^e but the spirit of Jesus did not permit them. **8** So they passed Mys'i-a by and came down to Tro'as.^f **9** And during the night a vision^g appeared to Paul: a certain Mac-e-do'ni-an man was standing and entreating him and saying: "Step over into Mac-e-do'ni-a and help us." **10** Now as soon as he had seen the vision, we sought to go forth into Mac-e-do'ni-a,^h drawing the conclusion that God had summoned us to declare the good news to them.

11 Therefore we put out to sea from Tro'as and came with a straight run to Sam'o-thrace, but on the following day to Ne-ap'o-lis, **12** and from there to Phi-lip'pi,ⁱ a colony, which is the principal city of the district of Mac-e-do'ni-a.^j We continued in this city, spending some days. **13** And on the sabbath day we went forth outside the gate beside a river, where we were thinking there was a place of prayer;

and we sat down and began speaking to the women that had assembled. **14** And a certain woman named Lyd'i-a, a seller of purple, of the city of Thy-a-ti'-ra^a and a worshiper of God, was listening, and Jehovah opened her heart^b wide to pay attention to the things being spoken by Paul. **15** Now when she and her household got baptized,^c she said with entreaty: "If you men have judged me to be faithful to Jehovah, enter into my house and stay."^d And she just made us come.^e

16 And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain servant girl with a spirit,^f a demon of divination,^g met us. She used to furnish her masters with much gain^h by practicing the art of prediction. **17** This girl kept following Paul and us and crying outⁱ with the words: "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who are publishing to you the way of salvation." **18** This she kept doing for many days. Finally Paul got tired of it^j and turned and said to the spirit: "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."^k And it came out that very hour.^l

19 Well, when her masters saw that their hope of gain had left,^m they laid hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the rulers,ⁿ **20** and, leading them up to the civil magistrates, they said: "These men are disturbing^o our city very much, they being Jews, **21** and they are publishing customs^p that it is not lawful for us to take up or practice, seeing we are Romans." **22** And the crowd rose up together against them; and the civil magistrates, after tearing the outer garments off them, gave the command to beat them with rods.^q **23** After they had inflicted many blows upon them,^r they threw them

CHAP. 16

- a Re 1:11
- b Lu 24:45
1Co 3:7
- c Ac 16:33
Ac 18:8
- d Mt 10:11
Ro 12:13
Ga 6:6
Heb 13:2
- e Ge 19:2
Jg 19:20
Lu 24:29
- f 1Sa 28:7
- g Le 19:31
Le 20:6
- h Ac 19:24
- i Mr 1:24
Lu 4:41
- j Mr 1:25
- k Mr 1:34
Lu 9:1
Lu 10:17
- l Mt 17:18
- m Ac 19:25
- n Mt 10:18
2Co 6:5
- o 1Ki 18:17
Ac 17:6
- p Es 3:8
- q 1Th 2:2
- r 2Co 11:23

Second Col.

- a Lu 21:12
Ac 5:23
- b Ac 12:6
Ac 12:10
- c Ps 105:18
Jer 20:2
- d Ps 42:8
- e Eph 5:19
Col 3:16
Jas 5:13
- f Ac 4:31
Ac 5:19
Ac 12:7
- g Ac 12:19
- h 1Ki 20:39
- i 1Th 5:15
- j Ac 10:25
- k Ac 2:37
- l Joh 3:16
Joh 6:47
- m Ac 11:14
- n Ac 10:24
- o Ac 8:12
Ac 16:15
- p Ac 16:20

into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them securely.^a **24** Because he got such an order, he threw them into the inner prison^b and made their feet fast in the stocks.^c

25 But about the middle of the night^d Paul and Silas were praying and praising God with song;^e yes, the prisoners were hearing them. **26** Suddenly a great earthquake occurred, so that the foundations of the jail were shaken. Moreover, all the doors were instantly opened, and the bonds of all were loosened.^f **27** The jailer, being awakened out of sleep and seeing the prison doors were open, drew his sword and was about to do away with himself,^g imagining that the prisoners had escaped.^h **28** But Paul called out with a loud voice, saying: "Do not hurt yourself,ⁱ for we are all here!" **29** So he asked for lights and leaped in and, seized with trembling, he fell down^j before Paul and Silas. **30** And he brought them outside and said: "Sirs, what must I do^k to get saved?" **31** They said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will get saved,^l you and your household."^m **32** And they spoke the word of Jehovah to him together with all those in his house.ⁿ **33** And he took them along in that hour of the night and bathed their stripes; and, one and all, he and his were baptized^o without delay. **34** And he brought them into his house and set a table before them, and he rejoiced greatly with all his household now that he had believed God.

35 When it became day, the civil magistrates^p dispatched the constables to say: "Release those men." **36** So the jailer reported their words to Paul: "The civil magistrates have dispatched men that you two might be released. Now, therefore, come out and go YOUR way in peace."

37 But Paul said to them: “They flogged us publicly uncondemned, men who are Romans,^a and threw us into prison; and are they now throwing us out secretly? No, indeed! but let them come themselves and bring us out.” **38** So the constables reported these sayings to the civil magistrates. These grew fearful when they heard that the men were Romans.^b **39** Consequently they came and entreated them and, after bringing them out, they requested them to depart from the city. **40** But they came out of the prison and went to the home of Lyd’i-a, and when they saw the brothers they encouraged^c them and departed.

17 They now journeyed through Am-hip’o-lis and Ap-ol-lo’ni-a and came to Thes-sa-lo-ni’ca,^d where there was a synagogue of the Jews. **2** So according to Paul’s custom^e he went inside to them, and for three sabbaths he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,^f **3** explaining and proving by references that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer^g and to rise from the dead,^h and saying: “This is the Christ,ⁱ this Jesus whom I am publishing to you.” **4** As a result some of them became believers^j and associated themselves with Paul and Silas,^k and a great multitude of the Greeks who worshiped God and not a few of the principal women did so.

5 But the Jews, getting jealous,^l took into their company certain wicked men of the marketplace idlers and formed a mob and proceeded to throw the city into an uproar.^m And they assaulted the house of Ja’sonⁿ and went seeking to have them brought forth to the rabble. **6** When they did not find them they dragged Ja’son and certain brothers to the city rulers, crying

CHAP. 16

a Ac 22:25

Ac 23:27

b Ac 22:29

c Lu 22:32

2Co 1:4

CHAP. 17

d 1Th 2:1

e Ac 9:20

Ac 13:14

Ac 14:1

Ac 18:4

f Ac 18:19

g Ps 22:7

Ps 22:16

Ps 34:20

Ps 69:21

Ps 118:22

Isa 50:6

Isa 53:3

Isa 53:5

h Ps 16:10

Lu 24:46

i Ac 18:28

Ga 3:1

j Ac 28:24

k Ac 15:22

Ac 15:40

l Ac 13:45

m Ac 16:20

n Ro 16:21

Second Col.

a 1Ki 18:17

Ac 16:20

b Ezr 4:12

c Lu 23:2

Joh 19:12

d Ac 9:25

e Lu 16:29

f Joh 5:39

g Pr 14:15

h Ac 13:50

i Ac 14:19

1Th 2:15

j Ac 14:2

k Mt 10:23

l Ac 16:1

1Th 3:2

m 2Pe 2:8

n Ac 13:5

Ac 18:19

o Pr 1:20

out: “These men that have overturned^a the inhabited earth are present here also, **7** and Ja’son has received them with hospitality. And all these men act in opposition to the decrees^b of Caesar, saying there is another king,^c Jesus.” **8** They indeed agitated the crowd and the city rulers when they heard these things; **9** and first after taking sufficient security from Ja’son and the others they let them go.

10 Immediately by night^d the brothers sent both Paul and Silas out to Be-roe’a, and these, upon arriving, went into the synagogue of the Jews. **11** Now the latter were more noble-minded than those in Thes-sa-lo-ni’ca, for they received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining^e the Scriptures^f daily as to whether these things were so.^g **12** Therefore many of them became believers, and so did not a few of the reputable^h Greek women and of the men. **13** But when the Jews from Thes-sa-lo-ni’ca learned that the word of God was published also in Be-roe’a by Paul, they came there also to inciteⁱ and agitate^j the masses. **14** Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off to go as far as the sea;^k but both Silas and Timothy remained behind there. **15** However, those conducting Paul brought him as far as Athens and, after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy^l to come to him as quickly as possible, they departed.

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit within him came to be irritated^m at beholding that the city was full of idols. **17** Consequently he began to reason in the synagogue with the Jewsⁿ and the other people who worshiped God and every day in the marketplace^o with those who happened to be on hand. **18** But cer-

tain ones of both the Ep-i-cu-re/-an and the Sto'ic philosophers^a took to conversing with him controversially, and some would say: "What is it this chatterer would like to tell?"^b Others: "He seems to be a publisher of foreign deities." This was because he was declaring the good news of Jesus and the resurrection.^c **19** So they laid hold of him and led him to the Ar-e-op'a-gus, saying: "Can we get to know what this new teaching^d is which is spoken by you? **20** For you are introducing some things that are strange to our ears. Therefore we desire to get to know what these things purport to be."^e **21** In fact, all Athenians and the foreigners sojourning there would spend their leisure time at nothing but telling something or listening to something new. **22** Paul now stood in the midst of the Ar-e-op'a-gus^f and said:

"Men of Athens, I behold that in all things you seem to be more given to the fear of the deities^g than others are. **23** For instance, while passing along and carefully observing YOUR objects of veneration I also found an altar on which had been inscribed 'To an Unknown God.' Therefore what you are unknowingly giving godly devotion to, this I am publishing to you. **24** The God that made the world and all the things in it, being, as this One is, Lord of heaven and earth,^h does not dwell in handmade temples,ⁱ **25** neither is he attended to by human hands as if he needed anything,^j because he himself gives to all persons life^k and breath^l and all things. **26** And he made out of one man^m every nationⁿ of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth,^o and he decreed the appointed times^p and the set limits of the dwelling of men,^q **27** for them to seek God,^r if they might grope for him and really find him,^s al-

CHAP. 17

a 1Co 1:22
Col 2:8
b 1Co 4:13
c Joh 5:29
Joh 11:25
1Co 15:12
Re 20:6
d Mr 1:27
e Ac 2:12
f Ac 17:34
g Ac 17:16
h Ps 146:6
Isa 42:5
Ac 4:24
Ac 14:15
i 1Ki 8:27
Isa 66:1
Ac 7:48
j Ps 50:12
k Ge 2:7
l Isa 42:5
m Ge 5:2
n Ge 1:28
o De 32:8
p Ps 74:17
q De 2:5
De 2:19
De 32:8
Isa 34:17
r De 4:29
Isa 55:6
s Ps 145:18
Jer 23:23
Ro 1:20

Second Col.

a Isa 42:5
b Tit 1:12
c Ge 1:27
d Jos 22:22
Ps 50:1
Isa 46:9
e De 5:8
Isa 37:19
Isa 40:18
Isa 46:5
Ac 19:26
f Ac 14:16
Ro 3:25
Ro 5:13
Eph 4:18
g Lu 24:47
h Ps 96:13
Ps 98:9
Isa 2:4
Joh 5:22
Ac 10:42
i Joh 11:25
Ac 2:24
Ac 13:33
Ro 6:5
j 1Co 1:23
k Ac 17:19

CHAP. 18

l Ac 18:26
1Co 16:19
2Ti 4:19
m Heb 13:24
n Ac 11:28
o Ac 20:34
1Co 4:12
1Co 9:15
1Th 2:9
2Th 3:10
p Mt 4:23
Ac 13:14
Ac 17:2

though, in fact, he is not far off from each one of us. **28** For by him we have life and move and exist,^a even as certain ones of the poets^b among you have said, 'For we are also his progeny.'

29 "Seeing, therefore, that we are the progeny of God,^c we ought not to imagine that the Divine Being^d is like gold or silver or stone, like something sculptured by the art and contrivance of man.^e **30** True, God has overlooked the times of such ignorance,^f yet now he is telling mankind that they should all everywhere repent.^g **31** Because he has set a day in which he purposes to judge^h the inhabited earth in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and he has furnished a guarantee to all men in that he has resurrectedⁱ him from the dead."

32 Well, when they heard of a resurrection of the dead, some began to mock,^j while others said: "We will hear you about this even another time." **33** Thus Paul went out from their midst, **34** but some men joined themselves to him and became believers, among whom also were Di-o-nys'i-us, a judge of the court of the Ar-e-op'a-gus,^k and a woman named Dam'a-ris, and others besides them.

18 After these things he departed from Athens and came to Corinth. **2** And he found a certain Jew named Aq'-ui-la,^l a native of Pon'tus who had recently come from Italy,^m and Pris-cil'la his wife, because of the fact that Claudiusⁿ had ordered all the Jews to depart from Rome. So he went to them **3** and on account of being of the same trade he stayed at their home, and they worked,^o for they were tentmakers by trade. **4** However, he would give a talk in the synagogue^p every sabbath and would persuade Jews and Greeks.



***** w12 10/15 pp. 15-16 par. 13
What Kind of Spirit Do You Show? *****

¹³ Does this mean that it is wrong to offer our observation if we see something in the congregation that we feel needs adjustment? No. In the first century, an issue arose over which there was much disputing. The brothers “arranged

for Paul and Barnabas and some others of them to go up to the apostles and older men in Jerusalem regarding this dispute.” (Acts 15:2) No doubt each of those brothers had an opinion on the subject and an idea of how the matter might be handled. However, once each one expressed his thought and a spirit-directed decision was made, the brothers did not continue to bring up their individual opinions. After the letter with the decision reached the congregations, “they rejoiced over the encouragement” and were “made firm in the faith.” (Acts 15:31; 16:4, 5) Likewise today, once we bring a matter to the attention of the responsible brothers, we should be content to leave it to their prayerful consideration.

***** w11 4/15 p. 14 par. 4 Make Decisions That Honor God *****

⁴ Not all who want to make decisions for us mean us harm. Well-intentioned friends might insist that we follow their advice. If we are living away from home, our relatives likely still have deep concern for our well-being and may feel compelled to continue to involve themselves in important decisions we face. For instance, consider the matter of medical treatment. The Bible clearly condemns the misuse of blood. (Acts 15:28, 29) Other matters that have to do with health care, though, are not clear-cut and require that each of us make a personal decision as to what treatment we will accept or reject. Our loved ones may have strong opinions on these issues. However, when deciding about those matters, each dedicated baptized Christian needs to carry “his own load” of responsibility. (Gal. 6:4, 5) Our primary concern is to maintain a good conscience before God, not men.—1 Tim. 1:5.

***** w11 4/15 pp. 23-24 pars. 5-7 Are You Allowing God’s Spirit to Lead You? *****

⁵ Consider what took place between Paul and Barnabas. They had worked side by side for years in advancement of the good news. Each had commendable qualities. Yet, on one occasion, there occurred between them “a sharp burst of anger, so that they separated from each other.” (Acts 15:36-39) This incident underscores that even among devoted servants of God, disagreements will at times arise. If a Christian has a misunderstanding with a fellow believer, what might he do to prevent the situation from escalating into a heated exchange that could result in a lasting rift?

If a Christian senses that he is becoming angry when discussing a matter with a fellow believer, he is wise to heed the counsel found at James 1:19, 20: “Every man must be swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath; for man’s wrath does not work out God’s righteousness.” Depending on the circumstances, he might try to change the subject, defer the discussion, or excuse himself before the conversation becomes heated.—Prov. 12:16; 17:14; 29:11.

⁷ What are the benefits of following this counsel? By taking time to calm down, pray about the matter, and consider how best to reply, a Christian allows himself to be led by God’s spirit. (Prov. 15:1, 28)



*** w08 5/15 p. 30-p. 31
Highlights From the Book of Acts *** **Jehovah's Word Is Alive**

Some nine months later, Paul (also known as Saul) selects Silas as his companion and sets out on his second tour. (Acts 15:40) Timothy and Luke join Paul along the way.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

16:6, 7—Why did the holy spirit forbid Paul and his associates to preach in the district of Asia and Bithynia? There were just a few workers. Hence, the holy spirit directed them to more fruitful fields.

Lessons for Us:

16:1, 2. Christian youths should apply themselves spiritually and seek Jehovah's help to build up a good reputation.

16:3. We should do all we can within Scriptural bounds to make the good news acceptable to others.—1 Cor. 9:19-23.

*** w11 10/15 p. 30 par. 12 "Comfort All the Mourning Ones" ***

¹² A very important means of being comforted is to be present at Christian meetings, where Bible discussions encourage us. We read that Judas and Silas "encouraged the brothers with many a discourse and strengthened them." (Acts 15:32) Before and after our meetings, there is upbuilding conversation between members of the congregation. So even if we are suffering because of some distressing situation, let us not isolate ourselves, for doing so will not improve matters. (Prov. 18:1)

*** km 1/10 p. 7 Are You Putting It Off? ***

Putting what off? Filling out the DPA (durable power of attorney) card that is provided for baptized Witnesses. Since "you do not know what your life will be tomorrow," it is crucial that you decide in advance and indicate in writing what treatments and procedures you would accept in a medical emergency. (Jas. 4:14; Acts 15:28, 29) To help you, the video *Transfusion-Alternative Health Care—Meeting Patient Needs and Rights* has been produced. View it, and then prayerfully review what you learned with the help of the questions set out below.—

*** w12 1/15 p. 10 par. 4 Learn Watchfulness From Jesus' Apostles ***

Read Acts 16:6-10.

⁸ What can we learn from this account? Note that only *after* Paul set out for Asia did God's spirit intervene. Then, only *after* Paul neared Bithynia did Jesus step in. And finally, only *after* Paul reached Troas did Jesus direct him to Macedonia. As Head of the congregation, Jesus may deal with us in a similar way. (Col. 1:18) For example, you may have been thinking about serving as a pioneer or moving to an area where the need is greater. But it may be only *after* you take steps to reach your goal that Jesus, by means of God's spirit, will guide you. To illustrate: A driver can direct his car to turn left or right but only if the car is moving. Likewise, Jesus may direct us in expanding our ministry but only if we are moving—if we are putting forth effort to reach our goal.

***** w12 3/15 pp. 13-14 par. 19 Help People to “Awake From Sleep” *****

¹⁹ Naturally, we would like to help our relatives to accept the good news. (Josh. 2:13; Acts 10:24, 48; **16:31, 32**) If our initial effort is rebuffed, that could dampen our enthusiasm for trying again. We might imagine that there is little we can do or say that will change their attitude. Still, events may cause a change in your relatives' life or viewpoint. Or you may have improved in your ability to explain the truth, so that you might now have a different result.

***** w12 4/15 p. 28 pars. 5-6 Jehovah Safeguards Us for Salvation *****

.—**Acts 16:13-15**.

⁶ Was Lydia's experience unique? By no means. If you are a dedicated Christian, you too were drawn by God to true worship. Just as our heavenly Father saw something valuable in the heart of Lydia, he saw something good in you. When you began listening to the good news, Jehovah helped you to grasp it by supplying holy spirit. (1 Cor. 2:11, 12) When you endeavored to apply what you learned, he blessed your efforts to do his will. When you dedicated your life to him, his heart rejoiced. Indeed, ever since you started on the road to life, Jehovah has been with you each step of the way.

***** w12 8/1 p. 29 Champions of the Truth *****

Brother Morris continued, observing that while going through stormy times can be difficult, eventually the winds die down. As to hard times, he exhorted the students to consider what Paul and Silas did when jailed in Philippi. **Acts 16:25** relates: “About the middle of the night Paul and Silas were praying and praising God with song; yes, the prisoners were hearing them.” Note this detail: They did not just pray, they sang. Their singing was loud enough for other prisoners to hear. Most of us, Brother Morris commented, do not have trained voices, but we should not shy away from singing, especially when going through a crisis. Brother Morris concluded by reading the words of “Enduring to the End,” Song number 135 in the songbook *Sing to Jehovah*.

***** w11 10/15 p. 31 par. 14 “Comfort All the Mourning Ones” *****

In Berea, his listeners “received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily.” (**Acts 17:2, 10, 11**) How appropriate it is that we read the Bible daily, benefiting from it and from Christian publications designed to bring us comfort and hope in these troublesome times!

***** w10 2/15 pp. 13-14 pars. 16-17 Skillfully Wield “the Sword of the Spirit” *****

¹⁶ *Do more than just read scriptures; explain them.* It was Paul's custom to ‘explain and prove by references’ the things he taught. (**Acts 17:3**) A Scriptural text often contains more than one point, and you may need to isolate key expressions that apply to what you are discussing. You may do this by restating the thought-conveying words or by asking questions that will help the householder to recognize them. Then, explain the meaning of that part of the scripture. Once that is done, help your listener to see how the text applies to him personally.

¹⁷ *Reason from the Scriptures in a way that is convincing.* Using heartfelt entreaty and sound logic, Paul convincingly ‘reasoned with others from the Scriptures.’ (**Acts 17:2, 4**) Like him, endeavor to reach the heart of your listener. ‘Draw up’ what is in it by using kind questions that reflect personal interest in the individual. (Prov. 20:5) Avoid being blunt. Present arguments in a clear and logical manner. They should be supported by satisfying evidence. Your statements should be solidly based on God's Word. It is better to use one text well by explaining and illustrating the point than to read two or three scriptures in rapid succession. Using corroborative evidence can also ‘add persuasiveness to your lips.’ (Prov. 16:23)

Endure With Joy!

Instructions: Do this activity in a quiet place. As you read the scriptures, imagine that you are actually watching the events. Picture the scene. Hear the voices. Feel the emotions of the characters. Let the account come to life.

Main characters: The apostle Paul, Silas, a servant girl, her masters, and a jailer

Summary: Paul and Silas are jailed for preaching; then an earthquake frees them.

1 THINK ABOUT THE SCENE.—READ ACTS 16:16-40.

What facial expressions do you “see” on the masters of the servant girl? (*Reread verses 19-22.*)

on Paul and Silas while in prison? (*Reread verse 25.*)

Describe the appearance and sound of the “great earthquake,” as you imagine it. (*Reread verses 26, 27.*)

What tone of voice do you detect as the apostle Paul speaks to the jailer in verses 28-31?

2 DIG DEEPER.

Was the earthquake simply a natural event? Why, or why not? (Clue: Read Acts 4:31; 5:19; 12:7.)

Why might the jailer have been surprised that Paul and Silas treated him so kindly? (*Reread Acts 16:23, 24.*)

How did the persecution of Paul and Silas help them to preach to more people? (Clue: *Reread verses 25 and 33.*)

3 APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED.

Write down what you learned about . . .

How to endure suffering.

The benefits of endurance. (Read James 1:2-4.)

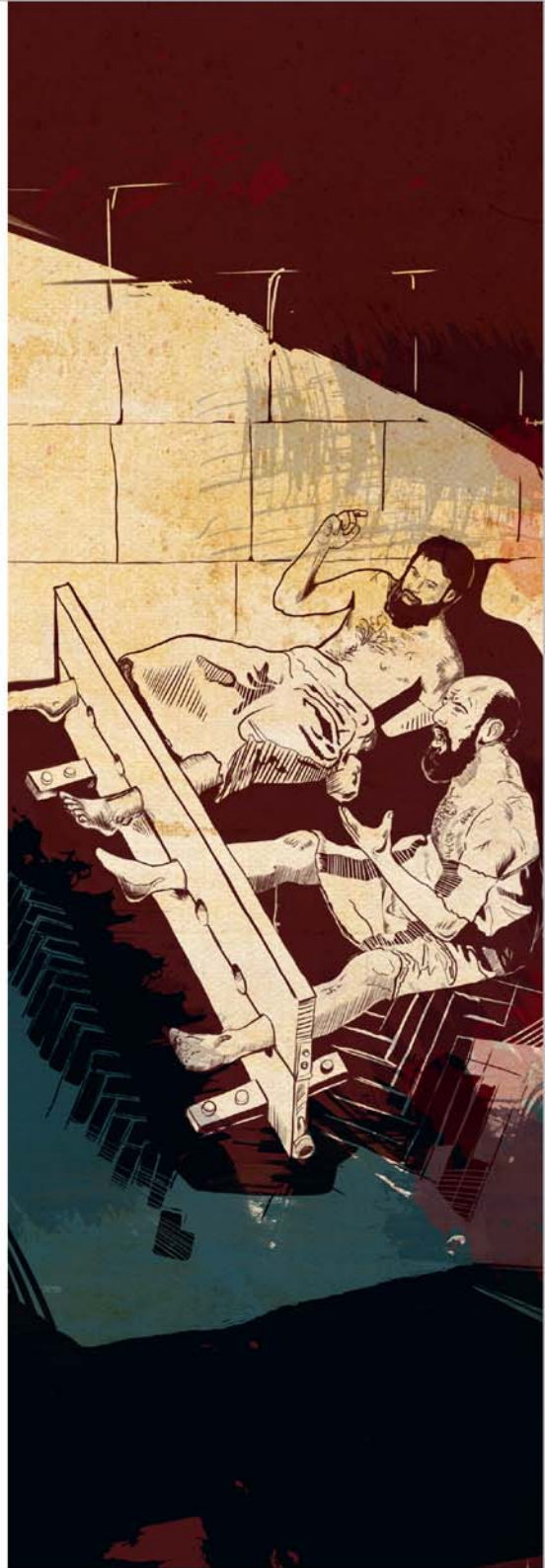
4 ASK YOURSELF.

When do I especially need endurance?

While I endure suffering, how can I imitate Paul in the way I treat other people?

What lesson from this account is most important to me, and why?

Suggestion: Imagine that you are the jailer. Write a description of the events in this account from his perspective. Include the jailer's feelings as he locks up Paul and Silas, witnesses the earthquake, and is finally baptized with his family.



Rapture

Definition: The belief that faithful Christians will be bodily caught up from the earth, suddenly taken out of the world, to be united with the Lord “in the air.” The word “rapture” is understood by some persons, but not by all, to be the meaning of 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The word “rapture” does not occur in the inspired Scriptures.

When the apostle Paul said that Christians would be “caught up” to be with the Lord, what subject was being discussed?

1 Thess. 4:13-18, *RS*: “We would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep [“those who sleep in death,” *NE*; “those who have died,” *TEV, JB*], that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” (Evidently some members of the Christian congregation in Thessalonica had died. Paul encouraged the survivors to comfort one another with the *resurrection hope*. He reminded them that Jesus was resurrected after his death; so, too, at the coming of the Lord, those faithful Christians among them who had died would be raised to be with Christ.)

Who are the ones that will be ‘caught up in the clouds,’ as stated at 1 Thessalonians 4:17?

Verse 15 explains that they are faithful ones “who are left until the coming of the Lord,” that is, they are still living at the time of Christ’s coming. Will they ever die? According to Romans 6:3-5 and

1 Corinthians 15:35, 36, 44 (quoted on pages 314, 315), they must die before they can gain heavenly life. But there is no need for them to remain in the death state awaiting Christ's return. They will instantly be "caught up," "in the twinkling of an eye," to be with the Lord.—1 Cor. 15:51, 52, *RS*; also Revelation 14:13.

Will Christ appear visibly on a cloud and then take away faithful Christians into the heavens while the world looks on?

Did Jesus say whether the world would see him again with their physical eyes?

John 14:19, *RS*: "Yet a little while, and *the world will see me no more*, but you [his faithful disciples] will see me; because I live, you will live also." (Italics added.) (Compare 1 Timothy 6:16.)

What is the meaning of the Lord's 'descending from heaven'?

Could the Lord "descend from heaven," as stated at 1 Thessalonians 4:16, without being visible to physical eyes? In the days of ancient Sodom and Gomorrah, Jehovah said that he was going to "go down to see" what the people were doing. (Gen. 18:21, *RS*) But when Jehovah made that inspection, no human saw him, although they did see the angelic representatives that he sent. (John 1:18) Similarly, without having to return in the flesh, Jesus could turn his attention to his faithful followers on earth to reward them.

In what sense, then, will humans "see" the Lord "coming in a cloud"?

Jesus foretold: "Then they will see the Son of man [Jesus Christ] coming in a cloud with power and great glory." (Luke 21:27, *RS*) In no way does this statement or similar ones in other texts contradict what Jesus said as recorded at John 14:19. Consider: At Mount Sinai, what occurred when God 'came to the people *in a thick cloud*,' as stated at Exodus 19:9? (*RS*) God was invisibly present; the people of Israel saw visible evidence of his presence, but none of them actually saw God with their eyes. So, too, when

Our Reasons for Joy (Matthew 5:12)

1. Our reasons for joy are abundant,
Like riches increasing in worth.
Desirable things of all nations
Are joining us in all the earth.
The joy in our heart is well-founded,
With roots reaching deep in God's Word.
We daily partake of its teachings;
Faith follows the things we have heard.
Our causes for joy are deep-seated,
Like embers that burn in our hearts.
Though troubles and trials beset us,
Endurance Jehovah imparts.

(CHORUS)

*Jehovah our God is our joy,
The work of his hands our delight.
How deep are his thoughts, how great are his works,
Abounding in goodness and might!*

2. We gladly behold his productions,
The heavens, the sea, and the land.
We gaze at the book of creation,
Applauding the work of his hand.
Triumphantly we now bear witness,
Proclaiming the Kingdom of God.
The news of its birth and its blessings,
We joyously spread all abroad.
Eternal rejoicing approaches,
Like daylight that follows the night.
The promised new earth and new heavens
Will bring everlasting delight.

(Chorus)

(See also Deut. 16:15; Isa. 12:6; John 15:11.)

studied with you or by receiving help from other capable teachers in the congregation, you may be able to improve in your ability to conduct productive studies, helping others to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

If you need assistance in starting and conducting a home Bible study, feel free to speak with one of the overseers or with a fellow Witness who is effective in the Bible study work. You can receive help to put into practice the suggestions that have appeared in *Our Kingdom Ministry* and have been demonstrated at the Service Meeting. Relying on Jehovah and making your desire a matter of prayer will bring results. (1 John 3:22) So share in making disciples, and if at all possible, make it your aim to conduct at least one home Bible study regularly in addition to any study that you may conduct with your family. By conducting Bible studies, you will increase your joy in the ministry.

DIRECTING INTERESTED ONES TO JEHOVAH'S ORGANIZATION

When we conduct Bible studies and help people become disciples of Jesus Christ, they come to know Jehovah God and are brought into the congregation. Congregations are organized theocratically to do Jehovah's will. Bible students will make spiritual progress and grow to maturity if we help them to recognize Jehovah's organization and cooperate with it. It is important to teach them how.

To accomplish this, you can use videos and brochures that have been specifically prepared for this purpose. Some of the information found in Chapter 4 of this publication may also be helpful.

From the very beginning of your Bible discussions with interested people, help them to see that Jehovah is using an organization to get his work done on earth today. Point out the value of the Bible study aids used by Jehovah's Witnesses, and explain how they are produced and distributed worldwide by volunteer workers who are dedicated to God. Invite your Bible students to accompany you to the Congregation Book Study. Introduce them to the brothers and sisters there, and explain how meetings at the Kingdom Hall are conducted. Encourage them to attend. Help them to get acquainted with other Witnesses at circuit assemblies and district conventions. On these and other occasions, let new ones observe for themselves how Jehovah's servants display the identifying mark of true Christians, love. (John 13:35) As interested people grow in appreciation for Jehovah's organization, they will make greater advancement in getting to know Jehovah.

USING BIBLE LITERATURE

The early Christians became zealous publishers of the Word of God. They made copies of the Scriptures for their personal use and for congregation study. They recommended God's Word of truth to others. Their handwritten copies were few in number and highly treasured. (Col. 4:16; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3: 14-17; 4:13; 1 Pet. 1:1) Using modern printing methods today, Jehovah's Witnesses publish millions of Bibles and hundreds of millions of Bible study aids—such as tracts, brochures, books, and magazines—in scores of languages.

As you share the good news with others, be sure to make good use of the numerous Bible study aids provided by "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matt. 24:45) *Our Kingdom Ministry* announces which pub-

1. On many occasions God spoke to men
By means of his prophets of old.
Today he has said, 'Let all men repent,'
By God's own Son we are told.

(CHORUS)

*Do we have the faith that is sure?
We must build such faith to survive.
Is our faith proved true by our works?
This kind of faith preserves our souls alive.*

2. We gladly obey Christ Jesus' command
To share Kingdom truth far and wide.
We carefully guard our freeness of speech;
This truth we never will hide.

(Chorus)

3. Our faith is an anchor firm and secure;
We never will shrink back in fear.
Though enemies will against us arise,
We know salvation is near.

(Chorus)