

You Can Live Forever On Paradise Earth ©1982, WTBS

Chapter 30

What You Must Do to Live Forever

JEHOVAH GOD offers you something wonderful—everlasting life in his righteous new system of things. (2 Peter 3:13) But living then depends upon your doing God's will now. The present wicked world, including all who remain a part of it, is about to pass away, "but he that does the will of God remains forever." (1 John 2:17) So you must choose between two courses. One leads to death and the other to eternal life. (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20) Which one will you take?

² How do you show that you are choosing life? First of all, you must have faith in Jehovah and in his promises. Are you firmly convinced that God exists "and that he becomes *the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him*"? (Hebrews 11:6) You need to trust God as a son or a daughter trusts a loving and merciful father. (Psalm 103:13, 14; Proverbs 3:11, 12) Having such faith, you will not doubt that his counsel is wise or that his ways are right, even if at times you do not understand matters fully.

³ However, more than faith is needed. There must also be works to demonstrate what your true feelings are about Jehovah. (James 2:20, 26) Have you done things to show that you are sorry for any failing in the past to do what is right? Have you been moved to repent or make changes to bring your life course into harmony with Jehovah's will? Have you turned around, that is, rejected any wrong course that you may have been following, and have you begun doing the things God requires?

1. (a) What two courses are open to you? (b) How may you choose the right course?
2. (a) If you have true faith, of what will you be convinced? (b) How will trusting God as a child trusts a loving father help you to serve him?
3. (a) In addition to faith, what else is necessary? (b) What works are needed to show that you are choosing life?

You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth —But How?

LIVING forever on earth is just an impossible dream. There is no way anybody can do it.

You may have heard people say that. Yet you may know that in the beginning it was God's purpose for obedient humans to live forever in an earthly Paradise. And God never fails to accomplish what he purposes! (Genesis 1:28; Isaiah 55:11) His Word plainly promises: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—Psalm 37:29.

That is the thrilling message that Jehovah's Witnesses bring to people when they call at their homes. The Kingdom, with Jesus Christ as Ruler, will see to it that God's original purpose is accomplished. Under the Kingdom's righteous administration this earth will be cultivated to become a beautiful Paradise. However, not everyone will be permitted to live in the Paradise earth. Requirements must be met. That is reasonable.—Matthew 6:10.

Consider: If you were the owner of a beautiful home surrounded by well-kept gardens, would you allow just anyone to live there? No, he would have to meet with your approval, meeting your requirements. What does God require of those who will reside forever upon his Paradise earth? Let us examine four basic requirements.

Four Requirements

Jesus Christ identified a first requirement when he said in prayer to his Father: "This means everlasting life, their *taking in knowledge* of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) Knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ includes knowledge of God's purposes regarding the earth and of Christ's role as earth's new King. Will you take in such knowledge by studying the Bible?

Many have found the second requirement more difficult. It is to *obey God's laws*, yes, to conform one's life to the moral requirements set out in the Bible. This includes refraining from a debauched, immoral way of life.—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 1 Peter 4:3, 4.

A third requirement is that we *be associated with God's channel*, his organization. God has always used an organization. For example, only those in the ark in Noah's day survived the Flood, and only those associated with the Christian congregation in the first century had God's favor. (Acts 4:12) Similarly, Jehovah is using only one organization today to accomplish his will. *To receive everlasting life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it.*

The fourth requirement is connected with loyalty. God requires that prospective subjects of his Kingdom support his

MANY PROTESTANTS believe in justification, or declared righteousness, by faith alone, and that belief in Jesus ensures salvation. Some believe that justification is predestinated

for by good works or remitted by means of an "indulgence."*

The Protestant View

The abusive sale of indulgences in the early 16th century sparked the Protestant Reformation. Catholic monk Martin Luther attacked this practice in the 95 theses he posted on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517. But, in reality, Luther's disagreement with official Catholic dogma went deeper than that. It embraced the church's entire doctrine of justification. Confirming this, *A Catholic Dictionary* states: "The difference of belief on the way by which sinners are justified before God formed the main subject of contention between Catholics and Protestants at the time of the Reformation. 'If this doctrine' (i.e. the doctrine of justification by faith alone) 'falls,' says Luther in his *Table Talk*, 'it is all over with us.'"

What, exactly, did Luther mean by 'justification by faith alone'? As a Catholic, Luther had learned that man's justifica-

* According to Catholic dogma, sin involves guilt and two kinds of punishment—eternal and temporal. Guilt and eternal punishment are remitted by means of the sacrament of penance. Temporal punishment must be atoned for in this life by good works and penitential practices, or in the next life in the fire of purgatory. An indulgence is a partial or a full (plenary) remission of temporal punishment by the application of the merits of Christ, Mary, and the "saints," that are stored up in the "Treasury of the Church." The "good works" required to obtain an indulgence can include a pilgrimage or the contributing of money to some "good" cause. In the past, money was thus raised for the Crusades and for the building of cathedrals, churches, and hospitals.

tion involves baptism, personal merit, and good works, as well as the sacrament of penance administered by a priest, who hears confession, grants absolution, and imposes compensatory works that can involve self-punishment.

In his efforts to find peace with God, Luther had expended all the resources of Roman dogma on justification, including fasting, prayers, and self-punishment, but to no avail. Unappeased, he read and re-read the Psalms and Paul's letters, finally finding peace of mind by concluding that God justifies men, not because of their merits, good works, or penance, but solely because of their faith. He became so enthused by this thought of "justification by faith alone" that he added the word "alone" after the word "faith" in his German translation of Romans 3:28!*

Most of the Protestant churches basically adopted Luther's view of "justification by grace through faith." In fact, this had already been expressed by the French pre-Reformer Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples. Summing up the difference between Catholic and Protestant views on justification, *A Catholic Dictionary* states: "Catholics regard justification as an act by which a man is really made just; Protestants, as one in which he is merely declared and reputed just, the merits of another—viz. Christ—being made over to his account."

Neither Catholic nor Protestant "Justification"

Catholic dogma goes beyond what the Bible teaches when it claims that "a man is really made just," or righteous, by the gift of divine grace bestowed at baptism. It is

* Luther also cast doubt on the canonicity of the letter of James, considering that his argumentation in chapter 2, that faith without works is dead, contradicts the apostle Paul's explanation of justification "apart from works." (Romans 4:6) He failed to recognize that Paul was speaking of works of the Jewish Law.—Romans 3:19, 20, 28.

not baptism that washes away original sin, but it is Christ's shed blood. (Romans 5: 8, 9) There is a big difference between *really* being made righteous by God and being counted, or considered, as being righteous. (Romans 4:7, 8) Any honest Catholic, struggling in his fight against sin, knows that he has not *really* been made righteous. (Romans 7:14-19) If he were *really* righteous, he would have no sins to confess to a priest.

Furthermore, if Catholic dogma followed the Bible, the sin-conscious Catholic would confess his sins to God, asking forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:9-2:2) The intercession of a human priest at any stage of "justification" has no foundation in the Bible, no more than the accumulation of merits upon which the doctrine of indulgences is based.—Hebrews 7:26-28.

The Protestant concept of justification, as meaning a Christian's being declared righteous on the merits of Christ's sacrifice, is without a doubt nearer to what the Bible teaches. However, some Protestant churches teach "justification by faith alone," which, as we will later see, overlooks specific reasonings presented by the apostle Paul and by James. Those churches' spiritually smug attitude is summed up by the phrase "once saved, always saved." Some Protestants believe that it is sufficient to believe in Jesus to be saved and, therefore, that justification precedes baptism.

Further, certain Protestant churches, while teaching justification by faith, follow the French reformer John Calvin and teach personal predestination, thus denying the Biblical doctrine of free will. (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20) It can, therefore, be stated that neither the Catholic nor the Protestant concepts of justification are totally in harmony with the Bible.

THE BIBLE teaches that man has free will and that Christ's ransom sacrifice opens up two hopes, one heavenly and the other earthly. Both hopes involve receiving a righteous standing before God

What Does the Bible Teach?

Yet the Bible definitely teaches the doctrine of "justification," or the way in which a human can be granted a righteous standing before God. We have earlier seen why we need to be put right with God, since we are all born, not as God's children, but as "children of wrath." (Ephesians 2:1-3) Whether God's wrath remains upon us or not depends upon our accepting or refusing his merciful provision for reconciliation with him, the holy, righteous God. (John 3:36) That loving provision is "the ransom paid by Christ Jesus."—Romans 3:23, 24.

The apostle Paul showed that Christ's ransom sacrifice opens up two hopes, one "upon the earth" and the other "in the heavens." He wrote: "God saw good for all fullness to dwell in him [Christ], and through him to reconcile again to himself all other things by making peace through the blood he shed on the torture stake, no matter whether they are the things upon the earth or the things in the heavens."—Colossians 1:19, 20.

To share in either of these two hopes, it is necessary to have a righteous standing before God, and this involves much more than merely "believing in Jesus." Just what is involved for Christians who have the heavenly hope and for those whose hope is to live forever in a paradise on earth will be considered in the following two articles. Please read on, and do not hesitate to ask the witness of Jehovah who supplied you with this magazine to discuss these articles with you, Bible in hand.

Fine Shepherd. (John 10:16) They exercise faith in Jehovah and in his Son. They dedicate their lives to Jehovah on the basis of Christ's ransom sacrifice. They are baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit" and recognize the need to cultivate "the fruitage of the spirit." (Matthew 28:19, 20; Galatians 5:22, 23) Their names are written in Jehovah's book of remembrance.

¹⁴ These "other sheep" gathered in this time of the end will make up the "great crowd" whom the apostle John saw in vision, after he had seen the 144,000 members of spiritual Israel. (Revelation 7:4, 9) He described the "great crowd" as having "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Verse 14) Because of their faith in the Lamb's shed blood, a degree of righteousness is credited to them. This was depicted by their symbolic white robes. They have a clean standing before Jehovah, and "that is why" he allows them to 'render him sacred service day and night in his temple.' (Verse 15) Still, each day they must confess their sins to Jehovah and ask for forgiveness through Jesus Christ.—1 John 1:9-2:2.

¹⁵ That the "other sheep" are God's friends and even now have a relatively righteous standing before him is also made clear in Jesus' prophecy on 'the sign of his presence,' which includes the illustration of the sheep and the goats. Because the "sheep" do good to the remnant of Christ's 144,000 "brothers" still on earth, they are blessed by Jesus' Fa-

14. What gives the "other sheep" a clean standing before Jehovah, but for what do they need to ask God?

15. (a) How does the parable of the sheep and the goats show that the "other sheep" have a righteous standing with God? (b) To what extent are they declared righteous at the present time?

ther and are called "righteous ones." Like Abraham, they are accounted, or declared, righteous as friends of God. Their righteous standing will also mean survival for them when the "goats" depart into "everlasting cutting-off." (Matthew 24:3-25:46) They will "come out of the great tribulation" that will mark the end of the present wicked system of things.—Revelation 7:14.

Brought Up to Perfection

¹⁶ The "great crowd," who survive the "great tribulation," are not already declared righteous for life. We can see this from the fact that the chapter that mentions them goes on to say: "The Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them, and will guide them to fountains of waters of life." (Revelation 7:17) So, even though God previously counted them as righteous compared to mankind in general and as his friends, they need additional help, or steps to be taken, so that they can be declared righteous for life.

¹⁷ During the Millennium, the enthroned Lamb, Christ Jesus, together with his 144,000 associate kings and priests, will apply a program of spiritual and physical "curing of the nations." (Revelation 22:1, 2) Such "nations" will be made up of the survivors of the great tribulation, any children born to them after Har-Magedon, and those who come back in the "resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) All who put faith in Christ's blood and accomplish appropriate "deeds" will even-

16. How do we know that the great crowd are not declared righteous for life before the "great tribulation"?

17. (a) What is meant by "the curing of the nations"? (b) Who will need to have their names inscribed in "the book of life"?

that humans need something to atone for, or cover, their sins. The apostle Paul summarized the principle in this way: "Unless blood is poured out no forgiveness takes place." (Hebrews 9:22) **Christians are not under the Mosaic Law with its requirements, such as sacrifices.** (Romans 10:4; Colossians 2:16, 17) They also know that animal sacrifices cannot provide permanent and complete forgiveness of sins. Instead, these sacrificial offerings foreshadowed a far more valuable sacrifice—that of the Messiah, or Christ. (Hebrews 10:4, 10; compare Galatians 3:24.) Yet, you may ask, "Was it really necessary for the Messiah to die?"

⁸ Yes, the Messiah had to die if mankind was to be saved. To understand why, we must think back to the garden of Eden and try to grasp the enormity of what Adam and Eve lost when they rebelled against God. Eternal life had been set before them! As children of God, they also enjoyed a direct relationship with him. But when they rejected Jehovah's rulership, they lost all of that and brought sin and death upon the human race.—Romans 5:12.

⁹ It was as though our first parents had squandered a vast fortune, plunging themselves into a pit of debt. Adam and Eve passed that debt on to their offspring. Because we were not born perfect and sinless, every one of us is sinful and dying. When we get sick or say something hurtful that we wish we could take back, we are experiencing the effects of our inherited debt—human imperfection. (Romans 7:21-25) Our only hope lies in regaining what Adam lost. However, we cannot earn perfect human life. Since all imperfect humans commit sin, all of us earn death, not life.—Romans 6:23.

¹⁰ Yet, could something be offered in exchange for the

8, 9. What precious things did Adam and Eve lose, and how did their actions affect their descendants?

10. What was needed to buy back what Adam lost?

life that Adam forfeited? God's standard of justice demands balance, "soul for soul." (Exodus 21:23) So a life had to be offered to pay for the life that was lost. Not just any life would suffice. Psalm 49:7, 8 says of imperfect humans: "Not one of them can by any means redeem even a brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; (and the redemption price of their soul is so precious that it has ceased to time indefinite)." Is the situation therefore hopeless? No, indeed.

¹¹ In the Hebrew language, the word "ransom" signifies the sum paid to redeem a captive and also denotes *equivalency*. Only a man with perfect human life could offer up the equivalent of what Adam lost. After Adam, the only perfect man born on earth was Jesus Christ. Hence, the Bible calls Jesus "the last Adam" and assures us that Christ "gave himself a corresponding ransom for all." (1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6) Whereas Adam passed death on to his children, Jesus' legacy is life eternal. First Corinthians 15:22 explains: "Just as in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ all will be made alive." Appropriately, then, Jesus is called "Eternal Father."—Isaiah 9:6, 7.

HOW THE RANSOM WAS PAID

¹² In the fall of 29 C.E., Jesus went to his relative John to be baptized and thereby present himself to carry out God's will. On that occasion Jehovah anointed Jesus with holy spirit. Jesus thus became the Messiah, or Christ, the one anointed by God. (Matthew 3:16, 17) Then Jesus embarked on his three-and-a-half-year ministry. He traveled throughout his homeland, preaching about God's Kingdom and gathering faithful followers.

11. (a) What does the word "ransom" signify in Hebrew? (b) Who alone could redeem mankind, and why?

12. When did Jesus become the Messiah, and what life course did he thereafter pursue?

loyal one would not remain in the grave. (Psalm 16:10; Acts 13:35) He slept in death for parts of three days, and then Jehovah God resurrected him to life as a mighty spirit being.—1 Peter 3:18.

¹⁶ At his death, Jesus surrendered his human life for all time. Upon being raised to life in heaven, he became a life-giving spirit. Moreover, when Jesus ascended to the holiest place in the universe, he was reunited with his dear Father and formally presented to Him the value of his perfect human life. (Hebrews 9:23-28) The value of that precious life could then be applied in behalf of obedient mankind. What does that mean for you?

CHRIST'S RANSOM AND YOU

¹⁷ Consider three ways in which Christ's ransom sacrifice benefits you even now. First, it brings *forgiveness of sins*. Through faith in the shed blood of Jesus, we have "the release by ransom," yes, "the forgiveness of our trespasses." (Ephesians 1:7) So even if we have committed a serious sin, we can ask God for forgiveness in Jesus' name. If we are truly repentant, Jehovah applies to us the value of his Son's ransom sacrifice. God forgives us, granting us the blessing of a good conscience, instead of exacting the penalty of death that we incur by sinning.—Acts 3:19; 1 Peter 3:21.

¹⁸ Second, Christ's ransom sacrifice provides the basis of our *hope for the future*. In vision, the apostle John saw that "a great crowd, which no man was able to number" would survive the coming cataclysmic end of this system of things. Why will they survive when God destroys so many others? An angel told John that the great crowd had

16. What did Jesus do upon returning to heaven?
17. How can we avail ourselves of forgiveness on the basis of Christ's ransom sacrifice?
18. In what way does Jesus' sacrifice provide us with hope?

"washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," Jesus Christ. (Revelation 7:9, 14) As long as we exercise faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ and live in harmony with divine requirements, we will be clean in God's sight and will have the hope of everlasting life.

¹⁹ Third, the ransom sacrifice is the ultimate *proof of Jehovah's love*. Christ's death embodied the two greatest acts of love in the history of the universe: (1) God's love in sending his Son to die in our behalf; (2) Jesus' love in willingly offering himself as a ransom. (John 15:13; Romans 5:8) If we truly exercise faith, this love applies to each and every one of us. The apostle Paul said: "The Son of God . . . loved me and handed himself over for me."—Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 4:9, 10.

²⁰ Therefore, let us show our gratitude for the love displayed by God and Christ by exercising faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice. Doing so leads to everlasting life. (John 3:36) Yet, our salvation is not the most important reason for Jesus' life and death on earth. No, his primary concern was an even greater issue, a universal one. As we shall see in the next chapter, that issue touches all of us because it shows why God has allowed wickedness and suffering to persist so long in this world.

19. How does Christ's sacrifice prove that he and his Father love you?

20. Why should we exercise faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice?

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Why did Jesus have to die to save mankind?

•
How was the ransom paid?

•
In what ways do you benefit from the ransom?

⁴ The knowledge of God brings responsibility before Jehovah. (James 4:17) But think of the blessings you will enjoy if you apply that knowledge and reach out for everlasting life. In his Word, the Bible, Jehovah God has painted a beautiful picture of what that life will be like in the Paradise earth so near at hand. Of course, as Jehovah's people we do not serve God solely out of a desire for a reward. We serve God because we love him. (Mark 12:29, 30) Moreover, we do not *earn* life by serving Jehovah. Everlasting life is a gift of God. (Romans 6:23) It will do us good to meditate on such a life because the Paradise hope reminds us of the kind of God Jehovah is—the loving “rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.” (Hebrews 11:6) A hope that burns brightly in our minds and hearts will enable us to endure hardships in Satan's world.—Jeremiah 23:20.

⁵ Let us now focus our attention on the Bible-based hope of everlasting life in the future earthly Paradise. What will life be like when the knowledge of God fills the earth?

AFTER ARMAGEDDON—A PARADISE EARTH

⁶ As shown earlier, Jehovah God will soon destroy the present wicked system of things. The world is rapidly approaching what the Bible calls Har-Magedon, or Armageddon. That word may make some people think of a nuclear holocaust brought about by warring nations, but Armageddon is nothing of the kind. As Revelation 16:14-16 shows, Armageddon is “the war of the great day of God the Almighty.” It is a war involving “the kings of the entire inhabited earth,” or the nations. Jehovah God's Son, the appointed King, will soon ride forth into

4, 5. (a) How will the Paradise hope be realized? (b) Why should we think about our hope for the future?

6. What is Armageddon, and what will it mean for mankind?

battle. The outcome is absolutely sure. All who oppose God's Kingdom and who are a part of Satan's wicked system will be eliminated. Only those loyal to Jehovah will survive.—Revelation 7:9, 14; 19:11-21.

⁷ Imagine that *you* have survived that cataclysm. What would life be like on earth in God's promised new world? (2 Peter 3:13) We need not speculate, for the Bible tells us, and what it says is thrilling. We learn that Satan and his demons will be put out of commission, locked away in an abyss of inactivity during the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus Christ. No longer will those wicked, malicious creatures be lurking behind the scenes, fomenting trouble and trying to goad us into acts of unfaithfulness against God. What a relief!—Revelation 20:1-3.

⁸ In time, all forms of sickness will vanish. (Isaiah 33:24) The lame will then stand, walk, run, and dance on sound, strong legs. After years of life in their world of silence, the deaf will hear the joyous sounds around them. The blind will gasp in awe as a rich world of color and form takes shape before their eyes. (Isaiah 35:5, 6) At last, they will see the faces of their loved ones! Perhaps then their vision will blur just momentarily with tears of joy.

⁹ Just think! No more eyeglasses, no more crutches and canes, no more medicines, no more dental clinics or hospitals! Never again will emotional illness and depression rob people of happiness. No childhood will be blighted by disease. The ravages of aging will be reversed. (Job 33:25) We will become healthier, stronger. Each morning we will wake from a refreshing night's

7. Where will Satan and his demons be during the Thousand Year Reign of Christ, and how will this benefit mankind?

8, 9. In the new world, what will happen to afflictions, illness, and aging?

12 Happy is the man that keeps on enduring trial, because on becoming approved he will receive the crown of life, which Jehovah promised to those who continue loving him.

12 Happy is the man that keeps on enduring trial

James here refers to trials from outside, not inward temptation, for, as one Bible scholar notes:

Happiness to Those Enduring

"Inner enticement to evil would have to be resisted, not endured."* Not that trials cannot also bring about or contribute to temptations to do wrong. (Compare Matthew 16:21-23.) But James is focusing on *en-*

during trials. By contrast, any incitement or pressure to do wrong that rises within us should be speedily dismissed. The man who does not give up when faced with a trialsome situation but who keeps on enduring faithfully is the one who can be pronounced happy. There is real joy and satisfaction in knowing that we are preserving a clean conscience and doing what is right despite difficulties, trials or temptations that could make us deviate from what is upright. We feel a closeness to our Creator as we continue to experience his loving care in time of adversity. (1 Pet. 5:7)

because on becoming approved he will receive the crown of life

Faithful endurance results in more than present happiness. By remaining an approved servant of Jehovah, the spirit-begotten Christian is sure to receive the "crown of life." This does not mean that he earns the right to life by his endurance of trials, but he is honored as with a "crown" by

* *The International Critical Commentary*, on The Letter of James, by Professor J. H. Ropes, p. 150.

13 When under trial, let no one say: "I am being tried by God." For with evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone.

the gift of heavenly life. Life cannot be earned by imperfect humans but is the free gift through faith in Jesus Christ. (Rom. 6:23) The *enduring* Christian has proved that he has that faith. Its quality has been tested and found complete.

which Jehovah promised to those who continue loving him

The "crown" (life itself) is promised to all spirit-begotten Christians who continue loving Jehovah, who prove to be his real friends. This love is shown by obedience to God's commands. (1 John 5:3; contrast with Romans 1:28-32.) God, through Christ, causes the Christian's trials to work together to perfect his servants, if they endure these steadfastly, uncomplainingly and, with his help, triumphantly down till death. (Rom. 8:28; 1 Pet. 5:10)

13 When under trial, let no one say: "I am being tried by God"

When experiencing any kind of affliction or adversity, a person would be wrong in concluding that Jehovah God is trying to induce him to commit sin. If the individual lets something in connection with the trial become a temptation to him—for example, if he turns from resistance to yielding because of some selfish advantage, or because he is seeking a way to avoid facing and enduring the trial—God is not to blame. For God will give strength to endure if the Christian remains steadfast in his own heart. (Phil. 4:13) The divine

How Sin Takes Place in Humans