made the choice in a dedication to God and symbolized it by baptism. But every day we are all faced with problems that require us to make lesser decisions and choices in harmony with that first big decision. Can we continue daily to make the right choices that keep us on the way to life? Can we be sure that we will actually realize the fullness of our hope in time?

**Hold to Your Choice!**

“If we remain faithful, God will not let us make ruinous mistakes. But sometimes he permits us to be in error so that we may see our need to look always to him and his Word. This strengthens our relationship with him and our endurance while waiting. We learn from our mistakes that it is necessary to be more careful in the future. The desire for the new system of things to take complete charge of the earth has always been very strong in Christians down through the centuries. And because of their own short life-span, they doubtless longed for it to come in their particular lifetime. Those who have tried to keep God’s judgment time “close in mind” have, on more than one occasion throughout history, become overly eager for that day’s arrival, in their own minds trying to rush the arrival of the desired events. (2 Pet. 3:12) In the first century, for example, the apostle Paul found it necessary to write to Christians in Thessalonica in this fashion, as we read at 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3: “However, brothers, respecting the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we request of you not to be quickly shaken from your reason nor to be excited either through an inspired expression or through a verbal message or through a letter as though from us, to the effect that the day of Jehovah is here. Let no one seduce you in any manner, because it will not come unless the apostacy comes first and the man of lawlessness gets revealed, the son of destruction.”

“*In modern times* such eagerness, commendable in itself, has led to attempts at setting dates for the desired liberation from the suffering and troubles that are the lot of persons throughout the earth. With the appearance of the book *Life Everlasting*—in *Freedom of the Sons of God*, and its comments as to how appropriate it would be for the millennial reign of Christ to parallel the seventh millennium of man’s existence, considerable expectation was aroused regarding the year 1975. There were statements made then, and thereafter, stressing that this was only a possibility. Unfortunately, however, along with such cautionary information, there were other statements published that implied that such realization of hopes by that year was more of a probability than a mere possibility. It is to be regretted that these latter statements apparently overshadowed the cautionary ones and contributed to a buildup of the expectation already initiated.

“In its issue of July 15, 1976, *The Watchtower*, commenting on the inadvisability of setting our sights on a certain date, stated: ‘If anyone has been disappointed through not following this line of thought, he should now concentrate on adjusting his viewpoint, seeing that it was not the word of God that failed or deceived him and brought disappointment, but that his own understanding was based on wrong premises.’ In saying “anyone,” *The Watchtower* included all disappointed

4 (a) Why should we not let the disappointment caused by errors shake us from our chosen course? (b) Into what erroneous attitudes has desire for the fulfillment of their hope led Christians throughout the past?

5. (a) How did strong expectation develop regarding the year 1975? (b) Why did cautionary statements published not accomplish a curbing of such concern over a date?

6. Did the information in the July 15, 1976, *Watchtower* endeavor to lay the responsibility for such expectation solely or primarily on its readers? Explain.

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ones of Jehovah’s Witnesses, hence including persons having to do with the publication of the information that contributed to the buildup of hopes centered on that date.

Nevertheless, there is no reason for us to be shaken in faith in God's promises. Rather, as a consequence, we are all moved to make a closer examination of the Scriptures regarding this matter of a day of judgment. In doing so, we find that the important thing is not the date. What is important is our keeping ever in mind that there is such a day—and it is getting closer and it will require an accounting on the part of all of us. Peter said that Christians should rightly be “awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah.” (2 Pet. 3:12) It is not a certain date ahead; it is day-to-day living on the part of the Christian that is important. He must not live a single day without having in mind that he is under Jehovah’s loving care and direction and must submit himself thereto, keeping also in mind that he must account for his acts.

Jesus gave the reason why we should maintain such a viewpoint, saying: “For the Son of man is destined to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will recompense each one according to his behavior.” (Matt. 16:27) The apostle Paul also pointed out: “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God . . . So, then, each of us will render an account for himself to God.” (Rom. 14:10-12) And, “we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of the Christ, that each one may get his award for the things done through the body, according to the things he has practiced, whether it is good or vile.” (2 Cor. 5:10) How long do we have before making such an accounting? Jesus said: “He that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved.” (Matt. 24:13) When is “the end”? That end can come either at the end of this system of things or at the individual’s own death before then. How long, then, does each one of us have? No one can calculate the day when he will die. Likewise, Jesus said to his apostles about the time for establishing God’s kingdom: “It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times or seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction.” (Acts 1:7) It is impossible for us to figure out the world’s end in advance.

The Fulfillment of Our Hope

If anyone is fearful that, because of trials that may arise, he will not stick to his choice to serve God and Christ, let him listen to the words of the apostle Peter. This apostle assures us that our hope is a certainty if we hold firmly to it through faith in God and his sure promises. He says: “[You] are being safeguarded by God’s power through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last period of time.” (1 Pet. 1:3-5) What do we learn from these words?

Well, when we first took notice and listened with belief to the “good news” proclaimed to us, could we properly credit ourselves with having the good sense to see its value and grasp it right away? No. “While we were yet weak,” helpless to save ourselves, “while we were yet sinners,” yes, while we were yet enemies, we were “reconciled to God through the death of his Son.” (Rom. 5:6-10) Whom, therefore, do we have to thank for the favorable position in which we now stand? His disciples: “No man can unless the Father, who is in him.” (John 6:44) On our part we would never come to God. Our imperfect, sinful nature would never let us do it.

However, we can seek his approval by faith. (Heb. 11:6) The Bible says: “Eye has not has not heard, neither has been conceived in the heart of that God has prepared for him.” (1 Cor. 2:9) Through faith and desire we have understood the truth and have pity on us and help us.

Knowing, therefore, that we are on the right path and helps us right now, we can appreciate how it is not far off from each one of us on 17:27: That if we will only look to him, He will help us. (Jas. 4:8) God knows our inner desire and sends us, with the “good news”; as God’s Word, with the help which God supplies, the seed of the “good news” to his situation. Then, if he is not in what God says, he is at the mercy of the darkness. As to the Bible says: “Eye has not has not heard, neither has been conceived in the heart of that God has prepared for him.” (1 Cor. 2:9) Through faith and desire we have understood the truth and have pity on us and help us.

10. (a) What effect should such human errors have on our faith in what God himself promises? (b) In actuality, what does God’s Word stress as the important factor?
11. (a) To whom goes the real credit for our having received the “good news,” and why? (b) How does God make it possible for persons to recognize the light of truth? (c) What does 1 Corinthians 2:9 show as to the ability of humans to discern divine truths on their own?

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